

HHMI Doubles Postdoctoral Fellowships

HHMI ANNOUNCED IN JUNE THAT IT IS increasing support for outstanding postdoctoral researchers through expanded collaborations with four foundations. Since 2007, HHMI has supported four postdoctoral fellows a year through the Jane Coffin Childs Memorial Fund, the Helen Hay Whitney Foundation, the Damon Runyon Cancer Research Foundation, and the Life Sciences Research Foundation. The new initiative doubles the number of fellows to eight per organization each year.

As is already the case, each group will competitively select candidates—who come

from universities across the country—based on its own criteria. The foundations focus on basic biomedicine, general life sciences, and cancer research.

“These organizations consistently select outstanding scientists for their prestigious fellowship programs, and this support comes at a critical moment in the young scientists’ careers,” says HHMI President Robert Tjian. “We are pleased to expand our partnership as well as the funding needed to develop and nurture some of the most talented among a new generation of scientists.”

Each fellowship will have a three-year term. Start dates will vary, but most of the new funding will take effect in 2010. When the initiative is at full capacity, HHMI will be supporting 96 postdoctoral fellows through this program at an anticipated annual cost of about \$5 million. HHMI separately funds postdoctoral associates at the Janelia Farm Research Campus.

“By expanding its funding for this program, HHMI will enable these organizations to offer 32 additional fellowships each year,” says Jack E. Dixon, HHMI vice president and chief scientific officer. ■

In Memoriam

Alexander G. Bearn

1923–2009

Former HHMI Trustee, Alexander G. Bearn, a distinguished physician, scientist, and author, died May 15, 2009. He was 86.

Bearn served as a Trustee of HHMI for 18 years, from 1987 to 2005, providing wise counsel and thoughtful guidance during a period of sustained growth and transformation for the Institute.

Born in England, Bearn received his M.B., B.S., and M.D., degrees from the University of London. He came to The Rockefeller University in 1951 and in 1966 moved next door to The New York Hospital, where he served for 11 years as physician-in-chief and as chairman of the Department of Medicine for the Cornell University Medical College. He founded the first human genetics laboratory at the Medical College and, with colleagues at Rockefeller, initiated the joint M.D./Ph.D. program at the institutions.

An expert on the genetics of rare metabolic diseases, Bearn defined the genetic nature of Wilson’s disease—an inherited disorder that causes copper to accumulate in the liver and

brain. He also demonstrated that the disease was associated with decreased function of a blood protein that binds copper.

After nearly 30 years in academic medicine, Bearn joined Merck & Co. as senior vice president for medical and scientific affairs of its international division from 1979 to 1988.

In addition to serving as a Trustee of HHMI, Bearn was a Trustee of The Rockefeller University, the Helen Hay Whitney Foundation, and the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation and was an overseer of The Jackson Laboratory. In recent years, Bearn wrote biographies of three scientists: Archibald Garrod, Sir Clifford Allbutt, and Sir Francis Fraser.

Bearn was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine, the Harvey Society, and the American Society of Human Genetics. He was also a member of the American Philosophical Society and served as the organization’s vice president from 1988 to 1996 and then as executive officer from 1997 until his retirement in 2002.