

HHMI Expanding Patient-Oriented Pool

THE INSTITUTE IS COMMITTING APPROXIMATELY \$200 MILLION IN FIRST-TERM SUPPORT FOR THE INCOMING GROUP OF PHYSICIAN-SCIENTISTS.

HHMI EXPECTS TO APPOINT 15 NEW investigators whose work bridges the gap between basic research and clinical medicine in 2007 and to launch a second, general competition for new investigators later in the year.

The competition for physician-scientists was announced in late 2006 and reflects the Institute's longstanding commitment to supporting the work of highly creative scientists whose research is guided by their interaction with patients. It also represents the first time that HHMI has allowed candidates to apply directly—not requiring institutional nominations.

“There has been such a decline in the number of physician-scientists who are pursuing careers in patient-oriented research that some have called this group an endangered species,” says HHMI President Thomas R. Cech. “Unfortunately, the decline is coming at a time when we can least afford

it—a time of unprecedented opportunity for translating basic science discoveries into clinical treatments that benefit patients.”

The deadline for applications was January 15. Full-time faculty at 121 medical schools and associated institutions were eligible to apply if they met certain criteria, including having a current license to practice medicine and having between 4 and 16 years experience as an independent scientist.

“Our decision to solicit applications from individual faculty at leading institutions is a departure from our past practice of asking these institutions to nominate their best faculty,” says Cech. “We know our pool

of candidates has been excellent in past competitions, but how can it not be even deeper and broader if we open up access?”

The first HHMI-sponsored competition for patient-oriented researchers was held in 2002, when 12 new HHMI investigators were selected. These investigators have gone on to identify new drug targets, develop new therapeutic agents, and improve our knowledge of the genetic basis of diseases. As of December 2006, the total number of HHMI investigators, including patient-oriented researchers, was 300.

Another competition open to investigators in all fields of biomedical research will be announced in spring 2007. More information about this competition and the application process can be found on the HHMI Website, www.hhmi.org. ■

—JACQUELINE RUTTIMANN

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THOMAS CECH