

Promoting Brain Gain

EMBO, HHMI join forces.

HHMI AND THE EUROPEAN MOLECULAR Biology Organization (EMBO) want to attract some of the world's most promising scientists to Central Europe. To help talented researchers establish their first independent laboratories there, the organizations are launching the EMBO/HHMI Startup Grants—3-year awards of \$75,000 annually. The new grants spring from a joint initiative of HHMI and EMBO involving Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia.

“HHMI believes it is essential that fresh new scientists with fresh new ideas start independent careers with sufficient resources to become competitive in the global world of contemporary science,” says Peter J. Bruns, HHMI's vice president for grants and special programs. “By ‘resources’ we mean more than money; we also mean equipment, supplies, personnel, space, and time. This partnership among HHMI, EMBO, member

countries, and local institutions, with each recognizing specific needs and each contributing unique resources, should make a significant difference.”

HHMI will contribute \$50,000 a year for 3 years for up to six grants. Another \$25,000 a year per grant will come from the participating member countries and EMBO. EMBO will oversee the Startup Grants as part of its Young Investigator Programme, which has been identifying and supporting exceptional young scientists in Europe since 2000.

HHMI has supported outstanding scientists in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, and Ukraine since 1995, reflecting the Institute's commitment to scientific excellence as a global enterprise. Through its international scholars program, HHMI currently provides grants to non-U.S. scientists in 29 countries around the world (see related article on page 44). ■

- Jennifer Boeth Donovan -

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PETER J. BRUNS



The Science of Fat

Lectures on DVD tell the story of obesity.

THE TYPICAL AMERICAN CONSUMES NEARLY a million calories a year, yet weight generally fluctuates very little. The body has mechanisms that track and carefully balance food intake and energy output. That's what makes dieting so difficult.

The science behind obesity came alive for hundreds of high schoolers late last year when two experts delivered a series of engaging lectures on the subject at HHMI headquarters. HHMI's 2004 Holiday Lectures on Science, titled *The Science of Fat*, featured HHMI

RONALD M. EVANS



JEFFREY M. FRIEDMAN



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investigators Ronald M. Evans, from the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, and Jeffrey M. Friedman, from the Rockefeller University. Over two days in early December, a live audience shared their lectures with viewers around the world via live Web simulcast.

Now, the complete lecture series—along with a rich collection of animations, interviews, and other special features—is available from HHMI on a free DVD. The three-DVD set can be ordered online at www.hhmi.org. ■

- Jennifer Boeth Donovan -

THE BIG PICTURE

Studying mice that are massively obese, Jeffrey Friedman and his colleagues identified the gene for leptin, a hormone produced by fat cells. Leptin—named after the Greek word for “thin”—feeds into the circuit of neurons in the brain that controls eating and energy expenditure.

Ronald Evans is an expert on a family of proteins called PPARs (for peroxisome proliferator activator receptors), which control how the body uses sugar and fat. One member of this family, PPAR- γ , acts as a master switch that drives the formation of fat cells and regulates the storage of fat.