

JUNE 12, 2001

## HHMI Announces National Competition for Appointment of Investigators Who Conduct Patient-Oriented Research

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) today announced a national competition for the appointment of outstanding physician-scientists as HHMI investigators. The Institute expects to select between five and 10 new investigators by early next year.

“There has been a steady decline in the number of physician-scientists who are pursuing careers that integrate direct patient contact and fundamental biomedical research,” said HHMI President Thomas R. Cech. “In this competition, we will be looking for researchers who show the greatest potential for being able to translate basic science discoveries into useful clinical applications.”

The completion of the human genome sequence and the advent of other technological advances such as those in the area of biomedical imaging are creating new opportunities for bridging the gap between advances in basic science and clinical research. The new competition seeks to identify researchers whose scientific work is guided by their interaction with patients or other human subjects.

Although several of the 340 current HHMI investigators are doing patient-oriented research, the majority of Hughes scientists focus on basic research directed toward understanding the genetic, molecular and cellular bases of human disease. This type of research is generally characterized as being disease-oriented rather than patient-oriented, because the research does not require significant contact with patients.

Letters inviting nominations are being sent to 119 institutions, including medical schools, research institutes, schools of public health and some independent hospitals. A committee of distinguished biomedical scientists will evaluate the nominations, which are due by September 10, 2001. It is anticipated that the appointments will be announced by the summer of 2002.

The Institute is a medical research organization that enters into long-term collaboration agreements with universities and other academic research

organizations, where its investigators hold faculty appointments. Under these agreements, HHMI investigators and their research teams, all of whom are employees of the Institute, carry out their research with considerable freedom and flexibility in HHMI laboratories located on various campuses. HHMI investigators conduct basic biomedical research using the techniques of modern molecular biology.

The previous competition for new investigators, which was completed in 2000, resulted in the appointment of 48 researchers. The Institute currently has about 340 investigators on its staff, including six Nobel laureates and 74 members of the National Academy of Sciences.

The Institute's biomedical research expenditures this fiscal year will total about \$500 million. In addition to conducting medical research, the Institute's large grants program supports science education in the United States and the research of a select group of biomedical scientists in other countries. HHMI grants will total more than \$100 million during the current fiscal year.

Established in 1953 by the aviator-industrialist for whom it is named, the Institute's headquarters and conference center are located in Chevy Chase, Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C.