

NOVEMBER 01, 2006

## HHMI Awards \$19 Million to Latin American, Canadian Scientists

Thirty-nine outstanding scientists in Latin America and Canada have been named Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) international research scholars. Each will receive a five-year award totaling nearly \$500,000.

The competitive awards recognize the accomplishments and promise of biomedical researchers from Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Mexico, and Venezuela. They also help build the research capacity of countries that have a strong tradition of science but insufficient resources to adequately support world-class research, by supporting scientific leaders and strengthening their research institutions.

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— Peter J. Bruns

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"This is the 15th anniversary of HHMI's international program, which began in 1991 with awards to outstanding scientists in our closest neighboring countries, Mexico and Canada," said Thomas R. Cech, president of the Institute. "The program has grown five-fold and now supports outstanding researchers in 28 countries, including Canada and five Latin American nations. The research these scientists are doing compares favorably to the research conducted by accomplished investigators in the United States."

The new HHMI international research scholars were chosen from 546 applicants from eight countries. Twenty-one of those selected have received previous international research scholar awards from the Institute.

"These scientists are recognized pacesetters in their fields," noted Peter J. Bruns, HHMI vice president for grants and special programs. For example:

Alejandro Schinder, a neuroscientist from Argentina, studies how neurons, or nerve cells, develop in the adult brain. His research has helped reveal striking similarities between the way the brain develops and the way it stores knowledge, and could enable scientists to find ways to rewire the brain to restore the function of neurons lost to injury or neurodegenerative disease. This is his first international research award from HHMI. Canadian Freda Miller is a leader in the field of nerve cell growth and death. Miller is

interested in developing ways to use stem cells to treat injuries and wasting disorders. She has demonstrated that stem cells from adult skin can produce a variety of different cell types, including the type of nerve cells that are damaged during spinal cord injury or Parkinson's disease. This is her first award from HHMI. M. Fatima Leite is a Brazilian researcher who is studying how calcium in the nucleus of cells regulates cell growth. She hopes to determine whether growth factors stimulate cell growth specifically by activating calcium signaling pathways in the cell's nucleus. Her work could provide important insights for the regeneration of liver cells, as well as the development of organs and the abnormal cell growth of cancer. This is her first HHMI award.

HHMI launched its international research scholar program in 1991 to recognize the international scope of modern biomedical research and to support outstanding scientists in their own countries, linking them with each other and with HHMI investigators and professors in the United States to create an international network of outstanding scientists. Since then, the Institute has awarded more than \$100 million in grants to scientists in 32 countries. The new awards are HHMI's fourth round to scientists in Canada and Latin America.

In addition to Latin American and Canadian researchers, HHMI supports scientists in Eastern and Central Europe, Russia, and the Baltics, as well as parasitology and infectious disease researchers globally.

Part of the grant to each HHMI international research scholar supports shared resources at the researcher's home institution. "One of our goals is to enrich the scientific environment of these scientists' institutions and countries, Bruns explained.

The new international research scholars are:

### **Argentina**

Diego de Mendoza \*Institute of Molecular and Cellular Biology of Rosario, CONICET A. Beln Elgoyhen \*Institute for Research on Genetic Engineering and Molecular Biology, CONICET A. Carlos Frasch \*Institute for Research in Biotechnology, National University of General San Martin Fernando A. Goldbaum \*Leloir Institute Foundation Alberto R. Kornblihtt \*University of Buenos Aires Javier F. Palatnik Institute of Molecular and Cellular Biology of Rosario, CONICET Armando J. Parodi \*Leloir Institute Foundation Marcelo Rubinstein \*Institute for Research on Genetic Engineering and Molecular Biology, CONICET Alejandro F. Schinder Leloir Institute Foundation Alejandro J. Vila \*Institute of Molecular and Cellular Biology of Rosario, CONICET Pablo Wappner Leloir Institute Foundation Marcelo J. Yanovsky Institute for Agricultural Plant Physiology and Ecology, CONICET

### **Brazil**

M. Fatima Leite Federal University of Minas Gerais Pedro L. Oliveira \*Federal University of Rio de Janeiro Alexandre A. Peixoto \*Oswaldo Cruz

## Foundation

### **Canada**

Lea Harrington Ontario Cancer Institute Philip Hieter University of British Columbia Timothy R. Hughes University of Toronto Freda D. Miller Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto Dana J. Philpott University of Toronto Richard A. Rachubinski \*University of Alberta Michael A. Rudnicki \*Ottawa Health Research Institute Michael W. Salter Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto Erwin Schurr McGill University Eric Alan Shoubridge \*McGill University Nahum Sonenberg \*McGill University Peter St George-Hyslop \*University of Toronto Natalie C.J. Strynadka \*University of British Columbia Michael D. Tyers Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute Andr Veillette Clinical Research Institute of Montreal Yu Tian Wang \*University of British Columbia Richard W. Wozniak University of Alberta Jeffrey L. Wrana \*Samuel Lunenfeld Research Institute

### **Chile**

Miguel L. Concha Institute of Biomedical Sciences, University of Chile

### **Mexico**

Luis G. Brieba de Castro Center for Research and Advanced Studies, National Polytechnic Institute Luis R. Herrera Estrella \*Center for Research and Advanced Studies, National Polytechnic Institute Ranulfo Romo \*Institute of Cellular Physiology, National Autonomous University of Mexico Jean-Philippe Vielle-Calzada \*Center for Research and Advanced Studies, National Polytechnic Institute

### **Venezuela**

Ral A. Padrn \*Venezuelan Institute for Scientific Research

\* Indicates a previous HHMI international research scholar award.