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Illinois researcher among recipients of \$112K in grant funding

CHICAGO – Six researchers will receive seed money grants for their research into the causes of and cures for blinding eye conditions, thanks to Midwest Eye-Banks' Eye and Vision Research Program. Nine students were also selected to receive Eye and Vision Research Program stipends.

The Eye and Vision Research Program was created in 1980 to address the types of blindness that cannot be treated through corneal transplantation.

"Our mission is the restoration of sight, no matter what the cause may be," explains Charles Pivoney, Midwest's Chief Operating Officer. "Traditionally, eye banks recover, evaluate and distribute eye tissue for transplantation, but we know that transplants can only be used to treat about 10 percent of blinding eye conditions. By funding research, we can fight blindness on all fronts."

Of the six research proposals approved for funding, one was from Michelle Hastings, Ph.D., of Rosalind Franklin University. Her proposed research will investigate corneal nerve regeneration after surgery and antisense therapy. Four of the nine student stipend recipients are from Illinois universities.

The Illinois Eye-Bank is a subsidiary of Midwest Eye-Banks and is a charitable, not-for-profit organization dedicated to the restoration of sight. It recovers, evaluates and distributes human eye tissue for transplantation. It also supports research into the causes and cures of blinding eye conditions, promotes donation awareness through public and professional education, and provides humanitarian aid to people in need of corneal transplantation throughout the world. For more information, visit the Illinois Eye-Bank online at www.illinoiseyebank.org or call (800) 548-4703.



Midwest Eye-Banks Eye and Vision Research Program 2011 Grant Recipients

1. Gardner, Thomas, M.D., University of Michigan
A diabetic retinopathy risk of progression calculator (\$15,000)
2. Hastings, Michelle, Ph.D., Rosalind Franklin University
Therapeutic approaches for blindness using antisense oligonucleotides (\$14,821)
3. Fort, Patricia, Ph.D., University of Michigan
Characterization of crystalline proteins expression in human retinal effect of diabetes (\$15,000)
4. Qiao, Xiaoxi, Ph.D. Henry Ford Health System
Targeting APE1/Ref-1 redox function to inhibit choroidal neovascularization (\$15,000)
5. Wong, Kwoon, Ph.D., University of Michigan
Functional characterization of developmental changes in NMDA receptor subunit composition of retinal ganglion cells (\$15,000)
6. Goldberg, Andrew, Ph.D., Oakland University
Understanding delayed pathogenesis in retinal degenerations (\$15,000)

Student Stipend Recipients

1. Dr. Vinay Aakalu, University of Illinois at Chicago
2. Dr. Natalie Bajenova, University of Michigan
3. Dr. Shweta Chaudhary, University of Illinois at Chicago
4. Dr. Kristen Harris Nwanyanwu, University of Michigan
5. Dr. Jason Jacoby, University of Illinois at Chicago
6. Dr. Duma Raoof-Daneshwar, University of Michigan
7. Dr. Julia dos Santos, Kresge Eye Institute
8. Dr. Nazeem Shamsuddin, University of Illinois at Chicago
9. Gi Sang Yoon, Wayne State University