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## AMY WAGERS RECEIVES NEW YORK STEM CELL FOUNDATION – ROBERTSON STEM CELL PRIZE

**NEW YORK, NY (October 15, 2013)** – The New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF) announced today that Amy Wagers, PhD, Professor at Harvard University, will be the 2013 recipient of the NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Prize, which has been awarded since 2011 for extraordinary achievements in translational stem cell research by a younger scientist.

Dr. Wagers is the Forst Family Professor of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology at Harvard University and an Early Career Scientist of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. At Harvard, she leads an independent research program that focuses on the regulation and therapeutic potential of blood and muscle stem cells.

“Dr. Wagers’ groundbreaking research on the biology of blood and muscle forming stem cells has opened up an avenue for cures of degenerative diseases of the aged,” said Susan L. Solomon, CEO and Co-founder of NYSCF. “Her work has the potential to impact treatment of diabetes, cancer, and muscular dystrophy among many other devastating conditions.”

As the population ages, therapies that delay or reverse degenerative changes associated with age are increasingly important. To date, few interventions show promise, but exciting work from Dr. Wagers’ lab has uncovered a role for blood-borne factors. Her discovery of a hormone, GDF11, that regulates aging through stem cell “rejuvenation” has the potential to provide transformative new therapies for aging and chronic degenerative diseases.

“I am delighted that the NYSCF-Robertson Prize, which honors the most important research conducted by a young stem cell scientist, will this year recognize Dr. Amy Wagers. Her path-breaking work in understanding blood-forming and muscle-forming stem cells is precisely the kind of translational science that the NYSCF-Robertson Prize was created to encourage,” said Julian Robertson, whose foundation underwrites the \$200,000 prize. The terms of the prize require that the \$200,000 stipend be used, at the recipients’ discretion, to further support their research.

The NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Prize was presented to Dr. Wagers at a ceremony in New York City by Susan L. Solomon on October 15.

The jury that selected Dr. Wagers consisted of Fiona Watt, DPhil, from King’s College London in the United Kingdom; Lorenz Studer, MD, Director of the Sloan-Kettering Center for Stem Cell Biology; Irving Weissman, MD, Director of the Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative

Medicine at the Stanford School of Medicine; and inaugural recipient of the NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Prize, Peter J. Coffey, DPhil, Co-Executive Director of Translation UC Santa Barbara’s Center for Stem Cell Biology and Engineering and Director of the London Project to Cure Blindness, University College London.

Dr. Wagers’ current work focuses on defining the factors and mechanisms that modulate the migration, expansion, and regenerative potential of aging stem cells. Her work on GDF11, a circulating hormone that declines with age in mice and humans, has shown that restoring “youthful” levels of GDF11 in mice produces a striking reversal of age-related disease in multiple systems, especially skeletal muscle.

Previous recipients of the Robertson Prize include Peter Coffey, DPhil, Director to the London Project to Cure Blindness at University College London for his research on using embryonic stem cells to cure age-related macular degeneration and Kazutoshi Takahashi, PhD, Lecturer, Center for iPS Cell Research and Application at Kyoto University for his work founding the field of iPS cell research in the laboratory of Dr. Shinya Yamanaka, Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine.

In addition to the monetary award, Dr. Wagers will receive an award sculpture designed by celebrated architect Frank Gehry. In 2009, NYSCF honored Gehry with its Humanitarian Award, given to a non-scientist who has been an active advocate of stem cell research.

### **About The New York Stem Cell Foundation**

The New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF) is an independent research institute founded in 2005 that accelerates cures and better treatments for patients through stem cell research. NYSCF has over 45 researchers in its New York laboratory and is an acknowledged world leader in stem cell research and in developing pioneering stem cell technologies, including the NYSCF Global Stem Cell Array™. Additionally, NYSCF supports another 60 researchers at other leading institutions worldwide through its Innovator Programs, including the NYSCF – Druckenmiller Fellowships and the NYSCF – Robertson Investigator Awards. NYSCF focuses on translational research in a model designed to overcome the barriers that slow discovery and encourage multi-institutional collaboration.

NYSCF researchers have achieved five major discoveries in the field, including: the recent creation of patient-specific bone substitutes from skin cells; the discovery of a clinical cure to prevent transmission of maternal mitochondrial diseases in December 2012; the derivation of the first-ever patient specific embryonic stem cell line (named the #1 Medical Breakthrough of 2011 by Time magazine); the discovery of a new way to reprogram stem cells; and the creation of the first disease model from induced pluripotent stem cells (also named the #1 Medical Breakthrough by Time magazine in 2008).