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FENG ZHANG RECEIVES 2016 NEW YORK STEM CELL FOUNDATION – ROBERTSON STEM CELL PRIZE

New York, NY (October 25, 2016) – The New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF) announced today that Feng Zhang, PhD, is the 2016 recipient of the NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Prize for his pioneering advances to edit human and plant genomes using CRISPR-Cas9.

“We are particularly pleased to recognize Feng with the NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Prize,” explained Susan L. Solomon, CEO and Co-founder of NYSCF. “A 2014 NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Investigator and member of our outstanding Innovator community, his work represents a new frontier in research that has already dramatically changed the scientific and medical landscape, ushering in new treatments and therapies that have never before been possible.”

Dr. Zhang is an Associate Professor of Neuroscience and Biological Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), a Core Member of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, an Investigator at the McGovern Institute for Brain Research at MIT, and the W.M. Keck Career Development Professor in Biomedical Engineering in the Departments of Brain and Cognitive Sciences and Biological Engineering at MIT.

His development of the CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing system and seminal 2013 *Science* paper where he described successful gene editing using the technique in human cells opened an entirely new arm of scientific research and inquiry. Critically, the CRISPR-Cas9 system and later advances, also developed by Zhang, are easy to execute with almost endless possibility for new research enabling scientists to change, delete and replace any gene of any animal. This system has unquestionably accelerated research around the world that will benefit human health.

“It is really an honor for me and everyone in my team to be recognized for the work we are doing, and I am excited to apply the genome editing tools that we have developed to study complex human diseases,” said Dr. Zhang. “This prize will further our work to develop and apply molecular tools to identify genetic variants involved in disease phenotypes and refining these tools for therapeutic use.”

Previously, Dr. Zhang has received numerous awards and honors, including the NIH Director’s Pioneer Award, the Popular Science Brilliant 10 Award, named one of *Nature’s* “10 people who mattered in 2013,” The Society for Neuroscience Young Investigator Award, and recently, the Canada Gairdner International Award and the Tang Prize.

“Gene editing using RNA guided endonucleases has opened entirely new frontiers for regenerative medicine, and Dr. Zhang’s pioneering work in this area has ignited a new era of discovery that will

transform the way we study and treat human disease,” said Amy Wagers, PhD, 2013 NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Prize recipient and NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Investigator Awards Jury member from Harvard University. “I am so happy to see him recognized by the 2016 NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Prize, acknowledging the profound impact of his innovation and insight for scientists and patients around the globe.”

The NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Prize has been awarded annually since 2011 to an outstanding young stem cell scientist in recognition of significant and path breaking translational stem cell research. All NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Prize recipients receive \$200,000 to be used for research purposes at their discretion.

Previous recipients of the Robertson Prize include:

- 2015 – **Franziska Michor, PhD**, Professor of Computational Biology at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and in the Department of Biostatistics at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, for her research using quantitative approaches to optimize cancer therapies.
- 2014 – **Marius Wernig, PhD**, Associate Professor in the Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine and the Department of Pathology at Stanford University School of Medicine, for his research directly converting skin cells into functional neurons.
- 2013 – **Amy Wagers, PhD**, Professor at Harvard University, for her work on blood and muscle stem cells.
- 2012 – **Kazutoshi Takahashi, PhD**, Junior Associate Professor, 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, 2012 Nobel Prize Laureate in Medicine.
- 2011 – **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.

About The New York Stem Cell Foundation Research Institute

The New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF) Research Institute is an independent organization accelerating cures and better treatments for patients through stem cell research. The NYSCF global community includes over 140 researchers at leading institutions worldwide, including the NYSCF – Druckenmiller Fellows, the NYSCF – Robertson Investigators, the NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Prize Recipients, and NYSCF Research Institute scientists and engineers. The NYSCF Research Institute employs over 45 researchers in New York, and is an acknowledged world leader in stem cell research and in developing pioneering stem cell technologies, including the NYSCF Global Stem Cell Array™. NYSCF focuses on translational research in a model designed to overcome the barriers that slow discovery and replace silos with collaboration. For more information, visit www.nyscf.org