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THE NEW YORK STEM CELL FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES \$9 MILLION TO SIX NEW NYSCF – ROBERTSON INVESTIGATORS

NEW YORK, NY (October 10, 2012) – The New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF) named six of the most promising scientists as its 2012 NYSCF – Robertson Investigators.

Each Investigator will receive a \$1.5 million award disbursed over the next five years to foster his or her innovative research by expanding laboratories and by training other scientists. Three of the scientists were named **NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Investigators**, a program in its third year, and three were named **NYSCF – Robertson Neuroscience Investigators**, a program in its second year.

“These young Investigators truly undertake the most daring yet rewarding stem cell research. We are all honored to support the future investigations of these promising talents,” said Susan L. Solomon, Chief Executive Officer of NYSCF.

The Investigators were announced **at NYSCF’s Seventh Annual Translational Stem Cell Research Conference**, held at The Rockefeller University in Manhattan.

Designed to support scientists engaged in novel neuroscience and cutting-edge translational stem cell research, the two Investigator programs aid these researchers as they move beyond postdoctoral work and establish their own laboratories.

The Investigator award builds on the previous success of NYSCF’s Postdoctoral Fellowship program, which is the largest program of postdoctoral support for stem cell researchers in the United States, and has provided funding for 35 postdoctoral researchers to date.

Marc Tessier-Lavigne, President of The Rockefeller University, chaired the NYSCF – Robertson Neuroscience Investigator program’s selection committee.

“With such an outstanding group of young scientists, we had an exceptionally difficult decision to make. We are thrilled to be able to give these awards to such a talented group of scientists,” remarked Tessier-Lavigne. “We are confident they will become leaders in the field of neuroscience.”

Tessier-Lavigne was joined on the jury by Anders Björklund, MD, PhD, Professor of Histology at the Wallenberg Neuroscience Center, University of Lund in Sweden; Catherine

Dulac, PhD, Professor of Molecular and Cellular Biology and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator at Harvard University; and, Lorenz Studer, MD, Director of Sloan-Kettering Center for Stem Cell Biology.

The NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Investigator program’s selection committee consisted of Christine Mummery, PhD, Chair of the Department of Anatomy and Embryology at Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands; 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, Pete Coffey, DPhil, Co-Executive Director of UC Santa Barbara’s Center for Stem Cell Biology and Engineering and Director of the London Project to Cure Blindness, UCL.

“It is such a pleasure to award the critical research undertaken by these young scientists that has the potential to completely revolutionize modern medicine,” said Coffey.

The new **NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Investigators** are:

- **Deepta Bhattacharya, PhD**, Assistant Professor at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. Bhattacharya focuses on the development of stem cell-based approaches for the treatment of severe viral infection. His aim is to use stem cells to produce transplantable immune cells that would directly attack these dangerous infectious agents.
- **Dieter Egli, PhD**, Senior Research Fellow at The New York Stem Cell Foundation. Egli focuses on the generation of therapeutically relevant cells for the treatment of diabetes. His research on nuclear transfer, published in Nature in October 2011, was named the #1 Medical Breakthrough of 2011 by TIME magazine and led him to be named as one of 2011’s People Who Mattered.
- **Alexander Meissner, PhD**, Assistant Professor at Harvard University and a senior associate member of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard. Meissner has been a pioneer in the mapping of the human genome. He now plans to use stem cells to produce mature liver cells that will allow for improved drug discovery methods and that will enable transplantation therapies for liver disease.

The new **NYSCF – Robertson Neuroscience Investigators** are:

- **Christopher Harvey, PhD**, Assistant Professor at Harvard Medical School. Harvey focuses on understanding the neuronal circuitry underlying short-term memory and decision-making. He proposes to study these important functions of the brain in the mouse by using virtual reality environments.
- **Michael Long, PhD**, Assistant Professor at New York University School of Medicine. Long focuses on developing approaches that use novel methods in microscopy to "watch" the brain produce skilled motor behaviors. His model system is the production of zebra finch song.

- **Vanessa Ruta, PhD**, Assistant Professor at The Rockefeller University. Ruta uses novel methods to trace and in turn study neural circuits to understand differences in how the brain encodes for innate (inborn) and adaptive (learned) behaviors. She proposes to use the fruit fly's learned and inborn reaction to distinct odors to solve this long-standing question of nature versus nurture.

The New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF) conducts cutting-edge translational stem cell research in its laboratory in New York City and supports research by stem cell scientists at other leading institutions around the world. More information is available at www.nyscf.org.