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THE NEW YORK STEM CELL FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES $10.5 MILLION TO SEVEN NEW NYSCF – ROBERTSON INVESTIGATORS

NEW YORK, NY (October 16, 2013) – The New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF) today named seven of the most promising scientists as its 2013 NYSCF – Robertson Investigators.

Each Investigator will receive a $1.5 million award, which will be disbursed over the next five years, which will enable them to expand their laboratories and train other scientists. Three of the scientists were named **NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Investigators**, a program in its fourth year, and four were named **NYSCF – Robertson Neuroscience Investigators**, a program in its third year.

"These young Investigators are on the cutting-edge of high-risk, high-reward research that no one else is doing. We are all honored to support the careers and future investigations of these promising talents," said Susan L. Solomon, Chief Executive Officer of NYSCF.

The latest Investigators were announced **at NYSCF's Eighth 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 were created to aid talented researchers as they make the transition from the post doctoral phase of their careers to the establishment of their own laboratories.

The Investigator awards build 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 40 postdoctoral researchers to date.

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

"It was again a very difficult decision to choose the investigators, but we are thrilled to be able to award these talented scientists and support their future work," said Dr. Tessier-Lavigne. "We are looking forward to the groundbreaking discoveries they will make 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 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, Pete 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.

"I'm happy we could select these early career scientists to support their future endeavors. This group has the potential to make new discoveries that may revolutionize our therapeutic approaches to diseases," said Fiona Watt.

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

- **Kristen Brennand**, **PhD**, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Dr. Brennand's research focuses on how neurons affected by schizophrenia differ from healthy neurons in order to better understand the causes of the disorder, and in the hope that this may one day lead to new potential therapies.

- **Jacob (Yaqub) Hanna**, **MD**, **PhD**, Senior Scientist in the Department of Molecular Genetics at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Israel. Dr. Hanna explores topics in embryonic stem cell biology, early embryonic development, and the modeling of human diseases. His projects include deciphering the mechanisms by which induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells are produced and characterizing unique types of human iPS cells and their various stages in early human development. Dr. Hanna's research holds the potential to create powerful research models for degenerative and autoimmune diseases such as type 1 diabetes.

- **Jay Rajagopal**, **MD**, Assistant Professor at the Center for Regenerative Medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Harvard Stem Cell Institute. Dr. Rajagopal's research focuses on the application of stem cell and regenerative biology to human lung disease. His lab's inquiries into the molecular mechanisms underlying adult lung epithelial regeneration will serve as a framework with which to understand how the distortion of normal developmental processes results in human lung disease, specifically cystic fibrosis.

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

- **Winrich Freiwald**, **PhD**, Assistant Professor at the Rockefeller University, Head of the Laboratory of Neural Systems. His work focuses on the neural circuit mechanisms of facial recognition, attention, and social cognition. His proposed research focuses on gaining a mechanistic understanding of the neural processes that transform visual information into social knowledge.

- **Daniel Huber**, **PhD**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Basic Neurosciences at the University of Geneva. Dr. Huber's lab combines novel behavioral paradigms with electrophysiology and innovative optical imaging tools to study how different areas of the frontal cortex interact during decision-making and the control of goal-directed action.

- **Melissa Warden**, **PhD**, will start her laboratory in November 2013 in the Department of Neurobiology and Behavior at Cornell University where she will be Assistant Professor and Miriam M. Salpeter Fellow. Dr. Warden's research at Cornell will integrate neurophysiological, imaging and cellular and molecular approaches to the understanding of neural circuits mediating rewards, motivation, and learning in rodent models. Her lab will investigate both normal circuit function as well as dysfunction in psychiatric disease.

- **Zachary Knight**, **PhD**, Assistant Professor in the Department of Physiology at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF). Building upon his postdoctoral work, Dr. Knight's lab is developing extraordinary new technologies for mapping neural circuits by sequencing RNA and using these tools to identify the cells that control innate behaviors such as feeding.

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).