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THE NEW YORK STEM CELL FOUNDATION AWARDS \$10.5 MILLION TO 7 NEW NYSCF – ROBERTSON INVESTIGATORS

*Philanthropic Dollars Support Innovative Neuroscience
and Stem Cell Research*

NEW YORK CITY (October 11, 2011) – The New York Stem Cell Foundation (NYSCF) today named seven of the nation’s most promising young scientists as its 2011 class of NYSCF – Robertson Investigators.

Each of the NYSCF Investigators will receive \$1.5 million over the next five years to expand their own laboratories, train other scientists and foster innovative high-risk/high reward research.

Susan L. Solomon, Chief Executive Officer of The New York Stem Cell Foundation, announced the new investigators at **NYSCF’s Sixth Annual Translational Stem Cell Research Conference** at The Rockefeller University in Manhattan.

“These early career scientists represent some of the world’s most gifted minds,” said Ms. Solomon. “This funding will support them at a critical juncture in their careers as they focus on research that has the potential to accelerate the path from bench to bedside.”

Four of the scientists were named **NYSCF – Robertson Neuroscience Investigators**, a new program, and three were named **NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Investigators**, a program in its second year.

The new Investigators join six NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Investigators named last year. Additional classes of NYSCF – Robertson Neuroscience Investigators and NYSCF – Robertson Stem Cell Investigators will be named each of the next several years.

Both Investigator programs support young scientists engaged in innovative neuroscience and cutting-edge translational stem cell research at a key point in their careers as they move beyond postdoctoral work and direct their own laboratories.

The programs build on the success of NYSCF’s Postdoctoral Fellowship program established in 2006 – the largest program of postdoctoral support for stem cell researchers in the United States – which has provided funding to 31 stem cell researchers to date.

The NYSCF Neuroscience Investigator Program's selection committee was chaired by Marc Tessier-Lavigne, PhD, President of The Rockefeller University.

"The group of applicants was exceptionally strong and we are thrilled with the opportunity to award grants to such talented young researchers," said Dr. Tessier-Lavigne. "These are the scientists who are changing our understanding of how the brain works and will be the future leaders in neuroscience research."

Dr. Tessier-Lavigne was joined on the jury by Dr. Anders Björklund, MD, PhD, Professor of Histology at the Wallenberg Neuroscience Center, University of Lund in Sweden; Dr. Catherine Dulac, PhD, Professor of Molecular and Cellular Biology and Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator at Harvard University; and Dr. Lorenz Studer, MD, Director of the Sloan-Kettering Center for Stem Cell Biology.

The NYSCF Stem Cell Investigator Program selection committee was chaired for the second year by Douglas A. Melton, PhD, co-director of the Harvard Stem Cell Institute.

"It was again incredibly difficult to choose the award winners from such an extraordinary group of scientists," said Dr. Melton. "It is with great pleasure that I see young scientists doing such advanced and translational science that has the potential to revolutionize modern medicine."

Other members of the Stem Cell Investigator jury included 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; and Irving Weissman, MD, Director of the Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine at the Stanford School of Medicine;

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

- **Paola Arlotta, PhD**, is an Assistant Professor at Harvard University in the Department of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology. Her laboratory focuses on the mammalian cerebral cortex, and her main interest is understanding and investigating the molecular pathways that direct the early specification of progenitors to generate distinct types of projection neurons during development. These cells degenerate in many diseases, such as Lou Gehrig's disease, and are permanently injured in spinal cord injury. She did her postdoctoral studies at Massachusetts General Hospital.
- **Ravindra Majeti, MD, PhD**, is an Assistant Professor at Stanford University School of Medicine in the Department of Hematology. Ravi is a physician-scientist researching cancer stem cells. Dr. Majeti postulates a new way of curing a patient with cancer by eliminating the cancer stem cells that are traditionally not killed during chemotherapy. His work would provide a novel therapeutic strategy for the treatment of acute lymphoblastic leukemia, the primary form of cancer his laboratory studies. He did his graduate studies at Stanford University before opening his lab there in May 2009.

- **Gabsang Lee, PhD, DVM**, a former NYSCF – Druckenmiller fellow, is an Assistant Professor at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. He works on differentiation and isolation methods of neural crest and through this he was able to model familial dysautonomia (FD) with induced pluripotent stem cells and identity symptom relevant phenotypes. Dr. Lee joined Johns Hopkins in September after doing his postdoctoral training at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

The NYSCF – Robertson Neuroscience Investigators are:

- **Ed Boyden, PhD**, is an Associate Professor at the MIT Media Lab. Since 2007 his laboratory has been working on tools that allow for in vivo analysis of the role that an ion channel plays in normal or pathological network dynamics. Dr. Boyden did his postdoctoral studies at Stanford University after receiving his PhD there. At Stanford he played a key role in the discovery of the field of optogenetics.
- **Christopher Gregg, PhD**, has been an Assistant Professor at the University of Utah since August of 2011. He studies the roles of imprinted genes in feeding circuits to gain deeper insights into the genetic and epigenetic pathways that influence feeding and motivated behaviors. Chris did his postdoctoral studies at Harvard University after receiving his PhD from the University of Calgary.
- **Takaki Komiyama, PhD**, began his work as a Professor at the University of California, San Diego in September 2010. He has developed a novel system to perform cellular functional imaging in mice during learning of a behavioral task. His group is pioneering a paradigm to use cutting edge imaging techniques in which they visualize cellular and subcellular plasticity in a large ensemble of neurons in the intact brain of mice during behavior and learning over many days. Dr. Komiyama did his graduate studies at Stanford University and his postdoctoral studies at Janelia Farm Research Campus, Howard Hughes Medical Institute.
- **Gaby Maimon, PhD**, started his laboratory at The Rockefeller University in January 2011, where he studies the decision-making of the brain. Specifically, he is looking to provide an explicit cellular mechanism for a simple behavioral decision – a fly choosing to change its flight trajectory. His research seeks to explain how behavioral choice arises from physiological interactions among neurons, and in the long term, to reveal fundamental new links between genes, cellular physiology and behavior. Dr. Maimon did his postdoctoral studies at California Institute of Technology after receiving his PhD in Neuroscience from Harvard University in 2005.

About The New York Stem Cell Foundation:

Founded in 2005, NYSCF conducts cutting edge research at its own independent laboratory and provides grants to outstanding investigators at other research institutions. NYSCF also invests in the next generation of stem cell researchers through The NYSCF Fellowship Program, The NYSCF Investigator Program, and The NYSCF – Robertson Prize. More information is available at www.nyscf.org.