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2005 NIH Director's Pioneer Award Recipients Announced

National Institutes of Health Director Elias A. Zerhouni, M.D., today named 13 new recipients of the NIH Director's Pioneer Award.

A key component of the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research, the Pioneer Award supports exceptionally creative scientists who take innovative approaches to major challenges in biomedical research. The award gives recipients the intellectual freedom to pursue groundbreaking new research directions that could have significant impact if successful but that, due to their novelty or other factors, also have inherently high risks of failure.

"The scientists we recognize with Pioneer Awards have far-ranging ideas that hold the potential to make truly extraordinary contributions to many fields of medical research," said Zerhouni. "The recipients reflect the talent and diversity of the impressive group of scientists who competed for the award. The strength of this group, and the willingness of a number of NIH components to contribute funds to the program, led us to make nearly twice as many awards as we originally planned. This speaks volumes about the exciting opportunities that lie ahead, and we look forward to seeing where the visionary concepts of our Pioneer Awardees lead."

The 2005 awardees work in diverse areas, including neuroscience, genetics, epidemiology, chemistry, stem cell biology, behavioral science, infectious diseases, and technology development. Six of the 13 are women and more than half are at relatively early stages of their careers (the associate professor level or below).

The new awardees, who will receive $500,000 in direct costs per year for five years, are:

Vicki L. Chandler, Ph.D., Regents' Professor of Plant Sciences and Molecular and Cellular Biology at the University of Arizona in Tucson, who studies the control of gene expression.

Hollis T. Cline, Ph.D., a professor and director of research at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory in Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y., who studies neural connectivity in the brain.

Leda Cosmides, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at the University of California, Santa Barbara, who applies evolutionary psychology to discover the design of the human mind and brain.

Titia de Lange, Ph.D., the Leon Hess professor and head of the Laboratory of Cell Biology and Genetics at The Rockefeller University in New York City, who studies chromosome caps called telomeres.

Karl Deisseroth, M.D., Ph.D., an assistant professor of bioengineering and psychiatry at Stanford University in Stanford, Calif., who develops and employs new technology to probe neural circuits in the brain.

Pehr A.B. Harbury, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Biochemistry at Stanford University School of Medicine in Stanford, Calif., who studies the chemical evolution of small molecules.

Erich D. Jarvis, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Neurobiology at Duke University Medical Center in Durham, N.C., whose research focuses on the molecular basis of vocal learning.

Thomas A. Rando, M.D., Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Neurology and Neurological Sciences at Stanford University School of Medicine, who studies the role of stem cells in tissue repair and

regeneration.

Derek J. Smith, Ph.D., a research associate in the Department of Zoology at the University of Cambridge in Cambridge, England, and a research scientist in virology at Erasmus Medical Center in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, who uses mathematics to study the influenza virus and other rapidly evolving infectious agents.

Giulio Tononi, M.D., Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Medical School, who studies the neural basis of consciousness and the function of sleep.

Clare M. Waterman-Storer, Ph.D., an associate professor in the Department of Cell Biology at The Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif., who studies how cells change shape and move.

Nathan D. Wolfe, D.Sc., an assistant professor in the Department of Epidemiology at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Md., who studies the emergence of infectious diseases.

Junying Yuan, Ph.D., a professor of cell biology at Harvard Medical School in Boston, Mass., who will explore the possible existence of a novel cellular mechanism that detects and removes misfolded, neurotoxic proteins.

The announcement of the 2005 Pioneer Award recipients occurred at the first annual NIH Director's Pioneer Award Symposium. This event featured individual talks and a roundtable discussion by the inaugural group of awardees, who were selected in September 2004.

The newest Pioneer Award recipients were selected from 840 scientists who underwent a streamlined but rigorous self-nomination and evaluation process that began in March 2005. After NIH staff determined the eligibility of each nominee, the first of three groups of distinguished outside experts identified the most highly competitive individuals in the pool. The second set of outside experts evaluated the 285 scientists in this group, focusing on their innovativeness and creativity, the importance of the scientific problem to be addressed, and the likelihood that the project's success would have a high impact on biomedical research. The evaluators also considered the appropriateness of the project for the Pioneer Award mechanism, including the requirement that it be distinct from other research by the investigator. These evaluators identified 20 scientists who were then interviewed at NIH by the third group of outside experts.

A final review was performed by the Advisory Committee to the Director, NIH, which made funding recommendations to the NIH Director based on the evaluations by the outside experts and programmatic considerations.

More information on the 2005 NIH Director's Pioneer Award recipients is at http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/pioneer/Recipients05.aspx. Details on the Pioneer Award program, including the names of the outside evaluators for the 2005 awards, are at http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/pioneer.

The NIH Roadmap is a series of far-reaching initiatives designed to transform the nation's medical research capabilities and speed the movement of research discoveries from the bench to the bedside. It provides a framework of the priorities the NIH must address in order to optimize its entire research portfolio and lays out a vision for a more efficient and productive system of medical research. For more information about the NIH Roadmap, please visit the Web site at http://nihroadmap.nih.gov.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — *The Nation's Medical Research Agency* — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit *http://www.nih.gov*.
