

May Updates: People and Places

Brain Prize awarded

The 2017 Brain Prize has been awarded to three researchers for their research into learning and the reward system of the brain. The trio, **Wolfram Schultz** of the University of Cambridge, and **Peter Dayan** and **Ray Dolan** of University College London, each studied the connections between dopamine and reward responses, with implications for normal—and compromised—decision making. Schultz used animal models to map the locations of dopamine neurons in the brain and test their reaction to reward and external stimuli. Dayan applied mathematical models, which Dolan followed up on with human trials showing human behavior is controlled by the same mechanisms as those observed in animal models.

The Brain Prize, totaling 1 million euros, has been awarded annually since 2010 by the Lundbeck Foundation. It will be presented by the Crown Prince of Denmark in Copenhagen on May 4.

Vium to partner with Japan's CIEA

Vium, a digital vivarium company based in San Mateo, California, has announced a new partnership with the **Central Institute for Experimental Animals (CIEA)**, a Japanese provider of animal models. The partnership will combine Vium's digital vivarium platform with CIEA's humanized mice, including the patented NOG[®] mice, a severely immune-compromised strain with transplantation and engraftment advantages over more traditionally used NOD/SCID mice. The initial focus of the partnership will be to develop a humanized model to study graft-versus-host disease (GvHD).

In a press release, Jun-ichi Hata, Research Director of CIEA, commented, "We are very impressed with Vium's Digital Vivarium..."

It is amazing to be able to watch and follow studies performed in California from our research facility in Japan." Vium's CEO and co-founder, Timothy Robertson, said, "We are excited to partner with CIEA, a world leader in developing humanized mice and disease models, and are gratified that the CIEA has recognized the value of our novel technology platform in preclinical research."

The models developed by the partnership will be offered by Vium as a fee-for-service to global clients.

New vets at ITR Laboratories Canada

ITR Laboratories Canada, a preclinical contract research organization based in Quebec, has announced that it has hired two new senior veterinary staff. **Abbas Fotovati** will join as senior veterinary scientist, responsible for the company's experimental and developmental veterinary services. Previously, Fotovati was a faculty member in the Department of Oncology and Department of Experimental Medicine and Medicinal Genetics at the University of British Columbia.

Stephen Groom will be tasked with expanding the company's pathology services as senior veterinary pathologist. Groom has worked in veterinary sciences and pathology for over 30 years, most recently as president of Halton Hills Pathology and Toxicology, Inc.

CRACK IT ups its awards

The NC3Rs CRACK IT Solutions program has increased its available funding to support collaborations identified through its platform. The previous scheme offered awards up to £30k for 12 months of research; that amount has been raised to £50k, in support of larger-scale projects. Applications are assessed quarterly.

CAREERS UPDATE

A paper published by **Joanna Makowska** and coauthor Daniel Weary of the University of British Columbia has been awarded the 2016 3Rs



Prize, awarded by the NC3Rs and sponsored by GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) to recognize publications advancing 3Rs science. The paper, published last June in Royal Society Open Science, investigated cage size in relation to laboratory rat welfare with an emphasis on providing opportunities for natural behaviors like burrowing, climbing, and standing upright.

The 3Rs prize includes a £28k grant and £2k personal award. Makowska commented in a press release, "It is an honor to have this work recognized by the NC3Rs. There is much more to do and the award from the NC3Rs and GSK will allow me to pursue this line of research in more depth."

Launching the Brain Ark

Gregory Berns, a neuroscientist at Emory University, is on the hunt for animal brains. He has recently launched the Brain Ark Project, an effort to create a digital archive of structural MRI data and three-dimensional reconstructions of white matter pathways. The project's goal is to include brain images from specimens of all major evolutionary taxa—beyond humans and common laboratory species. The project, which began scanning brains in December 2016, is looking for donations of both living and preserved specimens as well as scientists with access to MRI facilities. The database will be made publicly available.