November Updates: People and Places

Time flies

The 2017 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine has been jointly awarded to researchers Jeffrey Hall and Michael Rosbash at Brandeis University in Massachusetts and Michael Young at the Rockefeller University in New York for their work deciphering the molecular mechanisms behind the circadian rhythm. The trio used the fruit fly *Drosophila melanogaster* as their model organism to determine the genetics controlling the fly's ~24 hour internal biological clock. They will receive their medals at the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony on December 10 in Stockholm, Sweden, and will split the $1.1 million prize.

AAALAC awardees

Bryan Howard has been awarded the Bennett J. Cohen Award from AAALAC International in recognition of his long career in animal care and research. Howard received his veterinary degree from the University of Glasgow and a PhD from the University of Edinburgh. He also holds a master's of science in Laboratory Animal Science from the University of London and was recognized as a Laboratory Animal Specialist by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. In 1985, he became the Director of Animal Welfare at the University of Sheffield, where he established the pre-cursor to BioServ U.K. He was one of the first members of the European Section of AAALAC's Council on Accreditation and is currently a European Council Member Emeritus.

AAALAC International has also announced that Alan Palmer of the Francis Crick Institute in London is the 2017 UK recipient of the AAALAC International Fellowship Award. At the Crick Institute, Palmer is the Professional Development Manager and Named Training and Competency Officer, responsible for training up to 160 animal technicians and support staff. Previously, Palmer spent 24 years at the Medical Research Council in London in various animal welfare and technical positions. For UK recipients, the Fellowship funds a week-long internship at a US institute as well as attendance at the Institute of Animal Technology Congress.

A drug for the heart

Novo Biosciences, a regenerative medicine start-up founded in 2013 in Bar Harbor, ME, has received a $1.5 million Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant from the NIH National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to continue development of a drug candidate to repair cardiac tissue and heart function after acute heart attack. The treatment, based on a compound originally isolated from the dogfish shark at the MDI Biological Laboratory in the 1990s, has been successfully tested in zebrafish and mice; the SBIR grant will fund further testing in pig models of heart attack. Novo Biosciences will collaborate with the Louisiana State University Health Science Cardiovascular Center of Excellence in New Orleans. If the drug proves effective in pigs, "Novo Biosciences will seek an FDA Investigational New Drug authorization to conduct clinical trials in heart attack patients," says principal investigator and Novo Biosciences Chief Scientific Officer Voot Yin.

Peripheral neuropathy wins seed money

Sandra Rieger, a scientist at the MDI Biological Laboratory in Bar Harbor, ME, has received a one-year, $25,000 seed grant from the Maine Technology Institute (MTI) in Brunswick, ME, to study peripheral neuropathy with researchers at the University of New England in Biddeford, ME. Peripheral neuropathy, a condition that causes pain, tingling, and numbness in the extremities of 20–40 million Americans, currently has no treatment aside from managing pain symptoms. Working with a zebrafish model of peripheral neuropathy induced by Taxol (a chemotherapy agent that can cause the condition in humans), Rieger previously linked the enzyme MMP-13 to the condition and identified two compounds that inhibit MMP-13 activity as potential therapies. The MTI grant will support testing in rats. Rieger also has $1.8 million in grants from the NIH National Cancer Institute to continue research in zebrafish.

CAREERS UPDATE

Hanno Würbel, professor and chair of animal welfare at the Veterinary Public Health Institute at the University of Bern, has been awarded the 2017 Charles River Laboratories Excellence in Refinement Award. The award, sponsored by Charles River in cooperation with the Johns Hopkins Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing, awards $5000 dollars to recipients who have shown an "outstanding contribution to the development, promotion, and/or implementation of refinement alternatives." Würbel, who completed his doctorate degree at ETH Zurich in 1996 with a thesis on stereotypies in laboratory mice, was rewarded for his work to improve the housing and environmental enrichment of laboratory animals. The award was presented at the World Congress on Alternatives and Animals in the Life Sciences in August.