January Updates: People and Places

2017 Global 3Rs Awards

AAALAC International and the **IQ Consortium** have announced the 2017 recipients of the annual Global 3Rs Awards Program, which rewards individuals for their scientific contributions to animal welfare and ethics. In Europe, **Marcel Leist** of the University of Konstanz in Germany received the award for his 2016 publication in *Stem Cells Translational Medicine* titled "Stem Cell-Derived Immature Human Dorsal Root Ganglia Neurons to Identify Peripheral Neurotoxicants." In North America, American Preclinical Services Chief Scientific Officer **Mark Smith** was recognized for his 2017 publication in the *Journal of Medical Devices* titled "Thrombogenicity Testing of Medical Devices in a Minimally Heparinized Ovine Blood-Loop."

Both publications present alternatives to animal use for biomedical research and development; the awards will support continued work on the new technologies.

Digital news from JAX

The **Jackson Laboratory** is expanding its digital offerings. JAX will take part in the National Institutes of Health Data Commons Pilot, an effort to improve the availability of research data. JAX software for cardiomyopathy research will be part of a new online Disease Navigator, to be developed in conjunction with the Alliance of Genome Resources. Lead investigator and JAX professor Carol Bult commented on the Navigator in a press release: "It will make it easier for researchers to find the relevant connections between human genetics and genomics data and the expertly curated knowledge available for animal models in the Mouse Genomic Informatics and Rat Genome Databases." The Navigator will include animal data that has been cross-referenced to human data.

The nonprofit will also be collaborating with **Seven Bridges**, a biomedical data analysis company, to build a PDX (patient derived xenograft) Data Commons and Coordinating Center. The project, supported by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) will use cloud computing and bioinformatics approaches to organize PDX data generated by scientists involved with PDXNet, the PDX Development and Trial Centers Research Network. The PDX data will also be made interoperable with other NCI datasets currently available via the Seven Bridges Cancer Genomic Cloud.

CRISPR vs. Friedreich's Ataxia (FA)

The **Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance**, a nonprofit that supports FA research, has awarded its Kyle Bryant Translational Research Award to **CRISPR Therapeutics**, a Swiss genome editing company. FA is the most common form of ataxia, a neurological disorder that causes mobility issues and cardiac problems. The company will use the award to develop gene editing reagents targeted to the genetic causes of FA, which will then be tested in humanized animal models of FA in collaboration with Marek Napierala at the University of Alabama Birmingham.

Smart cages to cancer start-up

OncoSynergy, a biotech start-up in San Francisco focused on developing cancer therapies, is the first recipient of Vium's "Next Generation Disease Model Grant," which awards $100,000 in research services from the digital vivarium company. OncoSynergy will use Vium's Smart Housing™ system to study its lead monoclonal antibody therapeutic candidate in mouse models of ovarian cancer. OncoSynergy co-founder and CEO commented in a press release, "We believe the ability to continuously collect multimodal data noninvasively will be a game-changer for oncology studies, in which the current standard for decades has been binary…We are excited to work with Vium to develop this novel and more humane approach to studying animal models of orphan malignancies."

New projects for One Health

Member institutions of the **Clinical and Translational Science Award One Health Alliance (COHA)** have received funding for a series of new projects. COHA supports interdisciplinary research into diseases that affect both veterinary and human populations. According to the announcement, the University of Wisconsin-Madison will lead efforts to plan and coordinate a second Translational Research Summit on inherited cardiomyopathies; Colorado State University will lead a workshop to develop a unified veterinary record data management system; Tufts University will lead a One Health student event at the 2018 American Medical Student Association Convention; and Cornell University will lead efforts to improve biospecimen use across veterinary academic biobanks.

CAREERS UPDATE

Michael Yartsev, a neuroscientist at the University of California Berkeley and head of the NeuroBat Lab, has been awarded a 2017 Packard Fellowship for Science and Engineering. One of 18 awardees, Yartsev will receive $875,000 over the next five years.

Yartsev studies the link between brain development and vocal learning, the acquisition of language from listening to conspecifics. Bats, his animal model of choice, are one of the few mammalian species besides humans known for this ability.

Yartsev commented on the award, "The generous support from the Packard fellowship will allows us to take on this previously unexplored and very exciting scientific challenge…We hope that our studies will not only facilitate the investigation of normal language development but will also permit detailed examination of language learning impairments that affect both children and adults worldwide."