

July Updates: People and Places

Skills and knowledge transfer

The NC3Rs has awarded a total of £219,339 this year to three researchers through the 2018 NC3Rs Skills and Knowledge Transfer funding competition, designed to promote the post-development uptake of new 3Rs approaches. **Laura Scullion Hall** from the University of Stirling will partner with pharmaceutical company GSK to develop an online learning platform for research dog handling and welfare. **Jonathan Brown** from the University of Exeter will use the award to apply the TaiNI wireless EEG recording technology he developed with scientists at Eli Lilly through the NC3Rs CRACK IT Challenge to dementia research in mice. And funding for **Johnny Roughan** from Newcastle University will take him to the UK, Italy, and North America to support the adoption of non-aversive mouse handling methods.

Parkinson's collaboration continues

Charles River will continue working with **The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research**, a collaboration that has researched new therapies for Parkinson's Disease (PD) since 2011. Grants from the foundation will support two projects: a two-year effort to phenotype an alpha-synuclein knock-out model and an

alpha-synuclein A53T knock-in model; and the continued development of a pre-clinical model to test LRRk2 kinase inhibitors as a treatment for PD.

Easi editing

The University of Nebraska recently licensed its Easi-CRISPR gene editing technology to **Taconic Biosciences**. The CRISPR variant, developed by Masato Ohtsuka at the University of Tokyo and Channabasavaiah Gurumurthy at the University of Nebraska, enables the site-specific insertion of large sequences of DNA, an improvement to previous iterations limited to point mutations and constitutive knock-outs. Taconic will now have the rights to sell knock-in rodent models generated with Easi-CRISPR. John Couse, vice president of scientific services at Taconic, commented on the technology in a press release: "Combining the speed of CRISPR with larger genetic insertions allows complex projects typically requiring homologous recombination techniques to reduce project timelines by six months."

The research rodent supplier also announced that those models will be available for purchase through the **Scientist.com** marketplace. The website's CEO and founder, Kevin Lustig,

commented in a press release, "The partnership enables Scientist.com users to easily access innovative rodent models generated with the latest CRISPR technology."

Understanding aging fat

Kristy Townsend, a neurobiologist at the University of Maine in Orono, has received a three-year \$750,000 grant from the American Heart Association to study links between fat tissue and cardiovascular and metabolic diseases in aging mouse models. Recent work from her lab has revealed evidence of "adipose neuropathy"—fat tissue losing its nerve supply—as the tissue ages, and with obesity and diabetes in mice and human tissue samples. She'll be collaborating with Jackson Laboratory faculty member David Harrison, who also studies the mechanisms of aging and is one of three lead investigators of the NIH National Institute of Aging's Interventions Testing Program.

New president at MDI

The **MDI Biological Laboratory**, a biomedical research institute in Bar Harbor, ME that focuses on regeneration and aging, has a new president. The board of trustees and staff has appointed nephrologist **Hermann Haller** to the post, succeeding Kevin Strange in his nine-year tenure as president. Haller received his medical degree at the Free University of Berlin and has been a faculty member at the MDI Biological Laboratory since 2007. He commented in a press release, "The MDI Biological Laboratory has played an enormously important role in our understanding of kidney, cardiac, vascular and liver diseases over the last 120 years and I look forward to working with the board, faculty, visiting faculty, staff and our many supporters in continuing to build on this extraordinary legacy as we seek to understand our ability to repair the damage caused by disease and injury." □

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Careers update

University of Southern California Davis School of Veterinary Medicine dean **Michael Lairmore** has been appointed to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Council of Councils. Since it was established in 2007, the Council of Councils, a group of about thirty multidisciplinary scientists, has advised the NIH Director on the policies and activities of the Division of Program Coordination, Planning, and Strategic Initiatives.

Lairmore received his Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from the University of Missouri at Columbia, and also holds a PhD in experimental pathology from Colorado State University. He has served as dean of the veterinary school since 2011.

Lairmore commented in a press release, "As a veterinarian with a One Health background, I feel that I can bring a unique perspective to the group," adding that he is "proud to represent UC Davis at the national level." Lairmore is currently the only veterinarian on the Council, but follows another Davis veterinary school alum, associate dean Kent Lloyd, who served from 2011–2014.

Lairmore will serve a five-year term on the Council, which began in May.