

News Release



University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania Health System

May 30, 2006

CONTACT: Kate Olderman
(215) 349-8369
kate.olderman@uphs.upenn.edu

PENN Psychologist Receives Grant to Study Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Alcohol Dependence
Penn Investigators First to Examine Efficacy of Treatment Strategies

(Philadelphia, PA) - Over the next three years, **Edna B. Foa, PhD**, Professor of Psychology in Psychiatry at the **University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine**, will receive \$1.7 million from the National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to continue her groundbreaking study of treatment strategies for individuals who suffer from both post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and alcohol dependence (AD).

The goal of the study is to examine the effectiveness of treatments for the reduction of PTSD symptoms and alcohol consumption. Treatments include cognitive behavior therapy for PTSD alone; Naltrexone medication for alcohol alone; and combining cognitive behavior therapy for PTSD with Naltrexone for alcohol. "Because of the high rate of comorbidity of AD and PTSD, and the functional impairment associated with these disorders, it is crucial that we identify effective treatments," said Foa.

Foa and her co-investigators from Penn's Department of Psychiatry - Charles O'Brien, MD, PhD; David Riggs, PhD; and Joseph Volpicelli, MD, PhD - are the first to examine systematically the efficacy of treatment strategies for patients with AD and PTSD. Previous studies of PTSD have routinely excluded patients with AD on the assumption that the presence of AD would interfere with treatment for PTSD. Although treatment studies of AD have not routinely excluded patients with PTSD, they have found that patients with PTSD did not benefit from treatment as much as those without PTSD.

The research funded by this grant will capitalize on the unique expertise of two internationally renowned centers at Penn - the Treatment Research (TRC) and the Center for the Treatment and Study of Anxiety (CTSA) "The findings from our collaboration will provide the much-needed guidelines for treating this population," said Foa.

Foa's international expertise in this area was recognized once again with her recent receipt of the Fulbright Senior Specialist Award. This award will allow Foa to spend the month of June at Haifa University where she will work closely with the faculty of the School of Social Work teaching graduate students and consulting on research projects to study the effects of traumatic experiences and their treatments. "I am honored to receive this award. It will provide me the opportunity to disseminate my work on the treatment of PTSD that I have developed and have found very effective in helping people recover from their trauma and resume their functioning," said Foa.

###

***PENN Medicine** is a \$2.9 billion enterprise dedicated to the related missions of medical education, biomedical research, and high-quality patient care. PENN Medicine consists of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine (founded in 1765 as the nation's first medical school) and the University of Pennsylvania Health System.*

Penn's School of Medicine is ranked #2 in the nation for receipt of NIH research funds; and ranked #3 in the nation in U.S. News & World Report's most recent ranking of top research-oriented medical schools. Supporting 1,400 fulltime faculty and 700 students, the School of Medicine is recognized worldwide for its superior education and training of the next generation of physician-scientists and leaders of academic medicine.

The University of Pennsylvania Health System includes three hospitals [Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, which is consistently ranked one of the nation's few "Honor Roll" hospitals by U.S. News & World Report; Pennsylvania Hospital, the nation's first hospital; and Penn Presbyterian Medical Center]; a faculty practice plan; a primary-care provider network; two multispecialty satellite facilities; and home care and hospice.

This release is available online at http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/news/News_Releases/may06/PTSDgrant.htm