

Lombardi One of Seven New Tobacco Research Centers Established by NIDA, NCI, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Researchers at Georgetown University Medical Center and the Lombardi Cancer Center are among a select few whom have been awarded significant funding to study new ways to combat tobacco use and nicotine addiction.

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the National Cancer Institute (NCI), and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) have awarded grants to seven academic research institutions to establish transdisciplinary research centers devoted to investigating new ways to combat tobacco use and nicotine addiction. The institutions selected as Transdisciplinary Tobacco Use Research Centers (TTURCs) will receive more than \$14 million from NIDA and NCI for the first year of a five-year project. RWJF will provide an additional \$14 million over five years to support improved communications and policy development at the TTURCs.

In the past, research grants have focused on narrowly defined components of tobacco use and nicotine addiction, treatment or prevention, notes Dr. Jaylan Turkkan, Chief of NIDA's Behavioral Science Research Branch and coordinator of NIDA's TTURC efforts. The transdisciplinary approach will bring together collaborators who will have the freedom to investigate wider aspects of nicotine addiction, such as factors that influence smoking initiation, and to study the issues at levels ranging from genetics to peer interactions, Dr. Turkkan says.

The transdisciplinary centers represent an important new approach to research, says NIDA Director Dr. Alan I. Leshner. "Tobacco use and nicotine addiction are incredibly complex subjects, and transdisciplinary investigation can give us the broad perspective we need to understand the ecology of this addiction, not just one aspect of its environment. This approach will lead to the development of new interventions that will help prevent tobacco use, particularly among teens and younger children."

The TTURC concept evolved from informal conversations at a July 1998 conference "Addicted to Nicotine," cosponsored by NIDA and RWJF. At that meeting, researchers and policymakers from NCI, NIDA and RWJF discussed the advantages of a transdisciplinary approach to research on tobacco use and nicotine addiction. Several months later, NCI's Tobacco Research Implementation Group recommended transdisciplinary centers as the highest of its tobacco use research priorities. Within a year, NIDA and NCI jointly issued requests for applications from academic centers interested in developing transdisciplinary centers. The first TTURCs awards were announced in October 1999.

The centers, principal investigators and research areas are:

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania/Georgetown University,
Washington, D.C.

Principal Investigator: Dr. Caryn Lerman

Research Area: identification of biobehavioral basis of smoking initiation, smoking
treatment, and harm from tobacco exposure.

The Brown University Center for Behavioral and Preventive Medicine at the Miriam
Hospital, Providence, Rhode Island

Principal Investigator: Dr. David Abrams

Research Area: identification of early childhood and lifetime psychiatric factors that
determine smoking initiation, dependence, use patterns, cessation, and response to
cessation treatment;

The University of California, Irvine

Principal Investigator: Dr. Frances Leslie

Research Area: identification of predictors of nicotine addiction in animals and tobacco
susceptibility and use in humans.

The University of Southern California, Los Angeles

Principal Investigator: Dr. C. Anderson Johnson

Research Area: preventing tobacco use among youth of diverse cultures;

University of Minnesota, Minneapolis

Principal Investigator: Dr. Dorothy Hatsukami

Research Area: treating smokers who have been resistant to conventional methods of
intervention or who have not been previously targeted.

University of Wisconsin Medical School, Madison

Principal Investigator: Dr. Michael Fiore

Research Area: relapse to tobacco use.

Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut

Principal Investigator: Dr. Stephanie O'Malley

Research Area: treatment of tobacco addiction.

Additional information about the TTURCs can be found on the NIDA home page at
www.drugabuse.gov