

Tuesday, October 6, 2015

# NIH recruits five Lasker Clinical Research Scholars

The National Institutes of Health has selected five researchers as new Lasker Clinical Research Scholars as part of a joint initiative with the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation to foster the next generation of great clinical scientists.

This highly competitive program provides talented, early-stage researchers the opportunity to carry out independent clinical and translational research for five to seven years at the NIH. The researchers also have the possibility of additional years of financial support, at the NIH or an NIH-funded research institution, upon project review.

The scholars are Rebecca Brown, M.D.; Christian Hinrichs, M.D.; Beth Kozel, M.D., Ph.D.; Armin Raznahan, M.D., Ph.D.; and Natalie Shaw, M.D. Kozel was recruited from St. Louis Children's Hospital and Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis; Shaw was recruited from Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School in Boston. The others were recruited from time-limited assistant clinical investigator positions within the NIH. They join five NIH Lasker Scholars hired since 2012.

"NIH hopes to serve as a catalyst for a national effort to nurture clinician-scientists by providing these talented scholars with the opportunities and protected research time they need to thrive," said NIH Director Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D. "With 10 total scholars, it's thrilling to see the Lasker Scholar Program vision taking flight."

Brown works in the Diabetes, Endocrinology, and Obesity Branch of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. Her laboratory studies extreme insulin resistance as well as the role of leptin, the "satiety hormone," on metabolism and weight gain. By studying rare diseases of insulin and leptin regulation, Brown hopes to provide insights and ultimately treatments for common conditions such as obesity and the metabolic syndrome.

Hinrichs works in the Experimental Transplantation and Immunology Branch of the Center for Cancer Research in the National Cancer Institute. He researches

immunotherapy for HPV+ cancers including cervical, oropharyngeal, anal, vulvar, vaginal, and penile malignancies. Hinrichs laboratory has discovered personalized T cell and gene therapies for HPV+ cancers. As a Lasker Scholar, he will be developing these treatments in clinical trials, investigating why they work in some patients and not in others, and working to discover additional new treatments.

Kozel is a geneticist and a matrix and vascular biologist at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute. She seeks to better understand the factors that influence vascular disease severity in patients with rare connective tissue disorders. The majority of her work is focused on the study of two elastin insufficiency-related diseases: Williams syndrome, a neurodevelopmental condition, and isolated supraaortic stenosis.

Raznahan leads the Developmental Neurogenomics Unit in the Child Psychiatry Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health. He combines neuroimaging and genomic and systems-biology approaches to map human brain development and genetically-defined disorders that increase risk for neuropsychiatric impairment. This work aims to identify sets of genes and brain systems that can account for the emergence of a shared behavioral syndrome (e.g., autism) across distinct genetic disorders.

Shaw conducts research in the Clinical Research Branch at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and is also an adjunct faculty member at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine. She is interested in the environmental and genetic control of pubertal development and, specifically, in the effect of sleep disruption and obesity on reproductive hormone secretion. As a Lasker Scholar, Shaw's work will focus on the genetics behind the timing of pubertal development in adolescent girls.

Lasker Scholars have access to the NIH Clinical Center, the largest hospital in the world devoted to clinical research. The Lasker Foundation will provide additional developmental support to the scholars while they are working at NIH by funding travel to scientific meetings and providing the opportunity to participate in selected foundation activities, including the Lasker Award ceremonies.

"The Lasker Clinical Research Scholars is an innovative program that supports accomplished young researchers as they work to discover new knowledge and develop therapies and cures," said Lasker Foundation President Claire Pomeroy, M.D., M.B.A.

"Providing career pathways for the next generation of scientists is a priority for the Lasker Foundation, and we are very pleased that these outstanding young investigators are joining this program. We look forward to the medical breakthroughs that will be made by these talented individuals."

The Lasker Clinical Research Scholar Program honors the contributions of Mary and Albert Lasker to the NIH and to the overall biomedical community. Learn more about the program at <http://www.nih.gov/science/laskerscholar>.

About the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation: Founded in 1942, the Albert and Mary Lasker Foundation envisions a healthier world through medical research. It seeks to improve health by accelerating support for medical research through recognition of scientific excellence, public education, and advocacy. For much of the 20th century, the Foundation was led by Mary Lasker, who was America's most prominent citizen-activist for public investment in medical research. She is widely credited with motivating the White House and Congress to greatly expand federal funding for medical research, particularly through the NIH. For more information about the Lasker Foundation and its programs, visit <http://www.laskerfoundation.org>.

**About the National Institutes of Health (NIH):** NIH, the nation's medical research agency, includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH is the primary federal agency conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and is investigating the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit [www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov).

## **Contact**

NIH Office of Communications  
301-496-5787

Dr. Maya Brainard  
212-286-0222