



# Miami VA Research & Development

Issue 9

Bruce W. Carter Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center

April, 2011



**VA NATIONAL RESEARCH WEEK MAY 2-6, 2011**  
DISCOVERY & COLLABORATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL HEALTH CARE

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The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs will celebrate National Research Week May 2 -6, 2011. **“Discovery & Collaboration for Exceptional Health Care”** is the theme for 2011, emphasizing the translation of research findings into advancements in Veterans’ health care; along with the ongoing collaboration between VA, its academic affiliates, and other federal agencies.

As part of the nationwide observance, the Miami VA Medical Center will conduct Research Week activities on May 2-3. A special Grand Round by Keynote Speaker, Dr. Hermes Florez, will be held on May 2 in the Research Conference Room 207. Dr. Florez was recently selected as the PI for the Miami VA site in the Million Veterans Program (MVP). As the name implies, this is a VA-initiated partnership with veterans to better understand how genes affect health and illness in order to improve health care for veterans. The talk will focus on Dr. Florez’s involvement in the MOVE and Million Veteran Programs. On May 3, the Research Service Office will host the 4th annual poster session. All research investigators are welcome to submit abstracts for this event. Along with an abstract investigators should include the names of collaborating representatives and compelling examples of translational research involved in their projects, if applicable.

To participate in the 4th annual poster session please submit a one-page abstract describing your proposed project. The Abstract Submission Form can be found on Page 13 or to request a copy, please e-mail Isabel Perez at [iperez4@med.miami.edu](mailto:iperez4@med.miami.edu) or [Isabel.Perez1@va.gov](mailto:Isabel.Perez1@va.gov).

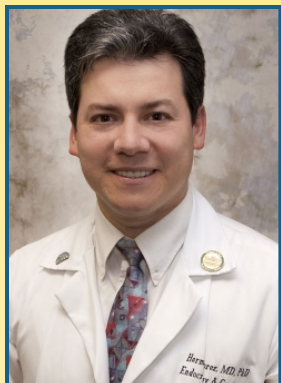
## MIAMI VA RESEARCH SERVICE WILL RECEIVE SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT

The Miami VA Research Service will receive substantial support from the VA medical center this year. Salary support for seven full-time equivalents (FTE) amounting to over \$600,000 will be transferred to the Chief of Staff as a part of the Medical Care Appropriation.

This decision by the Patient Centered Medical Center Leadership Board recognizes the great contribution of Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) funds by the Research Service to the Medical Center. It in effect “gives back” a small fraction of the



## HERMES FLOREZ, MD, PHD RECEIVES MAJOR GRANT



**Hermes Florez, MD, PhD**  
Associate Professor of Medicine & Epidemiology  
Divisions of Geriatric Medicine and Endocrinology  
University of Miami Miller School of Medicine  
GRECC Associate Clinical Director  
Miami VA Healthcare System

The \$2.9 million grant that Hermes Florez, M.D., Ph.D. received was the second largest grant awarded to the Miller School under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) that President Obama pushed through Congress in February 2009 to mend the economy.

Dr. Florez said his grant will build on the lessons learned from the Miller School’s previous diabetes prevention research and the Veterans Affairs Diabetes Trial. Specifically, he and his team of GRECC and UM investigators will test the use of peer counselors and technology to implement the findings of the Diabetes Prevention Program. Conducted at the Diabetes Research Institute, the prevention study showed that older prediabetics who adopted exercise routines and healthier diets experienced a 71 percent risk reduction over a three-year period. The long-term follow-up recently showed a four-year delay over a decade in the onset of the disease.

According to Dr. Florez, the cost of providing the case managers, exercise physiologists, nutritionists and nurses who helped study participants make those lifestyle changes is too high to implement the strategy on a broad scale. As a result, he sought his grant to train peer counselors – patients who already have succeeded at delaying or reducing their diabetes through exercise and diet – to help others 60 and older do the same by, for example, leading exercise classes or sharing prevention messages, as done in the Miami VA Healthcare System with the MOVE! weight management and Enhance Fitness programs.

*Continue on Page 3*

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

### Ninel Gregori, MD



**Ninel Gregori, MD**  
Assistant Professor Of Clinical Ophthalmology  
Bascom Palmer Eye Institute  
University of Miami Miller School of Medicine  
Chief of Ophthalmology Section  
Miami VA Healthcare System

Dr. Ninel Gregori, Chief of Ophthalmology at the Miami VA Medical Center, is a principal investigator on several prospective and retrospective clinical studies, including:

1. Prospective randomized clinical trial comparing patient comfort with two anesthetic preparations of the eye for intraocular (intravitreal) injections. This trial is aimed at deciphering which anesthetic method results in less ocular discomfort to the patient after eye injections and yields less ocular surface irritation. The trial is near completion. Results were presented at the 2011 Angiogenesis conference in Miami and have been accepted for a poster presentation at the Association of VA Surgeons meeting in April 2011 and the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology meeting in May 2011.

2. Retrospective study analyzing progression of retinopathy in diabetic patients after uncomplicated cataract surgery. This study attempts to assess the degree and the rate of diabetic macular edema progression after uneventful cataract surgery in patients with diabetes mellitus.

3. Retrospective study looking at the anatomic features and visual outcomes after epiretinal membrane surgery in patients with history of previous retinal detachment repair. This study will describe retinal anatomy and visual improvement after removal of epiretinal membranes secondary to retinal detachment surgery. The results of this study are being submitted to the American Society of Retinal Specialists meeting in Boston this year.



## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

### A Message from Dr. Herman Cheung, Editor

Dear Colleague,

I wish to introduce my new Ebook entitled **Stem Cell & Regenerative Medicine**. This Ebook should be extremely useful for researchers and working professionals in the field of regenerative medicine and stem cell science. I am confident that after reading the synopsis and content description, you will recommend this book to your colleagues, students and library. Alternatively, you may want to purchase individual chapters of my Ebook: for more details [click here](#).

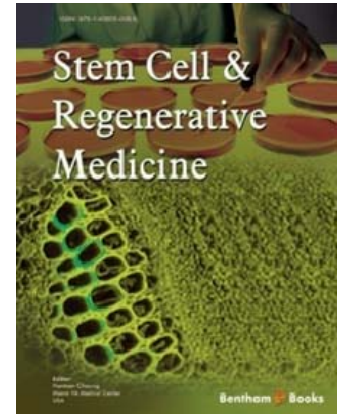
A special 30% discount offer off the list price of the Ebook is valid for a limited time. To make use of this special limited offer just [click here](#) and quote discount code: **ABCD09**

Sincerely,

Herman Cheung

### Stem Cell & Regenerative Medicine

The potential use of stem cells in transplantation for the purpose of tissue regeneration is an exciting area of research currently undergoing rapid development. Implantation of human embryonic or autologous, ex vivo-expanded adult stem cells, particularly in older individuals, could circumvent the limited availability of organs/tissues as well as prevent complications related to immune rejection and disease transmission. Musculoskeletal tissue degeneration is closely associated with aging. Strategies employing autologous adult MSCs from older individuals for transplantation in order to regenerate their own ailing organ or tissues require that we vigorously define MSCs capacity to maintain growth potential and differentiation potential into the desirable cell lineages. We are currently restricted by the limited knowledge about physical parameters, such as biomechanical forces, that influence MSC growth and differentiation capacities. This is particularly important for MSCs isolated from older individuals, for whom little information is available. This special volume aims to serve as an impetus in generating more interest among stem cell researchers and biotechnologists to improve and develop the cell-based therapies of damaged tissue using stem cells.



**Fully Downloadable**

**Ebook Price**  
US\$ 115

**Publication Date**  
2010

**eISBN**  
978-1-60805-008-6

### Research Service will receive substantial support

*Continued from Page 1*



**Luis Gonzalez**  
Administrative Officer for Research  
Miami VA Healthcare System

indirect funds generated by grants so that the research appropriation supports research as intended. The Research Service has sought this support for some time. Finally achieving it is an important sign of success.

This support would not have been possible without the around the clock, shuttle diplomacy of Luis Gonzalez, AO/R. Our Service also gratefully thanks the Medical Center CFO, Bill Lysaght, Chief of Staff, Dr. Vincent DeGennaro and Director, Ms. Mary Berrocal for their faithful support in this effort.

The decision recognizes the critical role of our human research protection program in enhancing patient safety, and it validates the worth of our research programs for veterans' health.

The return of VERA funds to the Research Service is an important milestone in our development as a nationally recognized program.



## IN THE NEWS

### Growth Hormone-Releasing Hormone Antagonist Reduces Prostate Size in BPH



*“Our findings suggest that the GHRH antagonists are effective at shrinking the enlarged prostate without the adverse side effects of current drugs,” says Schally.*

*“The importance of this study is that it points to a new therapy that can be more effective than what is currently available.”*

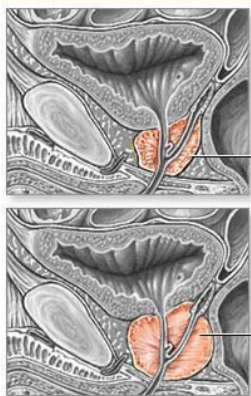
Researchers at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine have developed a potential treatment for one of the most common urologic problems in men – benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). The condition is a progressive hyperplasia or enlargement of the prostate gland that affects 70 percent of men who are over 60 years old. The current treatments are not completely effective and carry severe side effects, creating a clear need for more effective therapies.

First author Ferenc G. Rick, MD, research assistant professor of pathology at the Miller School, and member of the Endocrine, Polypeptide and Cancer Institute at the Miami Veterans Affairs Medical Center along with co-senior authors of the study, Andrew V. Schally, Ph.D., M.D.h.c., D.Sc.h.c., the 1977 Nobel Prize winner for Physiology or Medicine, Distinguished Medical Research Scientist of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Distinguished Professor of Pathology, and Norman Block, M.D., professor of pathology, urology, oncology and biomedical engineering and the L. Austin Weeks Family Professor of Urologic Research, developed an approach that is more effective in animal models, without the unwanted side effects. Their findings are published in the February 14 online edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Despite its prevalence, scientists have not fully understood the pathogenesis of BPH. The enlargement of the prostate is commonly associated with bothersome lower urinary tract symptoms such as a weak stream and urgent and more frequent urination that gradually becomes more pronounced.

Current therapies have not been completely effective for BPH, leaving some patients to cope with side effects such as low blood pressure and in some cases impotence. Some patients must resort to surgery, most commonly a transurethral resection of the prostate which removes the enlarged portion.

In previous studies, Schally and other teams of researchers have demonstrated that synthetic antagonists of growth hormone-releasing hormone (GHRH) strongly inhibit the growth of human tumors by suppressing growth factors. Rick explains that “for the first time, we demonstrated that GHRH antagonists can shrink prostates in an experimental model of BPH.” Rick, Schally and Block evaluated the effects of three GHRH antagonists (JMR-132, MIA-313 and MIA-459) on rat models with BPH. Using several methods, the researchers showed the presence of a receptor for GHRH in the prostate, which the antagonists were able to target. The three GHRH antagonists used reduced the size of the prostate by more than 21 percent in some cases, far more than finasteride, a common therapy now used. “Not only did the antagonists shrink the prostate,” says Block, “they also affected multiple factors related to growth and inflammation that are present in BPH.”

The researchers will next turn their attention toward developing a clinical trial using these GHRH antagonists in BPH patients. Block is hopeful that will happen in the next two to three years.



Normal Prostate

Benign Prostate Hypertrophy

## EYE RESEARCH AT THE BRUCE CARTER VETERANS AFFAIRS HOSPITAL



**Anna K. Junk, M.D.**

Director Glaucoma Service  
 Miami Veterans Healthcare System  
 Assistant Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology  
 Bascom Palmer Eye Institute  
 University of Miami Miller School of Medicine

The Division of Ophthalmology in the Department of Surgery offers specialty eye care to veterans residing in Miami-Dade and beyond. We strive to provide outstanding clinical service to improve every veteran's sight. Cataract, diabetic retinopathy and glaucoma are the three major causes of visual disability in our patients.

Dr. Anna K. Junk, Director of Glaucoma Service at the Miami Veterans Affairs Hospital is inspired by her clinical work to further the understanding of glaucoma in her research with the goal to find a better treatment for the permanently blinding condition. Glaucoma affects 1 – 2 % of white Americans and 4 – 8 % of black Americans. Fifty % of patients with glaucoma in the U.S. are undiagnosed. Glaucoma is the second leading cause of blindness in the U.S. After 20 years, the incidence of blindness is 27% in one eye and 9% in both eyes in glaucoma patients. 84,000 – 116,000 people in U.S. are bilaterally blind from glaucoma. Current treatment aims at lowering the intraocular pressure, with eye drops, laser procedures or surgery. The patient is followed in regular intervals with visual field testing to detect peripheral loss of vision and optic nerve imaging. Success of

that the intraocular pressure rises in response to blockage of the eye's natural outflow system, the sponge-like trabecular meshwork.

With approval of the VA-IRB Dr. Junk's research team is working to unravel the mechanisms of outflow resistance in the trabecular meshwork at the protein level. Veterans with primary open angle glaucoma who require trabeculectomy surgery to participate are eligible to enroll. Protein quantity and regulation, activity and post-translational modulation with lipid peroxidation products are studies using surgical specimen that are ordinarily discarded. With the assent of the patient the glaucoma specialists Drs. Junk and Wellik collect a piece of scleral tissue (trabecular meshwork) at the time of the trabeculectomy surgery that is usually discarded. In the laboratory, Drs. Anna Junk, Sarah Wellik and Sanjoy Bhattacharya assembled a research team to analyze the tissue. Using RNA analysis, proteomic studies and mass spectrometry, the team is searching characterize candidate proteins indentified in preliminary studies. Changes quantity and/or activity in glaucomatous trabecular meshwork are indicative of a pathological role in glaucoma. The analysis of glaucomatous trabecular meshwork modulation by protein accumulations will contribute to our understanding of increased outflow resistance in this disease.

Preliminary results of this work were presented in 2009 and 2010 at the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology meeting in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, and at the 2011 American Glaucoma Society meeting in Dana Point, CA .

Dr. Junk's team future goal is to use to use the newly gained understanding from this study to develop new therapies for glaucoma.

medical glaucoma treatment is heavily dependent on patient cooperation with drop instillation. Glaucoma is linked to 20 different genes but the details of the disease on a molecular level are poorly understood and a causative therapeutic approach is not available. Current theory assumes



## PUBLICATIONS

### Ophthalmology

A. K. Junk, M. Goel, T. Mundorf, E. J. Rockwood, S. K. Bhattacharya. *Decreased carbohydrate metabolism enzyme activities in the glaucomatous trabecular meshwork*. Mol Vis. 2010, 16:1286-1291

Full text available for free at: <http://www.molvis.org/molvis/v16/a142>

B. Govindarajan, A. Junk, M. Algeciras, R.G. Salomon, S.K. Bhattacharya. *Increased isolevuglandin-modified proteins in glaucomatous astrocytes*. Mol Vis. 2009, 15:1079-91

Full text available for free at: <http://www.molvis.org/molvis/v15/a114/>

R. Picciani, A.K. Junk, S.K. Bhattacharya. *Technical Brief: a novel strategy for enrichment of trabecular meshwork protease proteome*. Mol Vis. 2008, 14: 871-877

Full text available for free at: <http://www.molvis.org/molvis/v14/a104/>

### Pathology

Tran, M. *P2 receptor stimulation induced amyloid precursor protein production and secretion in rat cortical astrocytes*.

Neuroscience Letters, 492(3): 155-159.

### Pulmonology

Jackson, RM. *Development and utility of pirfenidone in the treatment of idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis: Review of preclinical science and recent clinical trials*. Accepted for Transplant Research and Risk Management.

### VA Endocrine, Polypeptide & Cancer Institute

#### Peer Review Journals

Liu SV, Schally AV, Hawes D, Xiong S, Fazli L, Gleave M, Cai J, Groshen S, Brands F, Engel J, and Pinski J. *Expression of receptors for luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone (LH-RH) 9in prostate cancers following therapy with LH-RH agonists*. Clin Cancer Research 2010 16(18):4675-4680.

Banks WA, Morley JE, Farr SA, Price TO, Ercal N, Vidaurre I, Schally AV. *Positive effects of chronic administration of an antagonist of growth hormone releasing hormone on telomerase activity, oxidative stress, longevity, and aspects of aging in SAMP8 mice*. PNAS 2010; 107(51):22272-77

Rick F, Schally AV, Block NL, Nadji M, Halmos G, Perez R, Vidaurre I, Zarandi M, Varga JL, and Szalontay L. *Antagonists of growth hormone-releasing hormone (GHRH) reduce prostate size in experimental benign prostatic hyperplasia*. PNAS 2011; 108(9):3755-3760.

Rozsa B, Nadji M, Schally A, Dezso B, Flasko T, Toth G, Mile M, Block N, Gabor H. *Receptors for luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone (LHRH) in benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) as potential molecular targets for therapy with LHRH antagonist Cetrorelix* The Prostate 71:445-452 (2011)

#### In Press

Abdel Wahab M, Schally AV, Rick FG, Szalontay L, Block N, Jorda M, Diaz A, Mahmoud O, Markoe A, Shi Y-F, Reiner T, Zarandi M, Duncan R. *Antagonists of growth hormone releasing hormone given before whole body radiation. Lead to radioprotection and organ-specific changes in the expression of angiogenesis*. Int J Rad Onc:

Klukovits A, Schally AV, Szalontay L, Vidaurre I, Papadia A, Zarandi M, Varga J, Block NL, Halmos G. *Novel antagonists of growth hormone releasing hormone (GHRH) inhibit growth and vascularization of human experimental ovarian cancers*. Cancer:

Kiaris H, Block NL, Papavassiliou G, Schally Av. *GHRH and wound healing*” Communicative & Integrative Biology. Accepted for publication.

Kiaris H, Chatzistamou I, Papavassiliou A, Schally AV. *Growth hormone-releasing hormone (GH-RH): not only neurohormone*. Trends in Endocrinology and Metabolism: Accepted for publication

Szilasi M, Buglyo A, Treszl A, Kiss L, Schally AV, Halmos G. *Expression of mRNA for Vasoactive intestinal Peptide (VIP) receptors in human lung cancer*. International J of Oncology: Submitted

### Miami Project to Cure Paralysis

Mary Eaton, Eva Widerstrom-Noga, Stacey Q. Wolf. *Subarachnoid transplant of the human neuronal hNT2.19 serotonergic cell line attenuates behavioral hypersensitivity without affecting motor dysfunction after severe contusive spinal cord injury*. Neurology Research International accepted for publication.



## PUBLICATIONS

## Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers

Cherniack EP, Florez HJ, Hollis BW, Roos BA, Troen BR, Levis S. *The Response of Elderly Veterans to Daily Vitamin D3 Supplementation of 2,000 IU: A Pilot Efficacy Study.* J Am Geriatr Soc 59:28-90, 2011-03-2

Dang S, Sanchez A, Oropesa L, Roos BA, Florez H. *Telehealth-Assisted Care Coordination of Older Veterans with Type 2 Diabetes Lowers Coronary Heart Disease Risk Despite Clinical Inertia.* Diabetes Technol Ther 12:995-1001, 2010

Andrade AD, Bagri A, Zaw K, Roos BA, Ruiz JG. *Avatar-Mediated Training in the Delivery of Bad News in a Virtual World.* J Palliat Med 13:1415-12, 2010

Golden AG, Tewary S, Qadri S, Zaw K, Ruiz JG, Roos BA. *The Positive Attitudes and Perceptions of Care Managers About Advance Directives.* Am J Hosp Palliat Care 28:98-101, 2011

Rahnemai-Azar A, D'Ippolito G, Gomez LA, Reiner T, Vazquez-Padron RI, Perez-Stable C, Roos BA, Pham SM, Schiller PC. *Human Marrow-Isolated Adult Multilineage-Inducible (MIAMI) Cells Protect Against Peripheral Vascular Ischemia in a Mouse Model.* Cytotherapy 13:179-92, 2011

Delcroix GJ, Garbayo E, Sindji L, Thomas O, Vanpouille-Box C, Schiller PC, Montero-Menei CN. *The Therapeutic Potential of Human Multipotent Mesenchymal Stomal Cells Combined with Pharmacologically Active Microcarriers Transplanted in Hemi-Parkinsonian Rats.* Biomaterials 32:1560-73, 2011

Roger M, Clavreul A, Venier-Julienne MC, Passirani C, Sindji L, Schiller P, Montero-Menei C, Menei P. *Mesenchymal Stem Cells as Cellular Vehicles for Delivery of Nanoparticles to Brain Tumors.* Biomaterials 31:8393-8401, 2010

Rai P, Young JJ, Burton DG, Giribaldi MG, Onder TT, Weinberg RA. *Enhanced Elimination of Oxidized Guanine Nucleotides Inhibits Oncogenic RAS-Induced DNA Damage and Premature Senescence.* Oncogene 30:1489-96, 2011

Lokeshwar GL. *Chemically Modified Non-Antimicrobial Tetracyclines are Multifunctional Drugs Against Advanced Cancers.* Pharmacol Res 63:146-50, 2011

Farzadfar F, Finucane MM, Danaei G, et al. (Florez H, collaborator/co-author). *National, Regional, and Global Trends in Serum Total Cholesterol Since 1980: Systematic Analysis of Health Examination Surveys and Epidemiological Studies with 321 Country-Years and 10 Million Participants.* Lancet 377:578-86, 2011

Landy DC, Mintzer MJ, Silva AK, Schulman CI. *Hispanic Ethnicity and Unintentional Injury Mortality in the Elderly.* J Surg Res 166:28-31, 2011

Arita NA, Pelaez D, Cheung HS. *Activation of the Extracellular Signal-Regulated Kinases 1 and 2 (ERK 1/2) is needed for the TGFβ-induced Chondrogenic and Osteogenic Differentiation of Mesenchymal Stem Cells.* Biochem Biophys Res Commun 405:564-9, 2011

*Manuscripts Accepted for Publication*

Ouslander JG, Lamb G, Tappen R, Herndon L, Diaz S, Roos BA, Grabowski DC, Bonner A. *Interventions to Reduce Hospitalizations from Nursing Homes: Evaluation of the INTERACT II Collaborative Quality Improvement Project.* J Am Geriatr Soc 2011 Mar 15 [Epub ahead of print] PMID: 21410447

Balkan W, Rodriguez-Gonzalez M, Pang M, Fernandez I, Troen B. *Betinoic Acid Inhibits NFATc1 Expression and Osteoclast Differentiation.* J Bone Miner Metab 2011 Mar 8 [Epub ahead of print] PMID: 21384111

Singh RK, Lokeshwar BL. *The IL-8 Regulated Chemokine Receptor CXCR7 Stimulates Signaling to Promote Prostate Cancer Growth.* Cancer Res 2011 Mar 11 [Epub ahead of print] PMID: 21398406

Davila PE, Florez H, Trepka MJ, Fleming LE, Niyonsenga T, Lee DJ, Parkash J. *Long Work Hours is Associated with Suboptimal Glycemic Control Among US Workers with Diabetes.* Am J Ind Med 2011 Jan 18 [Epub ahead of print] PMID: 21246586

Dahn JR, Fitzpatrick SL, Llabre MM, Apterbch GS, Helms RL, Cugnetto ML, Claus J, Florez H, Lawler T. *Weight Management for Veterans: Examining Change in Weight Before and After MOVE!. Obesity 2010 Dec 2 [Epub ahead of print] PMID: 21127474*

## PRESENTATIONS

### Ophthalmology

S. R. Wellik, S. K. Bhattacharya, **A. K. Junk**. *Reduced proteolytic activities and accumulation of proteasomal aggregates in the glaucomatous trabecular meshwork*. Submitted to American Glaucoma Society 2011, March 3 – 6, 2011 in Dana Point, CA

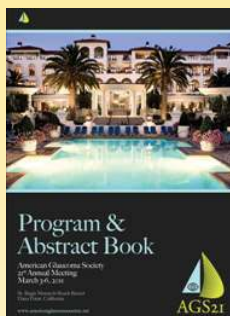
S. R. Wellik, **A. K. Junk**. *Outcomes of Sulcus-Placed Single-Piece Acrylic IOL After Posterior Capsule Tear*. Accepted for presentation at the 2010 Joint Meeting of the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) and the Middle East Africa Council of Ophthalmology, October 16-19 2010 in Chicago, IL, program no. 30025767

**A. K. Junk**, M. Goel, T. Mundorf, E. J. Rockwood, S. K. Bhattacharya. *Decreased Carbohydrate Metabolism Enzyme Activities in the Glaucomatous Trabecular Meshwork*. ARVO,

Fort Lauderdale, Florida, May 2 – May 6, 2010, program no. 3218

**A.K. Junk**, B. Govindarajan, M. Algeciras, B. Anand-Apte, R.G. Salomon, S.K. Bhattacharya. *Increased isolevuglandin modified proteins in glaucomatous astrocytes*. ARVO, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, program no. 658, May 3 – May 7, 2009

W.H. Lee, **A.K. Junk**, B. Govindarajan, J. Laird, R.G. Salomon, S.K. Bhattacharya. *Calpain-1 Processing Differences in Normal and Diseased Ocular Tissues*. ARVO, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, program no. 675, April 27 – May 1, 2008



### VA Endocrine, Polypeptide and Cancer Institute

Liu S, Schally AV, Dorff TB, Groshen SG, Hawes D, Quinn DI, Gross ME, Agus DB, Hu J, Tai YC, Block NI, Engel J, Pinski JK. *A phase I/II trial of AN-152, a targeted cytotoxic LHRH analog, in castration- and taxane-resistant prostate cancer*. Abstract #74003 ASCO Annual Meeting June 3-7, 2011, Chicago, IL

Treszl A, Steiber Z, Oláh G, Rózsa B, Schally AV, Halmos G. *Luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone receptors (LHRH) in human uveal melanoma as potential molecular targets for cancer therapy*. Abstract – 10<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on GnRH (The hypothalamic-pituitary-gonadal axis in cancer and reproduction). Salzburg, Austria, Feb, 2011.

Fernandez GL, Schally AV, Koru-Sengul T, Merchan JR, Flores AM, Jorda M, Datar R, Benedetto PW, Singal R, Block NL, Engel J. *A Phase I/II Trial of AEZS-108 in locally advanced unresectable or metastatic Luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone (LHRH) positive urothelial carcinoma (UC) patients who failed platinum based chemotherapy*. Abstract # 83230. ASCO Annual Meeting, Chicago, IL, June 3-7, 2011

Ziegler C, Schally AV. *Antitumor effects of peptide analogues targeting special neuropeptide hormones receptors in pheochromocytoma*. ENDO 2011, Boston, MA June 4-7, 2011





## PRESENTATIONS

### Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers



Dr. Paul Schiller was invited to deliver two key note addresses and participate in an additional seminar at the XVI Peruvian Congress and XXXII International Course of Internal Medicine in Lima Peru in October 2010. His keynote addresses were entitled *Stem Cells in the Treatment of Neurological Problems* and *The Biology of Stem Cells Determines its Therapeutic Impact: The Future is Now*. His presentation during the additional symposium was entitled *Stem Cell Therapies: Benefits, Limitations, and Risks*.

Dr. Florez also gave a presentation on Diabetes in the Geriatrics Community at the American Diabetes Association Conference, South Florida in March 2011.

Dr. Hermes Florez was invited to speak at an International Public Health meeting in Cuernavaca, Mexico in February 2011. He presented a lecture on Vitamin D and Co-morbidities in the Elderly.

Dr. Silvina Levis presented a seminar entitled *Challenges in Women's Health* at the Physician Panel, University of Miami School of Medicine, Miami, FL, in March 2011.

Dr. Stuti Dang was invited to give a presentation on Technology-Assisted Care Coordination for Chronic Disease Management at the Ft. Lauderdale PRIMED Conference in February 2011.

Ricardo Parrondo, working with Dr. Carlos Perez-Stable has a poster entitled *ABT-737, a Small Molecule Bcl-2/Bcl-xL Antagonist, Increases Docetaxel-Mediated Apoptosis in Human Prostate Cancer Cells* accepted for presentation at the Annual Meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) in Orlando, FL (April 2-6, 2011). The authors are Ricardo Parrondo (presenter), Alicia de las Pozas, Drs. Teresita Reiner, and Carlos Perez-Stable.

Dr. Levis was invited to speak at the Federal Working Group on Bone Diseases, National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, NIH, Bethesda, MD in March 2011. Her presentation was entitled *Soy and Bone*.



### Psychiatry

David, D., Kutcher, G.S., Daroff R.B.: *Enhancing Military Cultural Competence in Psychiatry Residency Training*. Workshop presented at the American Association of Directors of Psychiatry Residency Training (AADPRT) Annual Meeting, Austin, TX, March 2011.

Ginory, A., Asare, A., Sanfilipo, M., David, D.: *Resiliency in veterans with PTSD*. New Investigators' Poster accepted for presentation at the American Psychiatric Association's annual meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii, May 2011.

*This workshop aimed at developing a curriculum that would apply to all trainees in the VA system and help familiarize them with the military culture and the veteran as a patient. Dr. Daroff is from the San Francisco VAMC.*

*Dr. Asare and Dr. Ginory are psychiatry residents who completed this unfunded research project under Drs. Sanfilipo and David.*



American Association of Directors of Psychiatric Residency Training

## RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

### Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers



National Institute on Aging



National Institutes of Health  
Turning Discovery Into Health

**Dr. Hermes Florez** served as a member of the NIH-Bioinformatics study section in February 2011 that met in Washington, DC.

**Dr. Silvina Levis** recently participated in a number of study sections and grant review panels. She served as an *ad hoc* member of the Neurological, Aging and Musculoskeletal Epidemiology (NAME) Study Section, National Institute on Aging, NIH; as an *ad hoc* member of the Disorders in Brain, Metabolism and Aging Study Section, NIH; and as an *ad hoc* member of the VA Merit Review panel on Aging and Neurodegenerative Diseases, as part of the Office of Rehabilitation Research and Development, US Department of Veterans Affairs.

**Dr. Guy Howard**, GRECC Research Director, is a member of the NIH Skeletal Biology Development and Disease (SBDD) Study Section, Center for Scientific Review. He recently participated in reviewing applications for NIH funding at a meeting held in Santa Monica, CA in February 2011.

Dr. Howard served as the Chairperson for a the VA Research Career Scientist and Promotion Evaluation Committee in Washington, DC in January 2011. Dr. Howard also served as a member of the VA PhD Eligibility Committee that met in Washington, DC in January 2011.

**Dr. Hong Yu** served as a member of the American Heart Association (AHA) Regenerative Medicine study section.

## GRANTS FUNDED



**Dr. Herman Cheung** was successful in renewing his VA Merit Review grant entitled *Effect of Smoking on Adult Stem Cell Viability and Differentiation*. This award is for the period April 1, 2011 - March 31, 2015.

**Dr. Bruce Troen** successfully renewed his VA Merit Review grant entitled *The Impact of Synthetic Resveratrol Mimetics (SyRMs) Upon Osteoclasts*. His award is also for the period April 1, 2011 - March 31, 2015

"It's empowering," Florez said. "Patients will have an important ally in a peer."



### Hermes Florez, MD, PhD Receives Major Grant

He'll also test a hypothesis that peer-led care alone, that facilitated by technology, is superior to more traditional methods of disseminating information on the management of diabetes, as shown in the Veterans Affairs Diabetes Trial and other major clinical trials. For instance, peer counselors may send daily tips for eating wisely via cell phones.

"This grant is meant to benefit older adults in South Florida at and outside the VA in the Healthy Aging Regional Collaborative, but the beauty of it is, if it works, it can be replicated nationwide," Florez said. "And it can be expanded to other chronic diseases. We could use it for high blood pressure and the prevention of stroke and heart attack."



## SFVAFRE CORNER

**Miami VA CRADAs**

Executed

**Niramol Savaraj**      Novartis Pharmaceuticals      PI Initiated CRADA  
*A Phase II Trial of SOM230C (Pasireotide LAR) and Topotecan in Patients with Relapsed or Refractory Small Cell Lung Carcinoma (SCLC)*

**Maria Umbert**      Nova Southeastern University      Data Collection CRADA  
*Understanding the Scope and Magnitude of Prescription Drug Diversion Study*

**Nancy Klimas**      Governors of the University of Alberta      Basic Science CRADA  
*Study of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome using comprehensive molecular profiling with network and control theory*

Under negotiation

**Cynthia Cely**      Astute Medical      Clinical Trial CRADA

**Master CRADAs**

- Amgen**
- Astellas**
- Astrazeneca**
- Avigen**
- Bristol-Myers Squibb**
- Celgen**
- Genentech**
- GSK**
- Lilly & Lilly**
- Merck**
- Novartis**
- OncoGenex**
- Pfizer**
- Regenesis**
- Roche**
- Sanofi-Aventis**
- Sucampo**
- Takeda**
- WatsonPharm**

**Other Funding Sources**

Awarded

**Hong Yu**      James and Esther King Biomedical Research– State of FL

**Hermes Florez**      Health Foundation of South FL  
*Matter of Balance in South Florida Older Veteran*

**Hermes Florez**      Health Foundation of South FL  
*3rd year Enhanced Fitness*

**Stuti Dang**      DOD Sub Award  
*Effectiveness of Telerehabilitation for OIF/OEF Returnees with Combat Related Trauma*

Submitted

**Allen Andrade J**      James and Esther King Biomedical Research– State of FL  
*Improving Smoking Cessation Counseling*

**Allen Andrade**      Pfizer Healthcare Charitable Contributions  
*Overactive Bladder Grant Proposal*

**Bruce Troen**      James and Esther King Biomedical Research– State of FL  
*Smoking Induced Stem Cell Dysfunction*

**Nancy Klimas**      National Health Institute  
*Epigenetic Changes in CFS/ME*



## AWARDS AND HONORS



**Herman S. Cheung, Ph.D.**

James L. Knight Professor of Biomedical Engineering  
Senior VA Research Career Scientist  
Professor of Medicine and Orthopedic Surgery

**Dr. Herman Cheung** was named the 2011-2012 Distinguished Visiting Scholar (DVS) of Union College Chinese University of Hong Kong.



香港中文大學  
The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Dr. Cheng was honored to received the award especially since previous DVS winners were 1981 DVS Professor, CW Yang, of New York (Nobel Laureate in Physics) and 2005 DVS Professor, Stanley Cohen (Nobel Laureate in Medicine) and the Dr. David Ho (National Academy of Science). Dr. Cheung expressed that to the list of winners with these distinguished scientists and scholars is perhaps the biggest that he has received so far in his academic career.

2011年10月 「到訪傑出學人」講座

到訪傑出學人：美國邁阿密大學醫學及骨科醫學講座教授、高級資深研究職業科學家、奈特生物醫學工程學講座教授張醒鐘教授



**Juan Ruiz**

University of Miami  
Class of 2013

**Juan Ruiz**, BME undergraduate and Honor Research Student is doing research in Dr. Herman Cheung's laboratory at the VAMC. He has been selected a 2011 Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) Exceptional Research Opportunities Program (EXROP) award recipient. This is a highly prestigious award. Only 2 students are nominated from each institution award each year. A total of 40 students are selected in the entire country. Juan will continue his research at Harvard Medical School Stem Cell Institute this summer.

Juan also received Honorable Mention in the highly prestigious National Goldwater Scholar Fellowships. This is the first time that a UM student ever received such an honor. According to Kefryn Reese, the UM Director of Prestigious Award Fellowship, it is very rare for a sophomore to receive the scholarship. The fact that Juan received Honorable Mention bodes very well for him for next year. Many students who win the Goldwater in their Junior year, were recognized with Honorable Mention as sophomores. Researchers in Dr. Cheung's laboratory are working hard to help him win the award next year. Juan's recognition speaks volume of the quality of mentorship provided to undergraduate students at the Miami VA.



## FEEDBACK

Faculty and staff submissions can be e-mailed to the  
Office of Research Communications at

[iperez4@med.miami.edu](mailto:iperez4@med.miami.edu)

[Isabel.Perez1@va.gov](mailto:Isabel.Perez1@va.gov)

Editor

**ISABEL PEREZ**

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**Miami VA Research Day Poster Session**  
**May 3, 2011**  
**T.C. Doherty Auditorium**  
**“DISCOVERY & COLLABORATION FOR EXCEPTIONAL HEALTH CARE”**  
**Abstract Submission Form**

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<b>Additional Authors</b>					
<b>Position/Title</b>					
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<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Basic Science</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Clinical/Health Services</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Young Investigator *</b> <small>*(within 5 years of graduation from post-graduate/degree program)</small>

<b>Title of Presentation/Poster</b>

<b>Abstract</b>
(Background, Methods, Outcomes/Results, Conclusions, Implications for the field, significance for the VA) Please limit abstract to less than 300 words