



PRESS RELEASE  
May 27, 2009

## HOPE FUNDS FOR CANCER RESEARCH AWARDS THREE POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS FOR INNOVATIVE RESEARCH ON DIFFICULT-TO-TREAT CANCERS

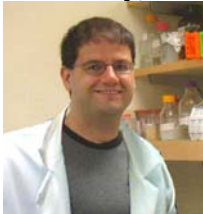
NEWPORT, RI -- May 27, 2009 -- Hope Funds for Cancer Research, an organization dedicated to advancing research for the most difficult-to-treat cancers, announced today it has selected this year's recipients of its Hope Funds Postdoctoral Fellowships. The Hope Funds Fellowships reflect the organization's strong commitment to promoting scientific innovation and risk, and to do so by taking a venture-capital investment approach to funding. "We believe these extraordinary young investigators have the skill and the courage to forge new paradigms and devise new approaches to understanding these rarer and more difficult cancers," states Leah Rush Cann, Chairman of the Board of Trustees.

Applications for the fellowships came from the country's most prestigious research institutions and were reviewed by a global scientific study session comprised of key opinion-leader scientists working in oncology. Thirty semifinalists were identified and ten finalists interviewed, after which the Hope Funds selected its three 2009 grantees. Each Fellow will receive \$87,000 over two years to fund his or her research, with the possibility for a third year of additional funding.

The Hope Funds Fellows for 2009 are: Eric Sawey, PhD, at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, who is attempting to better understand the molecular basis of liver cancer by identifying genes that lead to liver tumorigenesis; Hien Thanh Tran, MD, PhD, at The Rockefeller University, who is applying complementary approaches to determining the mechanisms that regulate the expression of metastasis suppressor microRNA; and Xiaoxing Wang, PhD, at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, who, by systematically manipulating gene expression, is working to understand the molecular program underlying metastatic pancreatic cancer.

The 2009 Hope Funds Fellows exemplify the mission of the Hope Funds for Cancer Research:

### **Eric Sawey, PhD, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, in the laboratory of Scott Powers, PhD.**



The most successful cancer therapies are those that affect only the tumor cells, leaving the surrounding tissue, and other tissues, untouched. "Our goal is to identify novel targets for the treatment of hepatocellular carcinomas, the most common form of liver cancer," says Dr. Sawey, who plans to use mouse models to single out genes that are "amplified" in liver-cancer patients. The genes will then be screened for their role in tumor formation. Those found to be involved in tumor growth will be examined more closely using human liver-cancer cells to validate findings. Sawey believes that by "using what we have learned about the human genome, combined with mouse modeling, we can shed light on these potential targets."

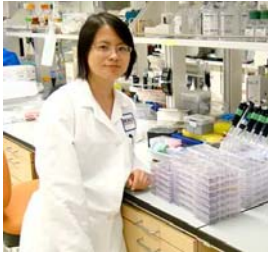
### **Hien Thanh Tran, MD, PhD, The Rockefeller University, in the laboratory of Sohail Tavazoie, MD, PhD.**



The study of human cancer has been limited by the lack of model systems that can recreate the way cancers behave in people, which has resulted in the use of mouse cancers as surrogates. Dr. Tran's model system instead introduces human cancer cells into a laboratory mouse in a way that mimics cancer metastasis in humans, enabling the direct study of the cellular changes that allow cancer to spread. Dr. Tran states, "We are studying a relatively new model of gene control that is mediated by small genetic elements called microRNAs." These elements can bind to the message made by a gene and cause the gene to degrade in way that prevents the subsequent formation of a protein. "By studying how these microRNAs are able to control genes involved in metastases, we hope to find ways to use them as therapeutics, as well as define new targets for the development of therapeutics against tumor metastases."

### **Xiaoxing Wang, PhD, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, in the laboratory of William Hahn, MD,**

**PhD.** There are few tailored treatment options available for metastatic pancreatic cancer, and scientists have not yet developed targeted molecular therapies for this type of cancer as they have with others. What is desperately needed is a greater understanding of the genes involved in the development and progression of this cancer. By using a genome-wide RNA interference library that permits the comprehensive analysis of gene function, Dr. Wang intends to systematically identify those genes that play a causal role in the disease. According to Wang, "the combination of this powerful gene-analysis tool and our experimental pancreatic cancer model will help us identify the novel genes critical to metastatic pancreatic cancer and guide targeted molecular therapy."



### Hope Funds Fellowships

The Hope Funds for Cancer Research supports research for highly innovative projects that challenge the traditional paradigms associated with understanding the causes, mechanisms, progression, disease markers, or risk factors of the most difficult-to-treat cancers. The Hope Funds believes it is important to emphasize creative approaches to research and award grants to young scientists based on the following criteria: project innovation and originality; the significance and direct relevance of the research proposal; the project's approach and conceptual framework; the researcher's qualifications and those of his or her mentors; and the quality of the researcher's overall working environment.

### About the Hope Funds for Cancer Research

The Hope Funds for Cancer Research was formed in 2006 by individuals with experience in science, medicine, intellectual property law, investment banking, philanthropy, sociology and the arts, who wanted to establish a funding vehicle that would take a rational scientific, medical and investment approach to awarding research grants. A strong emphasis is placed on identifying innovative and promising research efforts to address the most difficult-to-treat cancers, including pancreatic, lung, liver, sarcomas, esophageal, brain, gastric and ovarian cancers. These cancers are highly progressive illnesses that kill most of their victims within months, despite aggressive chemotherapy. The Trustees of the Hope Funds for Cancer Research believe that funding innovative research that can lead to medical breakthroughs and increased life expectancy is at the core of its mission. The Hope Funds for Cancer Research is a 509(a)(1) charity under 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service's code. For additional information about the organization, please visit [www.hope-funds.org](http://www.hope-funds.org).

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