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Van Andel Research Institute

VARI researcher chosen for highly competitive Scholar-in-Training Award

Jindong Chen, Ph.D., wins second AACR Scholar-in-Training Award

Grand Rapids, Mich. (April 30, 2009) – Van Andel Research Institute (VARI) Research Scientist Jindong Chen, Ph.D., was recently awarded the AACR-Sanofi-Aventis Scholar-in-Training Award for research submitted for presentation at the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) 100th Annual Meeting.

Chen, a researcher in VARI's Laboratory of Cancer Genetics, presented the findings of his research at the meeting held in Denver from April 18-22, where nearly 17,000 scientists from around the world gathered. This year's AACR meeting featured 6,000 research abstracts for presentation, including cutting-edge breakthroughs in molecular targeting, translational cancer research, and cancer prevention.

With Scholar-in-Training Awards presented to fewer than 10% of applicants, the process is highly competitive. The award was Chen's second. He also received the award in 2003 for cloning two cancer-related genes.

"The AACR is the oldest and largest scientific organization in the world dedicated solely to cancer research," said VARI President and Research Director Dr. Jeffrey Trent. "Research presented at the conference represents the latest and highest achievements in cancer research and reaches an audience of thousands of the world's top scientists."

Chen's research, entitled Proximal tubule-specific knockout of BHD in mouse kidney causes multicystic kidney disease and renal cancer pertains to a cancer called Birt-Hogg-Dubé (BHD) syndrome that affects the skin and lungs and increases the risk of certain types of tumors, including kidney tumors. VARI researchers tested the effect of the BHD gene in two different tubules that are part of the filtration system of the kidney and found initial evidence that one of the tubules may be where BHD originates.

In addition to Chen, five other VARI researchers also delivered oral and/or poster presentations at the conference. They include: Senior Scientific Investigator Art Alberts, Ph.D., Head of VARI's Laboratory of Cell Structure and Signal Integration, Research Scientist Qian Xie, Ph.D., of VARI's Laboratory of Molecular Oncology , Aik-seng Ooi, Ph.D., of the National Cancer Center Singapore-VARI Translational Research Laboratory, Singapore, Michigan State University graduate student Chih-Shia Lee, M.S., of VARI's Laboratory of Cancer and Developmental Cell Biology, and Michigan State University graduate student Tingting Yue, B.S., of VARI's Laboratory of Cancer Immunodiagnostics.

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About Van Andel Research Institute:

Established by Jay and Betty Van Andel in 1996, Van Andel Institute (VAI) is an independent research and educational organization based in Grand Rapids, Mich., dedicated to preserving, enhancing and expanding the frontiers of medical science, and to achieving excellence in education by probing fundamental issues of education and the learning process. VARI, the research arm of VAI, is dedicated to probing the genetic, cellular and molecular origins of cancer, Parkinson's and other diseases and working to translate those findings into effective