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Victory scored against dementia by scientists

Researchers at IUSM and the Medical Research Council of Great Britain have isolated a mutation in the tau gene which is the cause of a type of dementia.

Their findings will be published in an upcoming issue of the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. Their research also was featured in an article in the June 5 issue of the magazine *Science*.

Researchers who isolated the tau anomaly were Bernardino Ghetti, MD, Martin Farlow, MD, and Jill R. Murrell, PhD, of IUSM, and Maria Grazia Spillantini, PhD, Michael Goedert, MD, PhD, and Aaron Klug, PhD, of the Medical Research Council in Cambridge, England.

The findings have major importance for frontotemporal dementias and may also have implications for Alzheimer's disease. It is estimated that frontotemporal dementias account for 4 percent to 10 percent of all dementias.

In 1993, Dr. Farlow first became acquainted with the family whose disease led to the discovery of the tau anomaly. This family's disease is unique because it is exclusively tau related, unlike other dementias which could have multiple causes.

In 1997, the Indiana University and Medical Research Council scientists published their findings which identified the family's disease as a hereditary dementia, naming it familial multiple system tauopathy with presenile dementia (MSTD). Continued research with the members of the family led to the identification of the anomaly in the tau gene and the isolation of its mutations.

Several varieties or forms of the tau protein are normally found in the brain. What the researchers discovered is a difference in the amounts of some forms of the tau protein produced in patients with MSTD.

The excessive tau protein destabilizes the axons, which transmit information from the cells of the brain, and it causes the abnormal formation of tau filaments within the cells, leading to cell death.

It is possible that the mechanisms that cause MSTD and the other related frontotemporal dementias may also contribute to the development of Alzheimer's disease.

Funding for the research was provided through grants from the National Institute on Aging and the National Institute of Neurological Diseases and Stroke, along with the United Kingdom Medical Research Council, the Royal Society of London and the Metropolitan Life Foundation.

An illustration of how excessive amounts of tau protein forms in brain cells is available at <http://www.medicine.indiana.edu/tau3.bmp>. The illustration was drawn by the IUSM Department of Medical Illustrations.

BRIEFS

McDonald to retire

Dana McDonald, MLS, will retire June 30 as director of the IUSM Library. She has served in the position for 15 years.

McDonald says her biggest challenge at the library has been moving into the computer age, changing print material to digital information.

A reception in her honor will be from 4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., Friday, June 19, at the library.

Smith to retire

James Smith, MD, will retire July 5 as chairman of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, a position he has held for 6½ years. He has been a member of the IUSM faculty since 1970.

A reception in his honor will be from 3:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. Friday, June 26, in the ballroom at University Place Conference Center.

John Eble, MD, professor of pathology and experimental oncology and associate chairman and director of laboratories at Roudebush VA Medical Center will become the interim chairman of the department when Dr. Smith retires.

Dr. Eble has served as associate chairman and directed the VA laboratories for the past 17 years.

Teaching excellence awards presented

IUPUI presented the 1998 annual Teaching Excellence Recognition Awards to recognizing excellence in the classroom. Recipients were honored with cash prizes. IUSM recipients include:

Stan Alexander, MD; David Allmann, PhD; W. Marshall Anderson, PhD; Mark Braun, MD; Nancy Butler, MD; Randall Caldwell, MD; Daryl Christ, PhD;

Also Joseph DiMicco, PhD; Larry Einhorn, MD; Michael Frank, MD; Roy Geib, PhD; Mitchell Harris, MD; Dean Hawley, MD; Ahdy Helmy, MD; Antoinette Hood, MD;

Also Lewis Jacobson, MD; Stephen Jay, MD; John Kincaid, MD; Greg Kiray, MD; Thomas Klausmeier, MD; Donald Koritnik, PhD; Linn LaClave, PhD; James Lemons, MD; Sue London, MLS;

Also Joe Mamlin, MD; James Nocon, MD; Jackie O'Donnell, MD; Timothy Pettigrew, MD; Fred Rescorla, MD; Paul Righi, MD; George Sarosi, MD; Robert Schleomer, PhD; Anantha Shekhar, MD; Chris Steinmetz, MD; Richard Swanson, MD;

Also Robert Tarver, MD; David Weaver, MD; Eric Williams, MD, and Donald Wong, PhD.

School's out, Scope to take a break for summer

Just like faculty and staff, newsletters need breaks too. So Scope will take a summer hiatus beginning in July.

The June 29 issue will be the last until Scope resumes publication Aug. 24.

Contributions for the June 29 issue will be accepted until 8:30 a.m. June 22 by fax at 278-3502, campus mail to Mary Hardin at Long 401, or e-mail at mhardin@iupui.edu. Remember, the early bird gets the

worm, so submit your items promptly!

Submissions for Scope will be accepted throughout the summer for the fall issues.

Scope can be read online at the IUSM Public and Media Relations web page at <http://www.medicine.indiana.edu>.

Honors

Karen Stroup, PhD, director of the IUSM Community Education Department at Riley Hospital, has been selected as a Glenn W. Irwin Jr., MD, Experience Excellence Recognition Award winner. Stroup served as director of the Automotive Safety for Children Program for 10 years and has directed the development of the Community Education Department since its inception in 1993.

Brian Foresman, DO, clinical assistant professor of medicine, has been appointed chairman of the Tuberculosis Medical Advisory Board for the Indiana State Department of Health.

Philip Merk, MD, clinical professor of pediatrics, and **Stephanie Davis, MD**, a second-year fellow in pediatric pulmonology, were inducted into Alpha Omega Alpha at the annual society banquet. Each year, the IUSM chapter of the AOA Honor Medical Society may elect alumni, faculty, house staff and students for induction.

Carole Francq Gall, a director at the IUSM library, has received the Indianapolis Foundation Library Fund Leadership Award. The award was given in acknowledgment of her role during the previous seven years in organizing 36 academic, public and high school libraries in the Indianapolis area to apply jointly for grants.

Mark Dyken, MD, professor emeritus and former chairman of the Department of Neurology, and **Jose Biller, MD**, professor and chairman of the Department of Neurology, have returned from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where they presented lectures at the XIII World Congress of Cardiology.

Ora Pescovitz, MD, professor of pediatrics and physiology and biophysics, has been elected vice president of the Society for Pediatric Research. Her term begins in November. She will succeed to the presidency of the society in 2001. Membership to the society is by through sponsorship and is open to investigators under 46 years of age who are accomplished in their area of research. There are currently 2,316 life-time members in the organization.

<http://www.medicine.indiana.edu>