

AFAR Research Grants Launch Careers That Support Healthier Aging

For nearly 30 years, the American Federation for Aging Research has supported the science of healthier aging by providing critical start-up grants to promising young researchers, many of whose findings are dramatically changing both our understanding and the practice of medicine.

As one AFAR Florida researcher, Dr. Dave Morgan, states, “Almost without exception, AFAR picks the winners. AFAR

identifies those scientists who are truly committed – the top 20% that will go on to have highly productive research careers. AFAR has found a special niche by maximizing the use of its funds, moving young scientists into academic research careers.”

We are proud to introduce you to some former AFAR grantees who are pursuing groundbreaking research at Florida’s college and universities.



Todd E. Golde, M.D., Ph.D.

Professor, Neuroscience
Director, Center for Translational Research in Neurodegenerative Disease (CTRND),
University of Florida College of Medicine

“My AFAR/Beeson Award was the grant that launched my independent career as a scientist and provided the leverage needed to obtain my previous position with Mayo Clinic Jacksonville and current position with the University of Florida. Through the Beeson program, AFAR funds physician scientists in the early stages of their careers, taking a gamble on those they feel show the most promise. If you look at the Beeson classes from the early 1990s, these scientists are typically regarded as leaders in their fields. You can’t ask for a better return on your investment than that.”



Dave Morgan, Ph.D.

Professor, Molecular Pharmacology and Physiology; Director, Basic Neuroscience Research; Director, Alzheimer Research Laboratory, University of South Florida

“The purpose of my first AFAR grant award, in 1985, was to study changes of gene expression in the brains of Alzheimer’s patients. That was the grant that got me started. We found changes in glial genes more than neuronal genes. For over 20 years, my research has sought to understand how different types of glial cells in the brain play a role in Alzheimer’s and other age-related disorders. We are finding that glial cells are mediating inflammation and we believe this contributes neurodegeneration.”



Bruce R. Troen, M.D.

Professor of Medicine; Director, Molecular Gerontology Program; Interim Chief, Gerontology & Geriatric Medicine, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Center (GRECC), Miami Veterans Affairs Health System

My AFAR grant, my first extramural grant, gave me a great sense of accomplishment. It forever linked me to the aging research community and began my association with AFAR on multiple levels: a grantee, a grant reviewer, a member of national AFAR scientific advisory and review committees, and a founding member of the AFAR Florida board of directors. AFAR grants are often the first national awards for many junior researchers in the field of aging, helping to brand the researcher and providing the support needed for them to establish independent laboratories.

Chad A. Dickey, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Molecular Medicine, Johnnie B. Byrd Sr. Alzheimer’s Center and Research Institute, University of South Florida

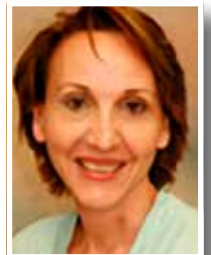
“AFAR is one of the few organizations that realizes that an emphasis on basic science is not only essential, but the key to building the foundation for the future. Many of today’s advances in heart disease and cancer treatments were made possible because of an emphasis on basic science. My AFAR grant provided the foundation for me to begin my own independent research. We’re examining the role of chaperone proteins in neurodegenerative diseases, like Alzheimer’s. Our goal is to modify these proteins so that ultimately, specific drugs can be developed to target these illnesses.”



Rebecca J. Beyth, M.D., M.Sc.

Associate Professor and Chief, Division of Career Development and Education, University of Florida College of Medicine, Department of Aging and Geriatrics

“I became interested in aging research while working with Dr. Seth Landefeld, the division chief of general medicine at Case Western Reserve University and the University Hospitals of Cleveland. He told me about the AFAR grant award, so I applied for a grant to study age as an independent predictor of bleeding while on anti-coagulant therapy. This funding opportunity gave me protected time to gather and analyze data, and convinced me I wanted to stay in academic medicine. It’s what got me hooked on wanting to do health-outcomes research in older people.”



Marcia N. Gordon, Ph.D.

Professor, Department of Molecular Pharmacology and Physiology, University of South Florida

“I knew from an early age that science was for me and that I wanted to pursue research. The AFAR grant I received for biomedical research – the first grant ever in my own name – gave me the start I needed. I went from being a post-doc scholar to a faculty member with my own independent lab, studying the build-up of the amyloid protein in the brains of Alzheimer’s patients and what it means.”



Through the AFAR Florida Affiliate, we are seeking to raise funds to support local, Florida scientists working to enhance our understanding of the fundamental processes of aging. Since 1981, AFAR (national) has provided \$132 million in grants to nearly 3,000 scientists at some of our nation’s leading academic institutions.

Please call 305-598-1115 or email susan@afar.org to learn how you can help advance the science of healthier aging!