

Advancing the Science of Healthier Aging

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Mayo Clinic Researcher Receives New **AvMED** HEALTH PLANS Research Grant



The first **AvMed Health Plans AFAR Florida Research Grant** was awarded to **Yongjie Zhang, PhD**, a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Neuroscience at Mayo Clinic College of Medicine in Jacksonville.

Dr. Zhang's research is focused on creating a new model of familial and sporadic amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), or Lou Gehrig's disease. Specific genetic mutations of the disease have been identified in recent years. Dr. Zhang is attempting to generate a novel transgenic mouse model of ALS that displays specific mutations. In the future, the results of his research could provide scientists with a model of ALS that would serve as a major step in developing ALS therapies for human sufferers of the disease.

Support the AFAR Research Grant Program!

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.

To support the AFAR Florida Research Grant program, please contact Susan Lichtman, AFAR Florida regional director, at susan@afar.org or visit www.afarfl.org.

To learn about AFAR Research Grant opportunities, programs, and deadlines, please visit <http://afar.org/grants.html>.



Top: AFAR Florida's Inaugural Awards Luncheon & Symposium was a great success, thanks to our generous sponsors.



Left: A standing-room-only crowd joined us at The Bankers Club of Miami to support our inaugural event and to hear our excellent speakers.



Dr. Bernard Roos, AFAR Florida chairman and Mr. Benjamin León Jr., who received an AFAR Florida Award of Distinction on behalf of the León family for their vision and leadership in making aging research and geriatric medicine a priority in our state.



Mr. Edwin W. Hannum, CPA, CLU, president and chief operating officer of AvMed Health Plans, was awarded the first Dr. Mark H. Beers AFAR Florida Award of Distinction, named for the late Dr. Beers, an esteemed past president of the national AFAR organization and the founding chairman of AFAR Florida. He is joined by AFAR Florida chairman, Dr. Bernard Roos.



Incoming AFAR Florida chairman and luncheon chair, Dr. Len Pinchuk, congratulates Dr. Bruce Troen on his interesting and informative presentation at the symposium. Dr. Troen also graciously filled in at the last minute to give an outstanding luncheon keynote presentation when the winter weather prevented our New York colleagues, including the scheduled keynoter, Dr. Nir Barzilai, from attending the event.



Dr. Len Pinchuk presents Dr. David Morgan with a plaque in recognition of the interesting and timely research update he presented at the afternoon symposium.

AFAR Florida's First Awards Luncheon & Symposium – A Great Success

Nearly 170 people gathered on February 11, 2010 at The Bankers Club of Miami for AFAR Florida's Inaugural "Advancing the Science of Healthier Aging" Awards Luncheon and Symposium. Luncheon chairman and incoming AFAR Florida chairman, Leonard Pinchuk, PhD, DSc, extended a warm welcome to the group while highlighting the importance of scientific research in helping us to live longer, more healthful lives. He then recognized the event sponsors, after which AFAR Florida regional director Susan Lichtman introduced AFAR Florida's mission and thanked the many scientists, board members, and business and community leaders whose efforts have contributed to AFAR Florida's progress.

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SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR DONORS

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UHealth/UM Miller School of Medicine
David Wilson, PhD
Peter Wood

We also wish to thank the following individuals and organizations that helped to make our February 11, 2010 Inaugural Awards Luncheon and Symposium such a success:

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American Federation for Aging Research
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Ana Viamonte-Ros, MD, Florida State
Surgeon General

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AFAR Florida's First Awards Luncheon & Symposium

Bernard Roos, MD, AFAR Florida chairman, then recognized Edwin W. Hannum, CPA, CLU, president and COO of AvMed Health Plans, for his tremendous support of aging research and healthy aging in Florida. Hannum has said, "We believe that aging research is essential to understanding the underlying causes of many diseases prevalent among seniors, and we support AFAR's efforts to reduce the suffering and ultimately, the health care costs associated with these diseases."

It was through Hannum's vision and leadership that AvMed established the AvMed Health Plans AFAR Florida Research Grant, which was awarded this past year to Dr. Yongjie Zhang of the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville.

Long associated with caring, high-quality health care, Benjamín León Jr. and the León family were also honored with an AFAR Florida Award of Distinction for their dedication

to making aging research and geriatric medicine a priority in our state through the establishment of a new center at Florida International University.

Bruce Troen, MD, delivered an outstanding keynote presentation and also spoke at the symposium that followed lunch. David Morgan, PhD, concluded the symposium with a timely research update, thus contributing once again to AFAR Florida's educational mission.

The success of the inaugural awards luncheon and symposium is also due to the efforts of a dedicated planning committee consisting of Leonard Pinchuk, PhD, DSc, Marilyn Berger, Debbie Brodie-Weiss, Sheila Chabrow, Marilyn Cheung, Olga Connor, Steve Hagen, Esq., Stephanie Lederman, Susan Lichtman, Nancy O'Leary, Nadine Pertnoy, Suzanne Roberts, Bernard Roos MD, Conchita Ruiz-Topinka, Alicia Schimek, Gail Serota, Elayne Tendrich, and Bruce Troen, MD.

State Surgeon General Opens Door to Possible Linkages with AFAR Florida

Increasing support for the AFAR Research Grant program was the key topic of discussion at a September 2009 meeting between Florida State Surgeon General, **Ana Viamonte-Ros, MD**, members of the AFAR Florida board of directors, and executives from AvMed Health Plans, which named AFAR Florida's first research grant.

Dr. Viamonte-Ros agreed on the importance of research in attacking public health problems, particularly in the realm of chronic disease, and urged the group to seek funding partnerships and collaborative ventures to fulfill AFAR's mission.

Joining Dr. Viamonte-Ros (3rd from the right) was (left to right): **Bruce Troen, MD**, AFAR Florida director and University of Miami professor of medicine; **Edwin Hannum**, president/CEO, AvMed Health Plans; **Conchita Ruiz-Topinka**, director of communication, AvMed Health Plans; **Bernard Roos, MD**, AFAR Florida chairman and director of the Miami Geriatrics Center at the Miami VA Medical Center; **Len Pinchuk, PhD, DSc**, AFAR Florida director and president/CEO, Innovia LLC and Affiliated Companies; and **Joshua Hare, MD**, director, University of Miami Interdisciplinary Stem Cell Institute (ISCI) and chief, UM Division of Cardiology. (Not pictured) **Susan Lichtman**, AFAR Florida regional director, and **Olga Connor**, director of communication for the FL Department of Health's Miami-Dade office, also participated in the productive meeting.



AFAR Researchers Increase Awareness, Provide Research Updates

AFAR Florida extends its thanks and appreciation to previous AFAR research grantees who were featured speakers at AFAR Florida-sponsored community education events during 2009:



Chad Dickey, PhD, USF/Tampa – spoke on "The Quest for New Drug Targets in

Alzheimer's Disease and Other Neurological Diseases of Aging" at the Museum of Discovery and Science, Ft. Lauderdale.



David Wilson, PhD, UM/Miami – spoke on "Reducing Human Aging: Clues from Why

and How We Age" at AFAR Florida-sponsored programs at the Miami Science Museum and the Downtown Miami Rotary Club.



David Morgan, PhD, USF/Tampa – spoke on "New Advances in Antibodies and

Genes to Treat Alzheimer's Disease" at the Museum of Science and Industry in Tampa.