



NEWS

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Rosalind Franklin Young Investigator Award Recipients Announced

Bethesda, MD (September 18, 2009) -- Jue D. Wang, Ph.D, Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, Texas, and Iiris Hovatta, Ph.D., University of Helsinki, Finland are the 2010 recipients of the Rosalind Franklin Young Investigator Awards, funded by The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation. The awards were announced today by the Genetics Society of America, the American Society of Human Genetics and The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation. Dr. Wang received the award for her work with bacteria and Dr. Hovatta for her work with mouse models and human genetics. Each of the recipients will receive a \$75,000 (USD) award administered over three years (\$25,000 per year).

The recipients were selected from among nearly 100 applicants. Their work and goals reflect the spirit and dedication of British scientist Rosalind Franklin, for whom the award is named. Their originality, scientific creativity and seminal discoveries within their fields, exemplify the innovative thinking Franklin used while working on determining the structure of DNA.

Dr. Wang arrived in Canada from China, speaking little English, to attend McGill University as an undergraduate physics major. Although a highly respected physics student, who co-authored papers and won awards, after graduation she switched from physics to biology to join the graduate program in biological sciences at the University of California, San Francisco. She earned her Ph.D. with Jonathan Weissman, Ph.D., and was the first member of his lab to use bacteria as a model organism, producing significant advances in understanding molecular chaperones important for cell survival. During her postdoctoral training with Alan D. Grossman, Ph.D., MIT, she was able to visualize previously unknown aspects of DNA replication by developing a whole-genome tiling microarray. She continues her interest in DNA replication regulation at Baylor, where she is seeking to identify small molecules and proteins involved in replication and additional regulators.

Dr. Hovatta earned her undergraduate degree and her doctorate in medical genetics from the University of Helsinki. Her initial work included studies into the genetic and molecular background of psychiatric diseases, including linkage mapping studies of schizophrenia in well-characterized Finnish families. For postdoctoral studies she attended the Max Planck Institute, focusing on the neurodevelopmental origins of psychiatric disorders. Still interested in neuropsychiatric diseases, she moved to the Salk Institute, where she initiated a novel approach, using the mouse model, for studying the neurobiology of anxiety. She has investigated the complex relationship between DNA and RNA level variations in the brain. Developing skills in molecular and epidemiologic genetics and genomics, and learning to plan, execute studies and analyze data from model organism (mouse) and human field work, Dr. Hovatta has mastered the concepts of inter- and multidisciplinary studies, which she brought to the Molecular Neurology Research Program she established at the University of Helsinki in 2007.

Drs. Wang and Hovatta will be acknowledged at the 59th ASHG Annual Meeting in Honolulu, Hawaii on Friday, October 23, 2009 in conjunction with the Gruber Genetics Prize Presentation.

Applications, which also required a curriculum vitae and two letters of recommendation, were reviewed by a distinguished committee that included members of both the Genetics Society of America and the American Society of Human Genetics. They were: Sally Camper, Ph.D., University of Michigan Medical School, Ann Arbor; Marian Carlson, Ph.D., Columbia University, New York; Beverly S. Emanuel, Ph.D., Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, PA; Judith E. Kimble, Ph.D., University of Wisconsin, Madison; Mary-Claire King, Ph.D., University of Washington, Seattle; Amy Pasquinelli, Ph.D., University of California, San Diego; Molly Przeworski, Ph.D., University of Chicago, IL; Janet D. Rowley, M.D., Ph.D., University of Chicago, IL; Trudi Schüpbach, Ph.D., Princeton University, NJ; and, Susan Wessler, Ph.D., University of Georgia, Athens.

Reviewers Amy Pasquinelli and Molly Przeworski are past recipients of the Rosalind Franklin Young Investigator Award. Pasquinelli, the first recipient in 2004, is an assistant professor of biology at UCSD. Przeworski, an evolutionary geneticist and an associate professor at the University of Chicago, was the second recipient of the award in 2007.

ABOUT THE GENETICS SOCIETY OF AMERICA

Founded in 1931, the Genetics Society of America (GSA) is the professional membership organization for geneticists and science educators. Its nearly 4,000 members work to advance knowledge in the basic mechanisms of inheritance, from the molecular to the population level. The GSA is dedicated to promoting research in genetics and to facilitating communication among geneticists worldwide through the Genetics Society of America Conferences including the biennial conference on Model Organisms to Human Biology, an interdisciplinary meeting on current and cutting edge topics in genetics research, as well as annual and biennial meetings that focus on the genetics of particular organisms. GSA publishes [GENETICS](#), the leading journal in the field. For more information about GSA, please visit www.genetics-gsa.org

ABOUT THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF HUMAN GENETICS

Founded in 1948, The American Society of Human Genetics (ASHG) is the primary professional membership organization for human genetics specialists worldwide. The nearly 8,000 members of ASHG include researchers, academicians, clinicians, laboratory practice professionals, genetic counselors, nurses and others involved in or with a special interest in human genetics. The Society's mission is to serve research scientists, health professionals and the public by providing forums to: (1) share research results through the Society's Annual Meeting and in [The American Journal of Human Genetics \(AJHG\)](#); (2) advance genetic research by advocating for research support; (3) educate current and future genetics professionals, health care providers, advocates, policymakers, educators, students and the general public about all aspects of human genetics; and (4) promote genetic services and support responsible social and scientific policies. For more information about ASHG, please visit: <http://www.ashg.org/>.

ABOUT THE PETER AND PATRICIA GRUBER FOUNDATION

The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation honors and encourages educational excellence, social justice and scientific achievements that better the human condition. The Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation is a private, United States-based philanthropic organization established in 1993 under the 501(c)(3) section of U.S. Corporate Law. It is funded entirely by Peter and Patricia Gruber, who serve as its Chairman and President, respectively. The Foundation is headquartered in St. Thomas, United States Virgin Islands, and maintains a small branch office in New York City. For more information about Foundation guidelines and priorities, please visit www.gruberprizes.org.

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