

UC San Diego Neuroscientist Honored with Prestigious MetLife Foundation Award

Dr. Edward Koo among four recognized in Washington, DC, for research in Alzheimer's disease

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Edward H. Koo, MD, professor of neurosciences at the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine was among four scientists honored at a luncheon in Washington, D.C. on February 25 for their work on complementary approaches to Alzheimer's research.

Koo is also co-director of the Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at UC San Diego, one of the five original centers for Alzheimer's research established by the National Institute on Aging.

Koo's lab focuses on understanding the pathophysiology of Alzheimer's disease, with the hope of translating findings from basic cell and molecular biological studies to the clinical setting, to better understand the causes of the disease or have an impact on treatments. Koo has also been recognized for his studies on characterizing the pathways of production of the amyloid beta-protein from the amyloid precursor protein (APP). He has investigated the physiological function of the APP and how it might contribute to Alzheimer pathogenesis in ways unrelated to amyloid production. More recently, he has focused his attention on how synapses are damaged in Alzheimer's disease.

According to recent estimates, more than 26 million people worldwide are believed to be living with Alzheimer's disease. In the United States, as many as 5.3 million Americans have Alzheimer's, and it is the seventh leading cause of death. It is estimated that the number of people with Alzheimer's will increase to 7.7 million by the year 2030, unless the disease can be effectively treated, delayed, or prevented.

Joining Koo in receiving the prestigious MetLife Foundation Awards for Medical Research in Alzheimer's disease were Todd E. Golde, MD, PhD, professor of neuroscience at the University of Florida and director of its Center for Translational Research in Neurodegenerative Diseases; and Eva-Maria Mandelkow, MD and Director Eckhard Mandelkow, MD, both of Hamburg, Germany's Max-Planck-Institute for Structural Molecular Biology.

This year's recipients are examples of how differing schools of thought can come together to solve some of the medical science's most vexing problems. For instance, Koo and Golde worked together to identify the gamma-secretase modulators that decrease production of a highly toxic type of amino acid which holds great promise for drug therapies to treat or prevent Alzheimer's.

"UC San Diego School of Medicine embraces collaboration across disciplines and organizations - partnerships which promote research in areas of need such as Alzheimer's disease where a cure or treatment is critically needed," said William C. Mobley, MD, PhD, Chair and Professor of UCSD's Department of Neurosciences. "Dr. Koo's work is a remarkable example of a partnership that has created a path toward discovery."

Since 1986, MetLife Foundation has granted major awards to scientists who have demonstrated significant contributions to the understanding of Alzheimer's disease. The program's goal is to recognize the importance of

basic research with an emphasis on providing scientists the opportunity to pursue ideas. Each winner received a \$100,000 research grant and personal prize of \$25,000 to further their work.

"MetLife Foundation has long recognized the impact Alzheimer's has on families, society and the economy," said C. Robert Henrikson, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of MetLife, Inc. "We continue our commitment to support the outstanding scientists who are making strides and developing methods to combat and, perhaps someday, prevent Alzheimer's disease from impacting future generations."

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