

September 20, 2011 | By Kim McDonald

## 2 UC San Diego Scientists Receive Prestigious New Innovator Awards from NIH

Two scientists at the University of California, San Diego have been awarded New Innovator Awards from the National Institutes of Health for research projects “that challenge the status quo with innovative ideas that have the potential to propel fields forward and speed the translation of research into improved health for the American public.”



*John Chang*

The federal biomedical research agency announced today that John Chang, an assistant professor of medicine, and Nathan Gianneschi, an assistant professor of chemistry and biochemistry, are among 49 scientists nationwide to receive the prestigious award this year.

“The awards are intended to catalyze giant leaps forward for any area of biomedical research, allowing investigators to go in entirely new directions,” said James Anderson, who heads the NIH’s High-Risk Research program.

Chang and his research group will receive \$2.3 million over the next five years from the agency to study the fundamental mechanisms by which cell fate is determined during immune responses against microbes.

*Nathan Gianneschi*

“Our overall goal is to gain a better understanding of how the immune system works in health and in disease,” he said. “Ultimately we hope that the insights gained from our studies can be used to improve



vaccine strategies and develop new treatments for patients with inflammatory bowel disease, a chronic intestinal disorder.”

Gianneschi and his group will receive \$2.3 million over the next five years to conduct further research on their innovative new strategy for delivering molecules specifically to tumor tissue, while avoiding unwanted side-effects normally associated with chemotherapy.

“We have developed a nanometer-scale particle capable of packaging drugs for transport through the blood stream, while avoiding accumulation in the liver,” he said. “These nanoparticles are essentially cloaking devices for manmade materials, such that the body does not recognize them until they strike their target. The hope is that these prototype systems can be developed, with the help of this generous NIH award, into a truly transformative and usable therapeutic strategy.”

More information about the New Innovator Award and the 2011 awardees is available at: <http://commonfund.nih.gov/newinnovator/>

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