

## **Giving the Fountain of Youth: UC San Diego Receives \$2 Million Research Grant from Hillblom Foundation to Slow Aging Process**

*Funding from late DHL co-founder to serve as catalyst for research in the new Division of Geriatrics at the UC San Diego School of Medicine—one of the nation's top five public medical schools*

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A grant of nearly \$2 million from the Larry L. Hillblom Foundation will offer researchers at the University of California, San Diego, the opportunity to forge ahead in their trail-blazing quest to better understand the process of aging and discover new ways of minimizing its effects. Physicians and researchers of the newly created Division of Geriatrics at the UC San Diego School of Medicine—ranked fifth in the nation among public medical schools by *US News and World Report*—will work collaboratively to determine how processes such as cellular damage, inflammation and gene activity may be linked to the aging process and disorders which often accompany advanced age.

The Larry L. Hillblom Foundation was created through a bequest from Larry L. Hillblom, a respected international businessman who was one of three founders of DHL Worldwide Express. The foundation provides support primarily to medical research targeting the prevention, diagnosis, treatment and cure of age-related chronic or degenerative disorders of the brain or vision, as well as diabetes and its complications.

Based on U.S. Census Bureau projections, it is anticipated that by 2030, the entry of Baby Boomers into retirement age will bring the number of persons over 65 to more than 76 million, or 25 percent of the population. As a result, more and more individuals will be living with chronic and debilitating conditions such as diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease and Alzheimer's. It has been suggested, however, that if the basic aging process itself could be slowed by five to 10 percent, this would have dramatic effects on the health of older adults and significantly decrease the number of individuals living with disease and disability.

"We are proud to support research of such great promise for patients of advanced age," said Peter J. Donnici, president of the Hillblom Foundation. "This study at UC San Diego is an excellent fit with the philanthropic mission of our foundation. We are pleased to provide the funding for this groundbreaking, innovative research which has the potential to positively affect individuals nationally and globally."

The four-year research project, led by Laura Dugan, M.D., holder of the Larry L. Hillblom Chair in Geriatric Medicine and the head of UC San Diego's Division of Geriatrics, is aimed at understanding the basic biology of aging in humans, which might lead to dramatic and far-reaching benefits to human health.

"This research should provide important insight into some of the most fundamental questions related to the process of aging," said Dugan. "The primary objective of the research is to identify the underlying problems of aging and to develop interventions to overcome them. We are extremely grateful to the Larry L. Hillblom Foundation for their continued generous and comprehensive support of aging research at UC San Diego."

The study will delve into how antioxidants may assist in rescuing memory loss and decreased cognitive function common to advanced age, which inflammation pathways cause derangement in the neural circuits

critical to normal brain function and the relationship between diabetes and the aging process. Researchers will also utilize imaging technology to map when and where the processes associated with aging occur in the brain. The conclusions drawn from the imaging may lead to methods which would allow physicians to better diagnose diseases associated with advanced age.

Joining Dugan in these studies are UC San Diego faculty members Sameh Ali, Ph.D., and Marga Behrens, Ph.D., also in the Department of Medicine, Division of Geriatrics; and Richard Buxton, Ph.D.; Tom Liu, Ph.D.; and Eric Wong, Ph.D., M.D., in the Department of Radiology. From the Department of Pathology, Nigel Calcutt, Ph.D., and Andrew Mizisin, Ph.D., will also be involved in the research efforts.

The UC San Diego Division of Geriatrics was founded as part of the university's School of Medicine in July 2007 with the goal of promoting healthy aging through patient care, medical education and research. More information on the new Division can be found by visiting: <http://geriatricsmedicine.ucsd.edu>.

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