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FOUR STANFORD SCIENTISTS RECEIVE MILLIONS FROM NEW FEDERAL CONSORTIUM TO STUDY PROGENITOR CELLS

STANFORD, Calif. — Four research teams at the Stanford University School of Medicine have been tapped to join a new consortium funded by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute to develop stem cell and regenerative medicine therapies.

All together, the institute awarded 17 teams of stem cell and regenerative medicine researchers across the country $170 million to create a Progenitor Cell Biology Consortium. The money will be distributed over seven years. Each of Stanford's four principal investigators will receive between $1 million and $1.2 million in the first of yearly installments of the award money. Although the budget for subsequent years has yet to be finalized, Stanford's total amount over the life of the grant is

estimated to be between $30 million and $40 million.

“NHLBI is committed to stimulating stem cell research that will lead to the development of regenerative therapies for the treatment of heart, lung and blood diseases,” said NHLBI director Elizabeth Nabel, MD, in a press release. “Important gaps remain in our understanding of stem and progenitor cells, and this consortium holds great promise to expand our knowledge and uncover therapeutic applications of great public impact."

The 17 multidisciplinary teams are organized into nine thematic research hubs. The research will be coordinated and administrated out of the University of Maryland-Baltimore.

Robert Robbins, MD, professor and chair of cardiothoracic surgery, will collaborate with researchers at the J. David Gladstone Institutes in San Francisco in the investigation of how to use induced pluripotent stem cells, or iPS cells, to repair damaged heart muscle. John Cooke, MD, PhD, professor of cardiovascular medicine, will collaborate with researchers at Johns Hopkins University to study how to reprogram adult cells into blood-forming progenitors.

Mark Krasnow, MD, PhD, professor and chair of biochemistry, and

Irving Weissman, MD, director of Stanford’s Institute for Stem Cell Biology and Regenerative Medicine, together head a team focused on identifying and characterizing progenitor cells in blood and lung tissue for future therapies.

Each of Stanford’s four principal investigators will work with multidisciplinary teams at Stanford to complete the work during the next seven years. For example, Cooke’s research will draw on scientists from various fields, including molecular pharmacologist Helen Blau, PhD; stem cell biologist Renee Reijo Pera, PhD; protein engineer James Swartz, DSc; and bioinformatician Wing Wong, PhD, among others. “The NHLBI Progenitor Consortium will also allow us to integrate our laboratories with other scientists who are national leaders in regenerative medicine,” Cooke said.

“This is a grand experiment,” said Weissman. “By forming this consortium, the NHLBI is encouraging a dialogue between scientific groups that would otherwise be competing with one another. I am very excited, and have high hopes that this will accelerate the understanding of stem and progenitor cells to the point of medical therapies.”

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The Stanford University School of Medicine consistently ranks among the nation’s top 10 medical schools, integrating research, medical education, patient care and community service. For more news about the school, please visit http://mednews.stanford.edu. The medical school is part of Stanford Medicine, which includes Stanford Hospital & Clinics and Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital. For information about all three, please visit http://stanfordmedicine.org/about/news.html.