**Yan Sun wins the Halfond-Weil Postdoctoral Fellowship**

The Masonic Medical Research Institute (MMRI) proudly celebrates Postdoctoral Fellow, Dr. Yan Sun, on her achievement in winning the Halfond-Weil Postdoctoral Fellowship for the year 2020. Sponsored by the 8th Manhattan District Lodge of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of New York, this is the first year of distribution for this grant and is expected to be awarded annually to a top-talented research fellow at the MMRI. “I express my sincere gratitude for the generosity of the MMRI Halfond-Weil postdoctoral fellowship and my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Kontaridis, my Principal Investigator, for giving me the opportunity to work on this promising project. She has been so supportive and encouraging since switching my research field from botany to molecular biology. I am also deeply thankful to my former professor Dr. Qu, for all the support he has provided me in my PhD training” said Dr. Sun.

The Halfond-Weil Postdoctoral Fellowship is an internal, competitive fellowship among MMRI postdoctoral fellows. In order to be considered, the fellows submit a proposal about their research, accompanied by letters of reference and various other statements concerning their work. The grant total is $50,000 for one year to help support salary and project materials for the project. Yan Sun was selected as the recipient of the award among five other postdoctoral applicants, each of whom applied for the grant.

After graduating from Peking University, China, in 2018, Yan joined the MMRI team as a Postdoctoral fellow. While her Ph.D. research was centered on Botany and the embryo development of Arabidopsis thaliana (a small flowering plant native to Eurasia and Africa), her work at MMRI has primarily focused on assisting Dr. Kontaridis’ obesity and diabetes research program. Her research proposal is focused on discovering how insulin resistance in the heart tissue can affect global metabolic rates. She hopes that this investigation will provide a path to reducing deaths related to diabetes and obesity.

“Yan has been an incredible addition to the MMRI team, bringing fresh ideas and talents, as well as a positive, up-beat disposition. Her research is an important discovery in development of diabetes and onset of obesity, and we hope that it will lead to a novel therapeutic in the near future. Congratulations Yan!” said Dr. Maria Kontaridis, the Gordon K. Moe Professor and Chair of Biomedical Research and Translational Medicine and MMRI Director of Research. Dr. Sun plans to attend the “Diabetes: Glucose Control and Beyond” conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico on January 27-30, 2020, where she will be presenting her exciting research to a national scientific audience.