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ONE COLLABORATION AT A TIME: THE BACKBONE OF MEDICAL RESEARCH

MMRI Collaborates with SUNY Upstate Medical University in Advancement of Cardiovascular Research

UTICA, NY — In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Masonic Medical Research Institute (MMRI) and SUNY Upstate Medical University (SUNY Upstate) launched an all-virtual speaker series, focused on creating a space in which collaborations could form among researchers. Thanks to Dr. Dave Amberg, Vice President of Research at SUNY Upstate, and Dr. Maria Kontaridis, Executive Director and Gordon K. Moe Professor at MMRI, two researchers from each institution have been awarded an Intramural Pilot Grant in the amount of \$15,000 each to support their communal projects. “The launch of this speaker series with SUNY Upstate has been an instrumental and insightful experience in moving forward with scientific discussion. I am so proud of my colleagues in their procurement of these awards. I look forward to witnessing their success and am looking forward to many more collaborations to come,” said Dr. Kontaridis.

Drs. Jonathan Hess, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at SUNY Upstate, and Nathan Tucker, Assistant Professor at MMRI, received funding for their application titled, “Circulating transcriptional biomarkers of preclinical cardiac dysfunction: The *HeartGENIE* Project.” Their project will profile RNAs, the molecular blueprints for a tissue’s function, obtained from blood samples, and examine their predictive value on the state of the heart. “Obtaining information directly from heart tissue is technically demanding and incurs tangible risk for a patient,” said Dr. Tucker. “Using a less invasive approach to predict the state of the heart would be a great step forward, with the hopes of allowing earlier diagnoses, more tailored treatments, and better patient outcomes.”

Additionally, Drs. David Auerbach, Assistant Professor of Pharmacology at SUNY Upstate, and Jonathan Cordeiro, Assistant Professor at MMRI, received funding for their project titled, “Cardiac Electrical Safety of Antidepressants in Long QT Syndrome.” Inherited arrhythmias often predispose patients to further medical conditions. When learning this information, many patients often experience forms of depression and are placed on anti-depressants (ADs). This project aims to gain a detailed understanding of the mechanisms behind Long QT syndrome and successfully identify the genotype-specific differences in the risk of arrhythmias both when on and off ADs. Results of this study will indicate the cardiac safety of ADs and assist medical professionals in their assessment of patients.

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MMRI is dedicated to scientific research that improves the health and quality of life for all. We strive to conduct high quality research aimed at developing a deep understanding of diseases and generating innovative cures and treatments. For more information about MMRI, please visit mmri.edu or find us on social media!