

SIR Foundation Grant Recipient Receives \$1.3 million NIH Grant

Three-Year Grant Will Explore Innovative Treatment for Liver Cancer

An SIR Foundation grant awarded to Jean-Francois Geschwind, MD, in 2001 has become the catalyst for what promises to be a truly innovative approach to the treatment of liver cancer. Geschwind, an associate professor of radiology, oncology and surgery at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and director of interventional radiology at Johns Hopkins Hospital, has recently been awarded a multiyear research project grant (R01) from the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) National Cancer Institute to study how liver tumors grow as a step toward finding a way to effectively treat the cancer.

The \$1.3 million NIH grant will test the unique concept of focusing on a specific tumor-related biochemical event that provides high specificity in therapy targeting and takes advantage of the high demand tumors have for glucose as a source of energy. This approach is cancer specific in that it uses intra-arterial delivery of potent inhibitors of energy metabolism to attack an enzyme that is overactive only in cancer cells. By inhibiting the energy-producing capabilities of cancer cells, the drug causes the tumor to rapidly die. "This approach should greatly improve local response and significantly reduce systemic toxicity problems commonly associated with conventional drug therapy for liver tumors," said Geschwind.

Geschwind's innovative approach was developed and refined through work he was able to accomplish when the SIR Foundation awarded him a Dr. Ernest J. Ring Academic Development Grant in the summer of 2001. "The grant that I received from the SIR Foundation set the wheels in motion for this NIH award," Geschwind said. "As a researcher, obtaining an R01 from the NIH is a major milestone in your career. The R01 is a grant that distinguishes the quality of the research — the ultimate step in

becoming recognized as a researcher. But to be taken seriously by the NIH you need to prove yourself as an independent investigator. The SIR Foundation's Ring grant provided me with the resources and time to establish a track record for good study design and data collection."

Created in 2000 by the SIR Foundation, the Dr. Ernest J. Ring Academic Development Grant is designed to provide junior faculty members early in their academic careers time and support to conduct research. The goal of the program is to have grant recipients subsequently obtain additional funding from other sources like the NIH. The data Geschwind was able to generate from the Ring grant were instrumental in proving to NIH that his cancer therapy concept was feasible. The data showed that his approach resulted in dramatic tumor destruction without toxicity and indicated the potential of prolonged survival and cure.

Geschwind encourages other interventional radiologists to seek funding for research from NIH and other bodies. "Having interventional radiologists actively seek out and receive NIH grants helps to legitimize our specialty in the eyes of the government," he said. "When people look for credibility in research they look at NIH studies as the benchmark. Having investigators who are interventional radiologists conducting research using interventional radiology techniques helps to recognize and validate our profession." ❖



2005 SIR FOUNDATION GRANT PROGRAM DEADLINES

Dr. Ernest J. Ring Academic Development Grant Program — December 15
 Pilot Research Grant Program — December 15
 Academic Transition Award — December 15
 ACRIN Protocol Development Award — December 15

Application guidelines for these awards can be downloaded from the SIR Foundation Web site at www.sirfoundation.org/grant_programs.shtml.