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For immediate release



Celiac Disease Researcher Nabs Top International Prize

Advances University of Chicago Celiac Disease Center fight against world's most common autoimmune disease

CHICAGO (May 7, 2010) – Bana Jabri, MD, PhD, co-director, University of Chicago Digestive Disease Research Core Center, and an internationally renowned celiac disease researcher, was recently awarded the coveted Warren Prize for Excellence in Celiac Disease Research.

Presented annually by The William K. Warren Foundation, the \$25,000 award goes to an individual or group whose research is judged by an independent committee of scientific experts to have made a significant contribution to the field of celiac disease research in the way of basic, translational, and/or clinical research.

The Warren Foundation this year elected to make two separate full awards due to the significant contributions both have made to the field,. Jabri received for excellence in basic research.

Nominations are open to individuals from the United States and abroad. This marks the first time the award has been given to a researcher in the United States, as well as the first time a female research has received this high honor.

Jabri's groundbreaking work includes the development of the first-ever mouse model to find a vaccine and cure for celiac disease. Her team of researchers has introduced several genetic modifications leading to the loss of tolerance to gluten in mice. Now Jabri is leading the effort to create a mouse celiac model reproducing the human disease, a critical breakthrough in celiac research. "It would have a profound impact on the future of celiac disease," said Jabri. "It will not only allow us to better understand the pathogenesis of celiac disease, but will allow us to develop and test new therapeutic avenues."

Celiac disease is triggered by the ingestion of gluten, the protein found in wheat, barley and rye by genetically predisposed individuals. Although often discounted as a manageable chronic health condition, left untreated celiac disease can be fatal. There is no cure for celiac disease. Its only treatment remains lifelong adherence to a strict gluten-free diet.

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At least 3 million Americans suffer with celiac disease. That number is on the rise; there has been a four-fold increase in the prevalence of celiac disease over the last 50 years.

"The Warren Prize is well deserved," said Stefano Guandalini, MD, founder and medical director of The University of Chicago Celiac Disease Center. "We are honored to have such a stellar researcher leading our team. With the proper funding, I am confident Dr. Jabri will lead us to the cure for celiac disease."

An associate professor in the departments of Medicine, Pathology and Pediatrics at the University of Chicago Medical Center, Jabri is also a member of the Committee on Immunology.

"This year was special in that two individuals tied for first place," said Martin F. Kagnoff, MD, director, Wm. K. Warren Celiac Center. "One award is for excellence in basic research and one for outstanding contributions in the area of clinical/translational research. Dr. Jabri was selected from among a large number of candidates to receive this prestigious award."

About the University of Chicago Celiac Disease Center

The University of Chicago Celiac Disease Center has fundamentally improved the care, diagnosis and awareness of celiac disease. In addition, it provides the infrastructure and support that is needed to

advance cutting-edge celiac research, including investigations into structure of gluten peptides and the mechanisms by which gluten modifies self molecules. The University of Chicago Celiac Disease Center is a 501-c3 non-profit organization within The University of Chicago and is completely funded by donor contributions.

For more information please visit: www.CeliacDisease.net

About the William K. Warren Medical Research Center for Celiac Disease

The William K. Warren Medical Research Center for Celiac Disease recognizes individuals who advance the knowledge of celiac disease pathogenesis and develop novel diagnostic and therapeutic advances. Community activities include increasing the medical and local community's knowledge about Celiac Disease. The Center clinics at the University of California, San Diego aim to provide state-of-the-art clinical care and education to adults and children with celiac disease.

For more information please visit: <http://celiaccenter.ucsd.edu/>

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