PVLSI PIONEER VALLEY LIFE SCIENCES INSTITUTE
A Baystate Medical Center ■ UMass Amherst Research Partnership

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Center of Excellence in Apoptosis Research makes first interdisciplinary postdoctoral fellow award

The Center of Excellence in Apoptosis Research (CEAR) interdisciplinary postdoctoral fellows program has awarded a grant to University of Massachusetts Amherst professors Todd Emrick, Polymer Science and Engineering, and Priscilla Clarkson, Kinesiology, for their project "Novel polymers for transfection of myoblasts and myotubes: Development of new tools for treatment of muscular dystrophy". Duchenne Muscular dystrophy is a disease characterized by degeneration and death of muscle fibers caused by a mutation in the dystrophin gene. Emrick and Clarkson's study is aimed at developing novel synthetic polymers which may allow the re-introduction of the extremely large dystrophin gene into muscle precursor cells to treat the disorder.

The CEAR Interdisciplinary Postdoctoral Fellowship Program encourages scientists, engineers, and physicians to develop novel research programs that require expertise in two or more disciplines. The program's goal is to stimulate research at the boundaries between disparate fields in order to develop new insights and applications. The CEAR grants support a postdoctoral scientist for one year with the possibility of two one-year extensions. "At a time when collaboration among life scientists, physical scientists and engineers is increasingly important to biomedical research, we are pleased to support interdisciplinary efforts that take advantage of UMass Amherst's strengths and prepare young scientists to work across traditional boundaries," says Dr. Lawrence Schwartz, science director at the Pioneer Valley Life Sciences Institute and director of CEAR.

The Center of Excellence in Apoptosis Research is part of the Pioneer Valley Life Sciences Institute. CEAR's membership includes 45 researchers from the Institute, Baystate Medical Center, and UMass Amherst. Apoptosis, or programmed cell death, is a genetic program resident in all of our cells that allows the body to effectively dispose of defective or surplus cells. Aberrations in apoptosis have been estimated to play a role in approximately 70% of human disease including cancer, autoimmune disorders, and cardiovascular disease. The John Adams Innovation Institute of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative supports CEAR's innovative programs.

About the Pioneer Valley Life Science Institute (PVLSI)
PVLSI was created in 2002 as a joint venture of Baystate Medical Center and the University of Massachusetts Amherst with the dual missions of biomedical research and economic development. Drawing on each of the founders as well as its own researchers, the Institute brings together physicians, scientists, and engineers to create interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teams focused on the molecular mechanisms of disease and the development of new diagnostic and therapeutic tools. For more information, go to www.pvlsi.org.

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