FIVE-YEAR NIH GRANT RENEWAL

Treatment of alcoholism may lie in hands, or labs of pharmacy pros

The future of treating alcoholism, a major health problem in the U.S. that costs more than $1.9 billion annually, may be influenced by basic research conducted at the Idaho State University College of Pharmacy.

Dr. Leslie Devaud, associate professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, was recently awarded a $1.2 million, five-year research grant through the National Institutes of Health for her project, “Molecular Basis for Sex-Selective Effects of Ethanol.”

This award will allow her and her colleagues to continue work they have been conducting at ISU over the last several years.

Dr. Devaud’s main research interest has focused on the study of key brain systems that mediate the development of alcoholism and withdrawal symptoms seen when alcoholics stop drinking.

With the use of a laboratory model in her studies, Dr. Devaud is able to focus on neurobiological mechanisms of alcohol dependence and withdrawal.

“We compare and contrast findings in male and female animals as we hypothesize that one’s sex is an important contributor to the potential for harm from alcohol dependence and withdrawal,” Dr. Devaud said.

Other faculty assisting Dr. Devaud in the research project include Dr. Fred Risinger, Dr. James Bigelow and Dr. Dan Selvage, all with the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences in the College of Pharmacy.

During the initial award, which began in 1999, the researchers uncovered significant differences...
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in changes in critical neuronal systems induced by chronic feeding of alcohol to animals. These cellular changes differed between the sexes, Dr. Devaud said. More recently, they found robust changes in behavioral expression and timing of recovery from alcohol withdrawal.

“Taken together with recent studies in humans, it is becoming clear that whether one is female or male influences consequences of excessive alcohol consumption,” she said. “It remains difficult to effectively treat recovering alcoholics and we believe that our research will help highlight ways to improve care of alcoholic patients, by tailoring treatment approaches according to gender.”

Funding for the first-year of the new grant comes from the Office of Research on Women’s Health, (ORWH). The remaining four years of the grant will be funded from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, (NIAAA).

“Dr. Devaud’s project represents exciting cutting-edge research addressing a timely and vital topic,” said co-investigator and Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences Interim Chair Dr. Fred Risinger. “Dr. Devaud is a nationally known neuroscientist and her work brings important recognition to the research mission of ISU. Her grant renewal as well as her national reputation reflects the many years of hard work she has devoted to research. She is a key asset for the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences and the College of Pharmacy, and a role model for biomedical researchers in this department and campus wide.”

take time to join us...

College of Pharmacy & ISU events

- ISU College of Pharmacy 2005 Recruiting Fair. Pond Student Union Ballroom. Company exhibition - 10 a.m. - noon.
- Pharmacy Treasure Valley Alumni Banquet, Saturday, October 8, Louie’s, Meridian, 6 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. dinner, $15 per person. RSVP Kathleen by Oct. 7 at 208-282-4597 or kal@otc.isu.edu.