

# Missouri consortium joins NIH national heart failure network

## Grant to support clinical trials, training

A Missouri-wide consortium led by Washington University School of Medicine has joined a national heart failure research network sponsored by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The consortium is one of only nine regional centers across the country.

The Washington University Heart Failure Network regional clinical center includes Washington University School of Medicine and Barnes-Jewish Hospital, Saint Louis University, the St. Louis Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Barnes-Jewish West County Hospital and the University of Missouri-Columbia.

With a \$3.5 million, seven-year grant from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the center is responsible for coordinating clinical trials within its own region and among the eight other regional centers to investigate innovative treatments for heart failure. In addition, Washington University will lead training efforts of young investigators in clinical heart failure research.

The nationwide network trials are designed to change the way physicians practice medicine.

The consortium is led by Victor G. Davila-Roman, MD, professor of medicine, and Douglas L. Mann, MD, the Tobias and Hortense Lewin Professor of Medicine.

"We are excited to be a part of the NIH heart failure network because it will allow us to test hypotheses for trials that we develop in a much larger venue," says Mann, also chief of the Cardiovascular Division at Washington University.

Mann emphasizes that one advantage of the network is its ability to conduct trials that would not necessarily be funded by industry. Most pharmaceutical companies support trials intended to gain approval for new therapies from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The trials conducted within the network are designed to change the way that physicians practice medicine.

"In many of the proposed studies for the network, we will be investigating the best use of drugs that may have been off-patent for decades," Mann says. "No company would fund trials to tell you what dose to give or how to use these medicines. But these are questions clinicians face every day. We're now able to do these studies using inexpensive drugs that may change the way we practice medicine."

The other regional centers are Duke University; Mayo Clinic; Massachusetts General Hospital/Brigham and Women's Hospital; University of Vermont/Tufts University; Cleveland Clinic; Emory University; Thomas Jefferson University Hospital; and the University of Pennsylvania.



ROBERT BOSTON

**Ambulance aid** Sara L. Bollinger, left, Global Health Scholars in Medicine coordinator, and Basia H. Najarro, division administrator, both in the Department of Medicine, with the ambulance donated this past December to InCan, a cancer hospital in Guatemala City. Fully stocked with supplies and equipment, the ambulance was a joint project of internal medicine residents, the university's Engineers Without Borders program, and the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts. Local automobile dealership Suntrup Ford also played a key role, donating \$12,000 in mechanical services. The Global Health Scholars in Medicine program expands global health education and research opportunities for resident physicians.

## Life sciences supported by Monsanto

Washington University has received a \$930,000 grant from the Monsanto Co. to support graduate student research in life sciences. The grant, to be distributed over the next seven years, will establish a Monsanto graduate fellowship program.

Each year, two graduate students pursuing doctoral degrees in the university's Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences (DBBS) will be selected as fellows. Life sciences include plant sciences, microbiology, biochemistry, immunology, genetics and other specialties.

Jordan K. Teisher, a doctoral student in evolution, ecology and population biology, and Jeremy D. King, a doctoral student in plant biology, have been named the first Monsanto graduate fellows.

"Through this fellowship program, Monsanto is giving Washington University graduate students a unique opportunity to be exposed to the breadth of research in life sciences," says Stephen M. Beverley, PhD, the Marvin A. Brennecke Professor of Molecular Microbiology and chair of the executive council of the DBBS.

As fellows, the students will be taught how to run laboratory research programs. They also will have the opportunity to interact with Monsanto scientists to gain experience in a corporate research environment.



JORDAN K. TEISHER

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