

August 3, 2018

## Regeneron Announces the 2018 Winners of the Regeneron Prize for Creative Innovation

TARRYTOWN, N.Y., Aug. 3, 2018 /PRNewswire/ --

### ***Both young scientists are pursuing important research to further the understanding and treatment of neurological conditions***

Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (NASDAQ: **REGN**) announced the winners of the sixth annual Regeneron Prize for Creative Innovation, an award designed to recognize, reward and foster talented early-career biomedical scientists. The country's leading research institutions were asked to nominate top candidates in the 'graduate student' and 'postdoctoral fellow' categories. Regeneron's selection committee awarded the Regeneron Prize along with \$100,000 in prize money to two scientists, both at Harvard Medical School, who were celebrated at an awards ceremony last night.

"The Regeneron Prize for Creative Innovation seeks to honor determined, creative young scientists who are leading the way for the next generation of medical breakthroughs," said George D. Yancopoulos, M.D., Ph.D., President and Chief Scientific Officer of Regeneron. "This year's accomplished winners are working in mental health and neurological disorders; critical areas of research with a profound need for better therapeutic interventions. We hope they will serve as inspiration to other potential young scientists who have ideas that can improve our world."

Competitors were reviewed by a selection committee of senior scientists at Regeneron. In May 2018, finalists visited Regeneron to tour the campus and present their 'dream' research proposals in biomedical research, which offered insight into each nominee's creativity and ability to think independently as scientists.

The two winners will each receive a \$50,000 cash prize, and Harvard Medical School will receive a donation to support its seminar series. This year's winners are:

- 1 **Lauren Orefice, Ph.D., Harvard Medical School, Regeneron Prize for Creative Innovation by a Postdoctoral Fellow:** Dr. Orefice studies the function of peripheral sensory neurons in mouse models of autism spectrum disorders (ASDs), with the hypothesis that altered functioning of these neurons contributes to the development of the behavioral manifestations observed in ASDs. Specifically, she has shown that mice harboring mutations in certain ASD-associated genes, only in peripheral sensory neurons, show hypersensitivity across the body along with some core social and cognitive deficits typically associated with ASD mouse models.<sup>1</sup> Her data suggest a causal link between sensory hypersensitivity and the development of core autistic-like behaviors. Dr. Orefice will begin her own laboratory as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Molecular Biology at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Department of Genetics at Harvard Medical School. She hopes her research will lead to more effective early treatments for individuals with ASD.
- 1 **Clara Kwon Starkweather, Ph.D., Harvard Medical School, Regeneron Prize for Creative Innovation by a Graduate Student:** Dr. Starkweather studies the association between the firing of midbrain dopamine neurons and belief-related behaviors. In her recent work with mice, she showed that neurons fire differently depending on how confident the mice were that they were about to receive a water reward.<sup>2</sup> She hopes to ultimately use this research to better understand and treat psychiatric diseases characterized by disrupted belief states, such as schizophrenia.

"For six years now, the Regeneron Prize has elicited submissions from the brightest young minds in science on their dream projects," said Susan Croll, Ph.D., Regeneron scientist and Director of the Regeneron Postdoctoral Training Program. "This year's winners once again demonstrate the vast potential of the coming generation of scientists. We congratulate these outstanding scientists on their accomplishments and are eager to see what other feats they personally achieve and inspire in others."

Requests for applications are distributed to academic institutions late each fall. Institutions are asked to nominate two graduate students and two postdoctoral fellows. In addition to the dream project proposals, submissions must include a curriculum vitae and a sample of publications that enable the selection committee to review each nominee's scholarly productivity.

### **About Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc.**

Regeneron (NASDAQ: REGN) is a leading biotechnology company that invents life-transforming medicines for people with serious diseases. Founded and led for 30 years by physician-scientists, Regeneron's science-driven approach has resulted in six FDA-approved medicines and numerous product candidates, all of which are homegrown in their laboratories.

Regeneron's medicines and pipeline are designed to help in a range of diseases, including eye disease, allergic and inflammatory diseases, cancer, pain, infectious diseases and rare diseases. We believe that scientists should be the world's heroes and are committed to fostering the next generation of scientific talent through STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education efforts. For additional information about the company, please visit [www.regeneron.com](http://www.regeneron.com) or follow Regeneron on Twitter and Facebook.

### **Regeneron Media Relations**

**Alexandra Bowie**

Tel: +1 (202) 213-1643

[alexandra.bowie@regeneron.com](mailto:alexandra.bowie@regeneron.com)

<sup>1</sup> Orefice, L.L. (2016). "Peripheral Mechanosensory Neuron Dysfunction Underlies Tactile and Behavioral Deficits in Mouse Models of ASDs." *Cell*, 166, 299-313.

<sup>2</sup> Starkweather, C.K. (2017). "Dopamine reward prediction errors reflect hidden-state inference across time." *Nature Neuroscience*, 20(4), 581-589.

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