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NIDA Avant-Garde-Medications Development Award winners announced
Grants support novel approaches for treating methamphetamine and nicotine addiction

Scientists proposing to develop vaccines against methamphetamine and nicotine have been selected to receive NIDA's second Avant-Garde Awards for Innovative Medication Development Research. The two scientists, Dr. Thomas Kosten, of Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, and Dr. Peter Burkhard, of the University of Connecticut, Storrs, will each receive \$500,000 per year for five years to support their research, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health.

"Through this funding opportunity, NIDA once again strengthens its commitment toward developing safe and efficacious medications to treat addiction," said NIDA Director Nora D. Volkow, M.D. "This program expressly seeks to promote research projects that are ready for clinical translation and can accelerate the development of new medications."

Awardees are listed below:

Awardee: Thomas Kosten, M.D., Baylor College of Medicine

Project: Human methamphetamine vaccine

Dr. Kosten's group will accelerate the development of a methamphetamine vaccine, which is expected to undergo initial clinical trials within the next five years. At present there is no FDA-approved medication for methamphetamine addiction, so a vaccine could have substantial impact on the treatment of methamphetamine addiction.

Awardee: Peter Burkhard, Ph.D., University of Connecticut

Project: A peptide nanoparticle nicotine vaccine

Dr. Burkhard's lab plans to develop and test a novel type of vaccine that induces a strong immune response against nicotine without the need of chemical enhancers, which could result in a less expensive vaccine with fewer side effects. This nicotine vaccine will be administered intranasally, which will be more convenient and less painful than an injection. The new vaccine is expected to enter initial clinical trials within the next five years.

"Not only do these grantees have a strong background in vaccine research, but they also have clear plans for initiating clinical trials within an accelerated period of time," said Dr. Volkow. "They clearly represent the goal of the Avant-Garde program to support investigators of exceptional creativity who propose bold and highly innovative new research approaches that have the potential to produce a major impact on the treatment of drug abuse."

This research competition is an extension of NIDA's successful Avant-Garde Award for Innovative HIV/AIDS Research, now in its fourth year. For further information about the Avant-Garde Award, please visit <http://drugabuse.gov/avgp.html>. Information about applications for the 2012 Avant-Garde Awards will be posted on this site soon.

A statement from the NIDA Director on NIDA's commitment to vaccine development can be found at www.nida.nih.gov/about/welcome/Messagingvax2.html.

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The National Institute on Drug Abuse is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to inform policy and improve practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and information on NIDA research and other activities can be found on the NIDA home page at www.drugabuse.gov. To order publications in English or Spanish, call NIDA's new *DrugPubs* research dissemination center at 1-877-NIDA-NIH or 240-645-0228 (TDD) or fax or email requests to 240-645-0227 or drugpubs@nida.nih.gov. Online ordering is available at <http://drugpubs.drugabuse.gov>. NIDA's new media guide can be found at <http://drugabuse.gov/mediaguide/>.

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