NEWS RELEASE

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Jefferson Awarded $2.8 Million Grant in Support of Dr. Vincent Njar's Project to Develop 2nd Generation RAMBAs

Research Aims to Develop New Treatment for Breast Cancer

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has awarded Thomas Jefferson University a five-year $2,824,075 R01 grant for a project titled "Development of VN/14-1 and Related Analogs for Breast Cancer Therapy." The principal investigator of the grant is Vincent C. O. Njar, PhD, Professor of Medicinal Chemistry and Oncopharmacology in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences at Jefferson School of Pharmacy (JSP) and member of TJU's Kimmel Cancer Center. This is the first R01 grant awarded to a JSP faculty member.

VN/14-1 is a multi-target retinoic acid metabolism blocking agent (RAMBA) invented by Dr. Njar. It is in further development by Cancer Research UK for breast cancer therapy. The goal of this NIH-funded project is to develop new, metabolically more stable and efficacious analogs of VN/14-1 (i.e., 2nd generation atypical RAMBAs) for breast cancer therapy.

To effectively tackle this project Dr. Njar is collaborating with a multi-disciplinary team of investigators at TJU, including Mathew Thakur, PhD, Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology; Paolo Fortina, MD, PhD, Professor, Department of Cancer Biology; and Constantine Daskalakis, ScD, Associate Professor, Division of Biostatistics, Department of Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics. Other investigators in Dr. Njar's lab working on this project are Lalji Gediya, PhD, Instructor; Purushottamachar Puranik, PhD, Senior Postdoctoral Fellow; and Abhijit Godbole, MBBS, graduate student.

The grant was reviewed by the NIH Drug Discovery and Molecular Pharmacology (DMP) Study Section and received Impact/Priority Score of 17 (range: 10-90) and percentile of 1. Enthusiasm level for the application was in the exceptional range.

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