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For Immediate Release

2017 Vision Grant Recipients Announced

Awardees Hail from Houston, Texas, Washington DC, and Montreal, Canada

Melbourne, Florida – October 5, 2017 – The Preeclampsia Foundation and its affiliate Preeclampsia Foundation Canada have announced that Manu Banadakoppa, PhD, Mayri Sagady Leslie, EdD, MSN, CNM, FACNM, and Sylvie Girard, PhD, are recipients of the 2017 Vision Grants. These highly competitive monetary awards recognize the best young investigators with novel research ideas in preeclampsia and related hypertensive disorders of pregnancy. (These \$20,000 research grants were awarded in USD for US awards and CAD for the Canadian award.)

The Vision Grants were awarded to the scientific proposals recommended by the Preeclampsia Foundation’s scientific review committee with a further review by a consumer advisory board. The Preeclampsia Foundation’s Board of Directors from the US and Canada render the final decision on those recommendations.

Dr. Manu Banadakoppa’s research, “Complement Activation and Preeclampsia,” will be conducted at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas. The purpose of his research is to better understand the underlying pathophysiology of preeclampsia. The study will focus on the dysregulated maternal innate immune system at the molecular level as a possible cause of the development of preeclampsia symptoms.

Banadakoppa earned his PhD in Biochemistry at the University of Mysore, Central Food Technological Research Institute, in Mysore, India. He has been recognized with several grants and awards, including the D. S. Kothari Post-Doctoral Award from the University Grants Commission in New Delhi, India.

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“The personal loss of a mom’s love inspires me to work on finding solutions related to maternity,” said Banadakoppa. “I believe that our research will shed light on the fundamental molecular mechanisms that went awry in preeclampsia.”

Dr. Mayri Sagady Leslie’s study, “The PEACH Project: Preeclampsia Survivor Awareness of Cardiovascular Health Risk,” will be conducted at George Washington University in Washington, DC, with support from its School of Nursing’s faculty researchers Linda Briggs, DNP, and Maritza Dowling, PhD. This research will gather important knowledge about how and when survivors of preeclampsia or other hypertensive disorders of pregnancy gain awareness of their increased risk for heart disease and stroke. In addition, investigators will examine how awareness may impact health behaviors that can reduce the risk for cardiovascular disease and death. Study findings can help to improve care and outcomes for preeclampsia survivors.

Leslie earned a Doctor of Education degree from George Washington University, a Master of Science degree in Nursing from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, and a Certificate in Midwifery from the Frontier School of Midwifery in Hyden, Kentucky. She is also a Fellow in the American College of Nurse-Midwifery.

“Previous research has shown us that patient awareness of their risks can impact health behaviors,” said Leslie. “We estimate that a majority of women with hypertensive disorders in pregnancy are not being educated about their increased cardiovascular risks. We are excited about this study utilizing The Preeclampsia Registry – it will be the premiere opportunity to explore both awareness and health behaviors with a substantial number of preeclampsia survivors.”

Dr. Sylvie Girard’s research, “Maternal Immune System in Preeclampsia,” will be conducted at Centre Hospitalier Universitaire Sainte-Justine in Montreal, Canada. The main goal of her research is to gather in-depth understanding of the role of the maternal immune system and the causal link with activation of the vascular endothelium in preeclampsia. This study will provide an in-depth understanding of the mechanisms involved and help identify new therapies.

Girard obtained her PhD from the Université de Sherbrooke, Quebec, prior to pursuing postdoctoral studies at the University of Manchester in the UK and at Yale University in the US. She is currently an assistant professor at the Université de Montreal and part of the Sainte-Justine Hospital Research Center in Montreal, Quebec. Her work combines immunology and obstetrics in order to advance an understanding of pregnancy complications, in particular preeclampsia.

“I am very excited to undertake this work supported by the Preeclampsia Foundation of Canada,” said Girard. “I truly believe it will not only lead to a better understanding of preeclampsia but also be key to the development of more efficient therapeutic targets greatly needed for this pathology.”

For more information or to arrange an interview with any of the Vision Grant recipients or the leadership of the Preeclampsia Foundation and/or Preeclampsia Foundation Canada, please call 1.800.665.9341.

Preeclampsia Foundation

The Preeclampsia Foundation is a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization established in 2000. As the nation's only patient advocacy organization dedicated to hypertensive disorders of pregnancy, the Foundation works to achieve its mission by raising public awareness, providing patient support and education, improving healthcare practices, and catalyzing research. The Foundation envisions a world where preeclampsia and related hypertensive disorders of pregnancy no longer threaten the lives of mothers and their babies. For more information, visit www.preeclampsia.org.

Preeclampsia Foundation Canada

Preeclampsia Foundation Canada was incorporated under the Canada Not-for-profit Corporations Act in May 2015. A charity dedicated to its mission of raising awareness and advancing education and research of hypertensive disorders of pregnancy. These activities are made possible by the combined efforts of our dedicated Board of Directors, Medical Advisory Board members, donors, and volunteers. For more information, visit www.preeclampsiacanada.ca.

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