GLADSTONE INSTITUTE OF VIROLOGY AND IMMUNOLOGY
NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 29, 2004

GLADSTONE INVESTIGATOR MIKE MCCUNE WINS PRESTIGIOUS NIH DIRECTOR'S PIONEER AWARD

Funding over Five Years Will Further Expert's Research into HIV/AIDS

Joseph ("Mike") McCune, MD, PhD, a senior investigator at the Gladstone Institute of Virology and Immunology and a professor of medicine and of microbiology and immunology at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), was today named a recipient of the first-ever NIH Director's Pioneer Award.

McCune is among nine researchers across the country chosen to receive the prestigious award, established last year and awarded for the first time this year. The NIH Director's Pioneer Award (NDPA) program was created to identify and fund investigators of exceptionally creative abilities and to provide them with enough funding—$500,000 per year in direct costs over five years—to develop and test far-ranging ideas. The only constraint on the funding is that it be used for research that is relevant to the NIH mission of science in pursuit of knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems.

McCune will use the funds to further his research into the mechanisms by which HIV causes immunodeficiency, with an eye toward understanding immune responses that might prevent the development of AIDS in HIV-infected people. Such insight, he says, could lead to more effective therapeutics for those with HIV, as well as to effective vaccine strategies for those at risk of being infected with HIV.

In recent years, McCune and his Gladstone team have focused on disease-causing mechanisms of HIV infection in research mice. They have also studied HIV effects on the production of disease-fighting white blood cells in patients with HIV disease. This work has provided insights into the mechanisms that normally support the human immune system and the processes by which HIV can cause immunodeficiency.

"Now I want to know if there are certain types of immune responses that protect against infection and others that might instead slow down the pace of disease," he explains. "Perhaps more importantly, I want to apply this knowledge to the creation of a vaccine that will prevent people from developing AIDS—and that will also be available for use around the world."

McCune, an associate director of the General Clinical Research Center at San Francisco General Hospital, earned his medical degree from Cornell University Medical College and his doctorate in immunology and cell biology from The Rockefeller University. He completed a residency in internal medicine at UCSF and then, after a postdoctoral fellowship in pathology at Stanford, went on to found two biotechnology companies, SyStemix and Progenesys. These

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companies were among the first to work on hematopoietic stem cells and the application of stem cell-based gene therapy for the treatment of HIV disease.

McCune, who joined the Gladstone Institute of Virology and Immunology in 1995, has been associated with UCSF since the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, first as a resident and subsequently as a faculty member. Through these two decades, he has continued to see patients with HIV disease at the AIDS Clinic (Ward 86) at San Francisco General Hospital. He won the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation Scientist Award in 1996, the Burroughs Wellcome Fund Clinical Scientist Award in Translational Research in 2000, and a MERIT Award from the NIH in 2001. He holds 20 patents and inventions, and has published over 120 journal articles.

The Gladstone Institute of Virology and Immunology is one of three research institutes of The J. David Gladstone Institutes, an independent, nonprofit biomedical research institution affiliated with UCSF. For further information, visit *www.gladstone.ucsf.edu*.

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