

**PROGRESS REPORT FOR THE  
SPINAL CORD AND BRAIN INJURY RESEARCH CENTER  
(SCoBIRC)  
UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY**

**SUBMITTED TO THE  
KENTUCKY SPINAL CORD AND HEAD INJURY RESEARCH TRUST  
(KSCHIRT)**

**NOVEMBER 18, 1999**

**JAMES W. GEDDES, PH.D.**

**SCoBIRC DIRECTOR**

**1. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SPINAL CORD AND BRAIN INJURY RESEARCH CENTER**

The Spinal Cord and Brain Injury Research Center (SCoBIRC) was approved by the University of Kentucky Board of Trustees and the University of Kentucky Senate in May 1999. The proposal to establish SCoBIRC was also approved by the Kentucky Spinal Cord and Head Injury Research Trust (KSCHIRT) in December 1998. Briefly, KSCHIRT has generously agreed to provide \$ 2.5 million in support over the next five years, \$2 million of which is to be matched by the University and placed in an endowment to support faculty salaries and also to support the training of graduate students and postdoctoral researchers. The remaining \$500,000 is to be used to defray renovation costs and start-up expenses associated with the hiring of new faculty. The University has secured \$2 million in matching funds and will provide additional support for start-up costs and faculty salaries. KSHIRT contributions from the previous two years (1996-97 and 1997-98) have been also been placed in an endowment, along with matching funds from the University. Together, this funding will enable SCoBIRC to recruit a Director, Clinical Director, and three additional faculty members.

With the assistance of the College of Medicine Public Relations Office, a series of press interviews were held to publicize SCoBIRC within the University and the community. The press coverage was very positive and SCoBIRC has been warmly received.

## **2. SCoBIRC DIRECTOR RECRUITMENT**

The initial search for a Director of SCoBIRC was conducted during fall 1998 and spring 1999. Eighteen applications were received; one applicant was interviewed and declined an offer. At that time, SCoBIRC was a subunit within the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology. In recognition of the importance of SCoBIRC within the University of Kentucky, SCoBIRC was organized as an independent unit within the College of Medicine with the Director reporting directly to the Associate Dean for Research. As a result of this change in organizational structure, Phase 1 of the Director search was closed and a new Director search (Phase 2) was initiated.

In Phase 2 of the director search, 17 applications were received to date. Four candidates were interviewed, two external and two internal. Due to the lack of available laboratory space at the University of Kentucky Medical Center and the uncertainty regarding the proposed Biomedical Research Building, it was not possible to provide sufficient laboratory space to recruit a strong external candidate. Dr. Jim Geddes was appointed as Director for a three-year term, beginning November 1, 1999. At the midpoint of the third year of this appointment, a national search will be initiated for the permanent Director.

## **3. SCoBIRC FACULTY RECRUITMENT**

We have been fortunate to recruit George Smith, Ph.D., from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas. Dr. Smith is an expert on the application of gene therapy to treat spinal cord injury, particularly to increase the

expression of neurotrophic factors. He has been appointed as an Associate Professor in the Department of Physiology. Dr. Smith is highly regarded for his use of state-of-the-art techniques to develop novel therapeutic approaches for spinal cord injury and exemplifies the high caliber of faculty that will be recruited by SCoBIRC.

#### **4. SCoBIRC LECTURE SERIES AND SYMPOSIUM**

With the support of KSCHIRT, we hosted a "Neurotrauma Minisymposium" on April 16, 1999. The invited speakers were Dr. Tracy McIntosh, University of Pennsylvania, "Molecular and Cellular Sequelae of Brain Injury: Implications for Novel Therapeutic Strategies;" Dr. Michael Beattie, Ohio State University, "Cell Death, Repair, and Recovery after Experimental Spinal Cord Injury;" and Dr. David Gater, University of Kentucky, "Lipid and Glucose Metabolism after Spinal Cord Injury: A Clinical Perspective." Approximately 70 researchers from the University of Kentucky and University of Louisville attended this mini-symposium. Two additional investigators have been invited to speak at the University of Kentucky, Dr. John McDonald from Washington University, and Dr. Xu from St. Louis University. In addition, five SCoBIRC Director candidates presented seminars during the past year and Dr. Scott Whittemore, University of Louisville, spoke in the Department of Physiology seminar series.

#### **5. SCoBIRC BUDGET**

The expenditure of funds received from KSCHIRT has progressed as outlined in the five-year plan to establish SCoBIRC. Trust contributions from 1996-97 and 1997-98 were placed in an endowment along with matching funds from the University. Interest from this endowment provides partial salary support for Dr. George Smith, who is also supported by an RCTF faculty line. Endowment interest will also provide partial salary support for the permanent Director. At the present time, Dr. Geddes receives salary support from a regular faculty line and a supplement from other sources.

The \$500,000 trust contribution from 1998-99 was requested to defray start-up and renovation costs associated with the hiring of Center faculty. The funds have been used for this purpose. To date, \$379,700 has been spent on renovations and start-up funds for Dr. George Smith, the recruitment of Dr. Smith, and the Director search. An additional \$55,000 has been allocated to develop a core laboratory for spinal cord and head injury models.

For the fiscal year 1999-2000, the \$ 500,000 contribution from KSCHIRT will be matched by the University and placed in an endowment to support salary costs for one additional faculty member. Recruitment for this position will begin immediately.

#### **6. NEUROTRAUMA SOCIETY ANNUAL MEETING**

It is noteworthy that sixteen investigators from the University of Kentucky attended the Neurotrauma Society annual meeting in Miami, October 1999. To my knowledge, this was the largest representation from any Institution and demonstrates the success of KSCHIRT in attracting investigators into spinal cord and head injury research at the University of Kentucky.

## **7. GOALS FOR 2000**

Our plans and goals for the coming year are to:

- Recruit one additional faculty member
- Establish a Core Laboratory for neurotrauma injury models
- Establish a Scientific Advisory Board
- Establish a SCoBIRC Foundation to assist with outreach and fundraising
- Host the KSCHIRT-supported Neurotrauma meeting. This will be held on June 12-14, 2000, at the Embassy Suites Hotel, Lexington