

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Sept. 16, 2011

Contact: Susan Lomas, President  
Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation  
P.O Box 1016  
Venice, FL 34284-1016  
(941) 485-8000  
E-mail: sue@pmsf.org

### **PHELAN-MCDERMID SYNDROME FOUNDATION AWARDS FIRST POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP**

The Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation (PMSF) is pleased to announce its first post-doctoral fellowship. The Board of Directors of PMSF has awarded \$100,000 for research related to the study of Phelan-McDermid Syndrome, a genetic condition caused by a mutation or deletion of the Shank3 gene, to Xiaoming Wang, M.D., Ph.D., of Duke University. Xiaoming Wang, along with mentor Yong-Hui Jiang, M.D., Ph.D., will for the next two years conduct biochemical, synaptic and behavioral analyses of a new mutant mouse model that disrupts the entire Shank3 gene. Shank3 mutations and deletions are a focus of intense research interest since they are one of the genetic causes of autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

PMSF set out to award the \$100,000 fellowship to further research related to the identification of the molecular pathophysiology of PMS that can inform translational research for drug discovery, the development and evaluation of novel treatments that can address the core symptoms and associated medical (including psychiatric) conditions of PMS throughout a person's lifespan, or the development of evidence-based clinical care recommendations for PMS.

Duke's Xiaoming Wang will develop a knock-out mouse that has construct validity – it would be the first valid mouse model of PMS that mimics the molecular defect found in the syndrome, also known as 22q13 deletion syndrome. In Xiaoming Wang's winning proposal, he wrote: "The proposed study is significant because Shank3 complete deficiency mice offer an excellent opportunity to fully understand the function and role of SHANK3 in PMS and ASD, and also provide a unique reference for head-to-head comparison with other isoform-specific Shank3 mutant mice. A valid PMS mouse model will ultimately lead to the exploration of treatment strategies."

Dr. Xiaoming Wang has worked as a post-doctoral fellow in the lab of Dr. Jiang at Duke University since 2008, where his work has focused on the autism-associated Shank3 gene. He was first author on an important Shank3 paper, (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21558424>), published in the journal of Human Molecular Genetics. Before arriving at Duke, he received his Ph.D. in 2008 from Fudan University in Shanghai, China, where he received extensive training in biochemistry and molecular biology. He received his M.D. at Dalian University in Dalian, China, in 2000.

For more information about the Fellowship program, contact PMSF Research Support Committee Chair Geraldine Bliss at [gbliss@att.net](mailto:gbliss@att.net).

#### **About Phelan-McDermid Syndrome**

Phelan-McDermid Syndrome, also known as 22q13 deletion syndrome, is a genetic condition found in approximately 1 percent of people with ASD. Phelan-McDermid Syndrome is a complex disorder involving developmental disability, delayed or absent expressive speech, autism or autistic-like features, seizures, and other medical conditions. The Foundation's Research Support

Committee strives to improve the quality of life for individuals and families affected by PMS by fostering sound genetic, biological and medical research related to the causes, effects, diagnosis and effective treatments of PMS. The Foundation's grants and fellowships program is intended to encourage research projects that will advance the development of treatments and cures for PMS.

**About Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation**

The Phelan-McDermid Syndrome Foundation raises awareness among the public and medical community about the syndrome and its effects on families. It was established in 2000 and is headquartered in Venice, Fla. Among its goals is supporting science for autism-related research.

**Follow us at**

[www.pmsf.org](http://www.pmsf.org) / [Facebook.com/22q13Foundation](https://www.facebook.com/22q13Foundation) / [Twitter.com/Phelan-McDermid](https://twitter.com/Phelan-McDermid)