

**For Immediate Release**

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### **RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS INVESTIGATORS COLLABORATE TO FIND A CURE FOR RA**

**SAN DIEGO** – Over 50 rheumatoid arthritis investigators from across the country recently met in San Diego to share information and present data and results from their innovative RA projects and to brainstorm ways to work more closely together to find a cure for RA.

Viewed as one of the most common and disabling types of arthritis, RA affects nearly 1.3 million Americans. RA causes pain, stiffness, swelling, and limitation in the motion of multiple joints and can cause inflammation in other organs as well. Because of rapidly advancing research into the fundamentals of inflammation and immunity, the outlook for those suffering from RA has improved dramatically over the past 25 years. Recent advances in treatment have made it possible to stop, or at least slow the progression of joint damage though serious complications and premature death remain important complications of the disease. Much research remains to be done to uncover the cause and to find the cure for RA.

Establishing collaborations between scientists in different locations—in some cases on opposite ends of the country—and across disciplines can often be challenging, but have been invaluable in answering many important scientific questions. Therefore, the American College of Rheumatology Research and Education Foundation brought together the investigators funded through its *Within Our Reach: Finding a Cure for Rheumatoid Arthritis* campaign with REF leadership, promising young investigators, as well as representatives from the National Institutes of Health to allow for a fluid exchange of knowledge and information.

“This meeting presented cutting-edge research on the cause, diagnosis and treatment of rheumatoid arthritis,” says Leslie Crofford, MD, REF President. “As our current *Within Our Reach* investigators represent a variety of scientific disciplines, including biochemistry, immunology, molecular biology and genetics, the meeting featured a wide range of topics in the context of rheumatoid arthritis.”

The goal of the meeting, explains Dr. Crofford, “was to encourage these scientists to brainstorm and approach cross-disciplinary collaborations in order to accelerate RA research.”

One such collaboration has already resulted from the first Investigators’ Meeting, held last year, between Gregg J. Silverman, MD, of the University of California, San Diego, and William F.C. Rigby, MD, of Dartmouth College. Both have known each other for years, but bringing these physician-scientists together to discuss current research spurred ideas for new projects.

“Dr. Rigby and I have complementary perspectives and we are planning on future research projects,” says Dr. Silverman. He also comments, “it isn’t one scientist who works in isolation in their efforts to find a cure for RA, as we move even faster when we collaborate with our colleagues in other institutions. Bringing the right people together is what it is all about.”

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## **RA INVESTIGATORS COLLABORATE IN CALIF. 2**

Dr. Rigby echoes Dr. Silverman's sentiment by saying, "one of the major strengths of a meeting such as this is that it allows an array of investigators with diverse talents, interests and strengths the time to discuss new ideas and strategies in RA therapeutics. Thus, it allows our interests to broaden through the generation of new collaborations. The provision of funds for research and the opportunity to discuss them by the *Within our Reach* program has resulted in major advances for RA research."

While their collaborative project is not yet formalized, Drs. Silverman and Rigby are thinking about how to better predict individual patient response to therapies already available. Dr. Silverman says, "As a clinician-scientist I think, how do I make my best clinical choice between the biologic agents available?" He continues, "getting together our different perspectives will hopefully be fruitful for advances in the future," thus making it easier to prescribe the best possible therapy for their patients.

The *Within Our Reach* campaign, launched in 2006, is the largest private fundraising campaign in the REF's history. It will tap a diverse donor base, and raise \$30 million to accelerate the innovative research necessary to find a cure for RA. The campaign has received tremendous support from the pharmaceutical industry, biotech companies, physicians and patients, raising nearly \$25 million to date.

To learn more about rheumatoid arthritis and the campaign, please visit [www.WithinOurReach.info](http://www.WithinOurReach.info).

### **About ACR Research and Education Foundation**

The ACR Research and Education Foundation was established in 1985 as a 501(c)(3) with a mission to improve patients' lives through support of research and training that advances the prevention, treatment and cure of rheumatic diseases. Since its founding, the REF has grown from a fledgling foundation to the second largest funding source of rheumatology training and research in the U.S. On average, 90 cents of every dollar donated to the REF is used to fund its extensive core awards and grants program. For more information, please visit [www.rheumatology.org/REF](http://www.rheumatology.org/REF).

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