

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **Local Professor and Alzheimer's Disease Researcher Awarded Zenith Grant**

**Seattle, WA** (October 19, 2010): In 2010, the Alzheimer's Association International Research Grant Program awarded nearly \$14 million in funding to 84 investigators. Funded projects represent the proposals ranked highest by peer reviewers in an extremely competitive field of 740 applications. Since 1982, the Alzheimer's Association has committed over \$279 million to more than 1,900 best-of-field grant proposals.

Zenith Society Awards support senior scientists who have made significant contributions to the field and continue to pursue promising lines of investigation about disease mechanisms, diagnosis, novel treatments and quality care. Only five were granted this year, including the work of University of Washington professor and Veteran's Administration researcher, Dr. Suzanne Craft.

Craft is Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington, Director of the Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center of the VA Puget Sound Health Care System (VAPSHCS), and Director of the Memory Disorders Clinic at the VAPSHCS/AL Division. She is a neuropsychologist with specialization in neuroendocrinology and neuroscience. Dr. Craft's "Intranasal Insulin Analogue Effects on CSF and Imaging Biomarkers in MCI (mild cognitive impairment)" research is showing significant results.

Insulin is known to be critical for controlling blood sugar levels, but it also performs other important functions in the brain. Previous research has shown that persons who have Alzheimer's disease have reduced levels of insulin in the brain, as well resistance to the effects of insulin.

Mild cognitive impairment (MCI) is a form of mild brain dysfunction that can progress to Alzheimer's disease in some individuals. Suzanne Craft, Ph.D. and colleagues have found that administration of intranasal insulin to persons with Alzheimer's disease or MCI can improve cognitive function. However, this effect lasted for only a short period of time. In order to mimic normal bodily function, the researchers have proposed using a modified version of insulin that has a longer period of action, mimicking the body's ability to continuously produce small amounts of insulin. Furthermore, they plan to administer this long-acting insulin through the nose, where it can gain easier access into the fluid that surrounds nerve cells of the brain (cerebrospinal fluid or CSF).

Dr. Craft's team has proposed a small pilot trial of long-acting insulin in persons with one form of MCI known as amnesic MCI. The researchers will study how long-acting insulin or placebo affect cognitive function, brain blood flow, and the levels of chemicals in the CSF known to be associated with MCI. These studies will provide initial evidence of whether long-acting insulin should be studied in larger clinical trials aimed at reducing the cognitive effects of MCI and perhaps slowing the progression to Alzheimer's disease.

"Dr. Suzanne Craft is a leader in the fields of geriatric and neuroscience research," said Patricia Lee Hunter, Interim Director of the Western and Central Washington State Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, based in Seattle. "The intranasal research led by Dr. Craft gives us great insights into the important role of insulin in brain function and memory. It also helps us

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better understand the connection between type 2 diabetes/insulin resistance and how it relates to Alzheimer's disease."

Craft's important research was recently featured on **ABC News** (October 18, 2010).  
<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/video/richard-besser-talks-alzheimers-11911763>

"The Alzheimer's Association is very pleased to fund Dr. Craft's innovative approach to insulin and Alzheimer's disease," said William Thies, PhD, National Alzheimer's Association chief medical and scientific officer. "Zenith Award recipients must be 'on the cutting edge' of basic science or biomedical research, and address fundamental problems related to early detection, treatment and/or prevention of Alzheimer's. We hope to learn much from her work."

The Zenith Fellows Awards are made possible by the generosity of a group of individuals and organizations (Zenith Fellows) that have each committed \$1 million to the Alzheimer's Association for support of the program. The objective of the 2010 Zenith Fellows Award competition is to provide major support for investigators who have contributed significantly to the field of Alzheimer's disease, or who have made significant contributions to other areas of science and are now beginning to focus more directly on problems related to Alzheimer's disease.

## **About the Alzheimer's Association, Western and Central Washington State Chapter**

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's. Our Chapter is based in Seattle and serves a 23 county region. For more information, visit [www.alzwa.org](http://www.alzwa.org).

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