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For Immediate Release

New Cause of Congenital Hydrocephalus Opens the Door to Collaborative Research Study

Hydrocephalus Association Commends Researchers on Discovery

Bethesda, MD, April 30, 2013: Yesterday afternoon the Institute of Biosciences and Technology at Texas A&M University formally announced that researchers discovered a connection between a form of congenital hydrocephalus and a genetic defect. The study is led by Jiang Chang, M.D., Ph.D., associate professor in the Center for Translational Cancer Research and a prominent researcher focusing on the abnormal development of heart tissue and how it leads to heart failure. After identifying the significant finding for hydrocephalus among his study subjects, Dr. Chang attended a local Hydrocephalus Association (HA) support group meeting to meet individuals affected by hydrocephalus and to share his findings with the Association.

"This is just beginning," stated Dr. Chang. "I am more than happy and curious to further this study. I would like to explore collaborations by bringing clinicians and basic scientists into the study. The participation of hydrocephalus patients in the study is extremely important as well, given the fact that there are so many unknown questions about human hydrocephalus and a limited patient population. There are many things we can do in the disease prevention, treatment and prognosis, if we work together."

HA is excited not only for the potential breakthrough for its members but also because of the introduction of new scientists in the hydrocephalus research community. HA has already introduced Dr. Chang to other established hydrocephalus investigators as well as to contacts at NIH to help accelerate his research.

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This is a particularly significant finding for those in the hydrocephalus community with a congenital form of the condition. It is estimated that 1 to 2 of every 1,000 babies are born with hydrocephalus. There is currently no cure for hydrocephalus and the only treatment requires brain surgery, typically the permanent implantation of a shunt. Studies have found that half of all shunts fail within the first two years of insertion, leaving the majority of children and their families facing a lifetime of multiple brain surgeries. This discovery will allow researchers to pursue pharmaceutical interventions to treat, and possibly prevent, this form of congenital hydrocephalus.

"This ground breaking research provides great hope that someday our children will have a bright future free from the fear of repeated, unplanned, emergency brain surgeries. I am so grateful to these researchers for this major discovery and thrilled for the hydrocephalus community," stated Barrett O'Connor, Chair of the Hydrocephalus Association Board of Directors.

The study findings are available online in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. The press release from the Texas A&M Health Science Center can be read by clicking here.

About the Hydrocephalus Association

The Hydrocephalus Association (HA) is a charitable non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating the challenges of hydrocephalus by stimulating research and supporting people who are affected by this condition. Incorporated in 1986, HA is now the nation's largest and most widely respected organization dedicated solely to serving those affected by hydrocephalus. HA has been instrumental in creating a community of individuals, families and health care professionals addressing the complexities of hydrocephalus in all age groups. In 2009, HA launched its Research Initiative and has funded $2 million in research to enhance the understanding of this complex condition as well as to find better treatment options and, ultimately, a cure.

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