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## Dr. Mark J. Shlomchik Receives Lupus Insight Prize Recognizing Outstanding Contribution in Lupus Research

WASHINGTON, DC (June 27, 2013) -- **Mark J. Shlomchik, M.D., Ph.D.**, the incoming Chair of Immunology at the University of Pittsburgh, was honored today as the first recipient of the Lupus Insight Prize, the first-of-a-kind award for use in innovative research on lupus, an unpredictable and sometimes fatal autoimmune disease that affects an estimated 1.5 million Americans. Dr. Shlomchik received the Prize during a formal ceremony at [FOCIS 2013](#), the 13th Annual Meeting of the Federation of Clinical Immunology Societies in Boston.

The Prize is a collaborative initiative among the [Alliance for Lupus Research](#), the [Lupus Foundation of America](#), and the [Lupus Research Institute](#) to recognize and honor the achievements of an outstanding investigator in the field, and whose research efforts have a high likelihood of generating further advances in understanding of the causes, biology, treatments, or cure of lupus.

“I would like to thank the three sponsoring organizations for bestowing this honor upon me,” said Dr. Shlomchik. “Lupus is a very complex disease for which I have devoted much of my career. This prize will help to further my research on the underlying causes of lupus which may lead to better understanding of lupus and ultimately make it possible to develop new and more effective therapies to bring an end to its devastating impact.”

With the award funds, Dr. Shlomchik will investigate the connection between the death of neutrophils, the body’s most abundant white blood cells, and lupus. Many researchers believe lupus is the result of an abnormal immune response to dying cells. To fight infections, neutrophils use a molecule called NADPH oxidase. It was thought that this molecule, however, may cause these neutrophils to die in a way that promotes an autoimmune response. However, to the surprise of most lupus researchers, Dr. Shlomchik discovered that lupus-prone mice that are missing this gene, have markedly worse disease—the opposite of the original theory.

Dr. Shlomchik will create new animal models of lupus that produce neutrophils lacking NADPH oxidase to test how this molecule prevents animals from developing severe lupus. Because NADPH oxidase is turned on by infections, the work could help researchers understand the role infections might play in triggering lupus.

Lupus Research Institute President/CEO Margaret Dowd commented, “The Lupus Insight Prize recognizes Dr. Shlomchik’s outstanding contributions to the field and supports his ability to

continue his innovative work. Judging by the exceptional quality of Dr. Shlomchik's LRI-funded project, we can look forward to his further progress in developing novel approaches for new treatments."

Additional information about the Lupus Insight Prize and Dr. Shlomchik's work in lupus are available online at [www.lupusinsightprize.org](http://www.lupusinsightprize.org). Information on the application process for the 2014 Prize will be posted in the coming weeks.

### **About Lupus**

Lupus is a chronic autoimmune disease that causes inflammation and tissue damage to any organ system in the body. The health effects of lupus include heart attacks, strokes, seizures, organ failure, and possible death. An estimated 1.5 million Americans and at least five million people worldwide have lupus.

### **About the Funding Organizations**

For more information about the Alliance for Lupus Research, visit [www.lupusresearch.org](http://www.lupusresearch.org).

For more information about the Lupus Foundation of America, visit [www.lupus.org](http://www.lupus.org).

For more information about the Lupus Research Institute, visit [www.lupusresearchinstitute.org](http://www.lupusresearchinstitute.org).

### **About FOCIS**

[FOCIS 2013](#) is the 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Federation of Clinical Immunology Societies in Boston, where scientists are presenting their findings on lupus and other diseases affecting the immune system. FOCIS exists to improve human health through immunology by fostering interdisciplinary approaches to understand and treat immune-based diseases.

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