



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **National Institutes of Health Awards \$15M to MMC**

*Studies to Advance Research in Osteoporosis, Obesity and Growing Kidney Tissue*

PORTLAND, Maine — The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has awarded a total of \$15 million in research grants to two researchers at the Maine Medical Center Research Institute (MMCRI).

MMCRI Director of Clinical and Translational Research and Senior Scientist Clifford J. Rosen, M.D., along with his colleagues at Yale University, Harvard University and University of Michigan, was awarded an \$8,048,101 five-year renewal grant to study the characteristics of bone marrow fat and how these fat cells affect other tissue. MMCRI is serving as the coordinating site and the liaison with the National Institutes of Health.

“This is the first time researchers are looking at the link between osteoporosis and obesity in the bone marrow,” said Dr. Rosen. “There is tremendous potential for this study to affect the diagnosis and treatments of two very common conditions.”

Dr. Rosen has also received a \$100,000 grant from the NIH’s Office of Research on Women’s Health (ORWH) to study the differences in male and female bone development at a cellular level. This project, a supplemental award to a larger grant

under which Dr. Rosen is studying how the protein IGFBP-2 stimulates new bone formation, is a collaborative with Dr. David Clemmons at the University of North Carolina.

“We know that there is huge difference between the sexes in terms of how bone is developed, and we will now have a first-ever opportunity to see if these bone cells are programmed differently in men and women,” said Dr. Rosen. This is in line with major initiatives throughout NIH to address the issue of sex differences in clinical and basic studies including the [2010 NIH Strategic Plan for Women’s Health: A Vision for 2020](#).

Leif Oxburgh, D.V.M, Ph.D., of the MMCRI Center for Molecular Medicine was awarded a five-year grant of \$6,855,225 from NIH for a groundbreaking study to rebuild kidney tissue for people with kidney disease, which may ultimately provide an alternative to kidney transplants. Dr. Oxburgh is coordinating the study which includes collaborators from Tufts University and the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center.

“To address complex questions such as engineering new kidney tissue, we need to assemble the best team, irrespective of geographic location. With this funding we have built a team of experts with complementary research expertise from three different academic research centers from Maine to Texas,” said Dr. Oxburgh. “The next five years will see accelerating progress in tissue engineering, and it is a great privilege to help lay the groundwork for a solution to kidney transplant organ shortage.”

The Maine Medical Center Research Institute’s work is aligned with the NIH’s growing focus on interdisciplinary studies to better answer complex medical questions by bringing together experts from different fields.

Don St. Germain, MD, Vice President of Research for MMC and Director of the Maine Medical Center Research Institute (MMCRI) said: “Dr. Rosen is a seasoned and internationally recognized scientist in the bone metabolism field, who is a pioneer in the concept of team science and was one of the first investigators in the country to receive interdisciplinary research funding from NIH.”

“Dr. Oxburgh began his career at MMCRI as a junior investigator and quickly rose to independent status with NIH funding for kidney research. These grants, where MMCRI will coordinate large multi-state studies are of great importance in treating disease, are testament to our outstanding research environment and our commitment to collaboration to advance cutting-edge solutions to health problems.”

## **About Maine Medical Center**

Maine Medical Center (MMC), recognized as the number-one ranked hospital in Maine by *U.S. News and World Report for 2015-2016*, is a complete health care resource for the people of Greater Portland and the entire state, as well as northern New England. Incorporated in 1864, MMC is the state's largest medical center, licensed for 637 beds and employing nearly 6,500 people. MMC's unique role as both a community hospital and a referral center requires an unparalleled depth and breadth of services, including an active educational program and a world-class biomedical research center. As a nonprofit institution, Maine Medical Center provides nearly 23 percent of all the charity care delivered in Maine. MMC is a member of the MaineHealth system, a growing family of health care services in northern New England. For more information, visit [www.mmc.org](http://www.mmc.org).

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