



LABioMed

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**LA BioMed Investigators Honored
For Studies of Obesity and Rare Genetic Disorder**
Award Recognizes Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Research

LOS ANGELES—(May 31, 2011)—Patricia Dickson, MD, and Jennifer Yee, MD, Los Angeles Biomedical Research Institute at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center (LA BioMed) researchers, will be honored on Thursday as recipients of the first UCLA Clinical and Translational Science Institute's (CTSI) Award for Translational Research in Maternal, Child, and Adolescent Health.

The UCLA Clinical and Translational Science Institute established the award to recognize outstanding junior investigators with a translational research focus on maternal, child and adolescent health. The Clinical and Translational Science Institute is an academic-clinical-community partnership designed to accelerate scientific discoveries and clinical breakthroughs to improve health in Los Angeles County, the most populous and diverse county in the United States. Its mission is to create a borderless clinical and translational research institute that brings innovations and resources to bear on the greatest health needs of Los Angeles.

"Congratulations to Drs. Dickson and Yee for this recognition of their vital research into some of the most vexing problems facing children and adolescents," said David I. Meyer, PhD, LA BioMed president and CEO. "Dr. Yee's research holds the promise of breaking new ground in understanding the causes of obesity, while Dr. Dickson is advancing the institute's development of treatments for a rare genetic disorder. The honors for these two investigators also signify both their commitment and LA BioMed's dedication to reaching across departmental boundaries to foster innovation and the delivery of new therapies to patients as quickly and safely as possible."

Dr. Dickson's research at LA BioMed focuses on enzyme replacement therapy for mucopolysaccharidosis, a group of metabolic disorders caused by the absence or malfunctioning of enzymes needed to break down molecules, called glycosaminoglycans, which help build bone, cartilage, connective tissue and other essential parts of the body. She is the principal investigator of ongoing clinical trials for replacing the missing enzyme through the spinal canal to ensure the enzymes reach the brain.

Dr. Dickson has published 15 research papers. She also serves as assistant professor of pediatrics at the David Geffen School of Medicine in the Division of Medical Genetics at Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. In addition, Dr. Dickson is a faculty member in the UCLA Intercampus Medical Genetics Training Program.

Dr. Yee, a pediatric endocrinologist, is seeking to understand how the processes of fatty acid production in fat cells contribute to obesity. In collaboration with investigators from the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, she is currently focused on how nutritional deprivation or excess before birth affects production of fatty acids in fat tissue. Her research seeks to determine potential markers for early detection of obesity risk. Fetal programming research has previously shown that nutrition and other factors experienced *in utero* can contribute to obesity and related conditions later in life.

Dr. Yee's recent publication in the journal *Lipids in Health and Disease* describes increased fatty acid production in fat tissue of animals at risk for obesity. She came to Harbor-UCLA Medical Center and LA BioMed in 2004 as a fellow and became a faculty member in 2007.

Drs. Dickson and Yee will be among 12 honorees at an Awards Ceremony scheduled for 4 p.m. Thursday at the UCLA-Westwood campus. Each honoree also will receive a \$4,000 award.

The Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Committee is chaired by Drs. Neal Halfon, Michael Lu and Kathleen Sakamoto. The committee is bringing together researchers from pediatrics and family medicine, the schools of public health and engineering, the National Children's Study and UCLA's partner institutions to address new trans-disciplinary collaborations in maternal, child and adolescent health.

About LA BioMed

Founded in 1952, LA BioMed is one of the country's leading nonprofit independent biomedical research institutes. It has more than 150 principal researchers conducting studies into improved treatments and cures for cancer, inherited diseases, infectious diseases, illnesses caused by environmental factors and more. It also educates young scientists and provides community services, including immunization and childhood nutrition programs. LA BioMed is academically affiliated with the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and located on the campus of Harbor-UCLA Medical Center. For more information, please visit www.LABioMed.org.

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