

Research will consider biomarker assay for early pregnancy prediction and regulations and functionality of key protein marker

Melbourne, FL – September 8, 2011 – The Preeclampsia Foundation announced today that **Dr. Sandra Founds**

, School of Nursing and Magee Womens Research Institute, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, Penn., and

Dr. Nihar R. Nayak

, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif., are recipients of its 2011 Vision Grants. These prestigious research awards will be presented to them at the Foundation's annual benefit gala,

Saving Grace – A Night of Hope and Gratitude

, on Saturday, November 12, at the Hilton New York in New York City, New York. For the second year in a row, in addition to the usual robust scientific review committee that makes the primary funding recommendations, the Preeclampsia Foundation had a patient review committee (PRC) to offer a second layer of review. The PRC findings were rendered only to the top applicants as determined by the scientific committee. Thus, this year's grantees represent the strongest scientific proposals with a further review and endorsement by a dedicated patient perspective.

About the Vision Grant Award Recipients (photos available upon request):

Dr. Sandra Founds is a Certified Nurse Midwife and Family Nurse Practitioner with extensive research training. As faculty in the School of Nursing and member of the Magee-Womens Research Institute, she conducts research, teaches, and practices in women's healthcare at the University of Pittsburgh. Her team aims to develop a set of discovery-based genes from first trimester placentas of women who subsequently developed preeclampsia. The Vision Grant will support translation of these predictive biomarkers to a multiplex serum profile of proteins for an early clinical screening test that could save lives and improve the health of mothers and babies by preventing preeclampsia.

"My research career is dedicated to providing as much good science as possible to eradicate this 'silent epidemic,'" said Dr. Founds. "I hope to identify early markers in maternal blood at the beginning of pregnancy that might clue us in to the possibility that preeclampsia and its related disorders could develop. Through genetic and protein candidates, we could learn about possible preventive measures and individualized treatments."

Dr. Nihar R. Nayak is currently an Assistant Professor and the Director of Translational Research in the Division of Maternal Fetal Medicine at the Stanford University School of Medicine. After receiving DVM and PhD degrees in India, Dr. Nayak obtained his postdoctoral training at the Oregon Health and Science University, Portland. He has served as Assistant Professor at a school of veterinary medicine in India, Staff Scientist at the Oregon National Primate Research Center, and Senior Scientist at Stanford University and has received several research awards, including the Lalor Foundation postdoctoral fellowship, the Andrew Mellon Foundation Junior Investigator Award, and the NIH BIRCWH award. One of his major research goals is to understand and develop novel therapies for preeclampsia and other pregnancy-associated vascular disorders.

“I am committed to understanding this disease and speeding up the development of effective therapies,” explained Dr. Nayak. “Assistance from the Preeclampsia Foundation will help in this effort, and because of the very central importance of this work to the understanding and treatment of the disease, it will help provide a solid foundation for my long-term career in the field.”

About the Vision Grant Program: The Preeclampsia Foundation provides Vision Grants to fund medical research pertaining to the pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment of hypertensive disorders of pregnancy. Vision Grants are small awards intended to provide initial funding for novel rather than well-established lines of research.

About Preeclampsia: Preeclampsia, a disorder of pregnancy, is characterized by high blood pressure and protein in the urine; other symptoms often include swelling in the hands and face. Preeclampsia affects the mother’s kidneys, liver and other vital organs and, if undetected or untreated, can lead to seizures (eclampsia), cerebral hemorrhage, failure in vital organs (i.e., kidney and heart) and death. Preeclampsia complicates five to eight percent of all pregnancies and is responsible for 15 percent of all premature births. By conservative estimates, each year this disease is responsible for 76,000 maternal and half a million infant deaths worldwide.

About the Preeclampsia Foundation: The Preeclampsia Foundation's mission is to provide patient support and education, raise public awareness, catalyze research and improve health care practices. We envision a world where preeclampsia no longer threatens the lives of mothers and babies. For more information, call toll free (800) 665-9341 or visit www.preeclampsia.org.