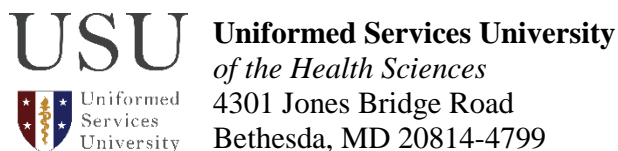


Learning to Care for Those in Harm's Way



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Dr. D. Scott Merrell Awarded 2017 Rare Disease Research Grant

Bethesda, Md. – The National Organization for Rare Disorders (NORD) has announced its 2017 Rare Disease Research Grant recipients and Dr. D. Scott Merrell, professor of Microbiology and Immunology at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences, is among the grantees.

NORD's Rare Disease Research Grant program provides seed funding to academic scientists for translational or clinical studies related to the development of potential new diagnostics or treatments for rare disease. Over the years, NORD grants have led to the development of two FDA-approved treatments and numerous journal articles. More than 150 grants have been awarded nearing \$7 million in approved funding since the program's launch in 1989. Grants are made possible by allies in the rare disease community that have generously donated into NORD's research fund. After a disease fund matures, NORD issues a request for research proposals, which are then independently reviewed by NORD's Medical Advisory Committee.

Merrell is one of only five researchers nationwide to receive the award, and he will use it to study the role of bacteria in the development and progression of pseudomyxoma peritonei (PMP), which is often associated with appendix cancer; his work will be supported via funding from the Appendix Cancer Pseudomyxoma Peritonei Research Foundation. PMP, often referred to as "jelly belly" by surgeons, is a clinical condition caused by cancerous cells that produce abundant jelly-like liquid called mucin, or gelatinous ascites, which accumulates abnormally in the abdominal (peritoneal) cavity.

"Bacteria play roles in health and disease that were completely under-appreciated only a few years ago," Merrell said. "Our previous PMP pilot studies suggest that bacteria can be found in or on PMP tumors. To expand on that work, we seek to define the bacteria present in a large collection of PMP samples and to determine if those bacteria differ depending on the type and severity of disease and/or patient outcome. If bacteria are present and are associated with disease, these studies may set the stage for future inclusion of antibiotics into PMP treatment strategies."

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