



**Washington Research**  
FOUNDATION

### **WRF Supports Groundbreaking Heart Research at UW Medicine**

\$10 million to help move treatments for damaged hearts into clinical trials

SEATTLE, WA--October 21, 2015

[Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States](#), but thanks to a gift from the Washington Research Foundation (WRF), UW Medicine scientists will undertake clinical trials of a treatment that has the potential to regenerate damaged heart tissue.

WRF, which supports groundbreaking technology in the life sciences, physical sciences and information sciences in the state of Washington, will provide UW Medicine's Institute for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine (ISCRM) with \$10 million to fund stem cell research to treat heart disease.

The funding will go to UW Medicine's Heart Regeneration Program (HRP), which serves as a translational vehicle for developing and clinically testing cell therapy for heart disease. The award was inspired by the foundational work of Charles Murry, M.D., Ph.D., UW professor of pathology, bioengineering and medicine and interim director of the Institute for Stem Cell and Regenerative Medicine, and Michael LaFlamme, M.D., Ph.D., former UW associate professor of pathology.

In addition to Murry, the HRP is directed by W. Robb MacLellan, M.D., head of the Division of Cardiology at UW Medicine, and Scott Thies, Ph.D., a stem cell scientist with over 15 years' experience in the biotech industry.

"We are deeply grateful to WRF for this \$10 million commitment," says Paul G. Ramsey, M.D., CEO of UW Medicine and dean of the UW School of Medicine. "This is critical funding that will bring the HRP closer to realizing its scientific goals. And, beyond these goals, we're committed to bringing this therapy to patients."

Adds Ron Howell, president and CEO of Washington Research Foundation: "We are hoping to help a team of top researchers dramatically change the way heart disease following a myocardial infarction (MI) is treated. We know that the problem is huge, and we also think that the Murry team has the potential to solve it in the next decade. We are joining the support given by Dean Paul Ramsey and other donors to help carry the project over the finish line."

Murry's group has demonstrated that human embryonic stem cells can be used to improve heart function for acute myocardial infarction using several animal models. This gift will help accelerate this research into clinical trials.

"Our therapeutic has a unique mechanism of action that remuscularizes the damaged heart," explains Murry, "and that's why we expect profoundly better efficacy than has been demonstrated for several other cell therapies in heart failure. We believe this important distinction will allow our developing product to achieve best-in-class status among cell therapies for heart disease. This research may help to

prevent congestive heart failure after MI and significantly increase the quality of life and life span for patients.”

WRF’s \$10 million commitment to UW Medicine will help the HRP complete a phase I clinical trial of human cardiomyocytes for treatment of post-heart attack muscle damage in the next five years.

The HRP has focused on recruiting professional scientists from industry, who can perform at a high level from day one and whose principal goals are product commercialization and the developmental activities required for FDA approval of its Investigational New Drug / Device (IND) filing.

The \$10 million in funding from WRF will also support most of the development work leading up to the HRP’s IND submission.

### **About Washington Research Foundation**

Washington Research Foundation (WRF) was founded in 1981 to assist universities and other nonprofit research institutions in Washington state with the commercialization and licensing of their technologies. WRF is recognized as one of the foremost technology transfer organizations in the nation and has returned more than \$485 million to the state's research institutions through gifts and licensing disbursements.

For more information, visit <http://www.wrfseattle.org>. Washington Research Foundation, 2815 Eastlake Avenue East, Suite 300, Seattle, WA 98102

### **About UW Medicine**

UW Medicine’s mission is to improve the health of the public by advancing medical knowledge, providing outstanding primary and specialty care to the people of the region, and preparing tomorrow’s physicians, scientists and other health professionals. UW Medicine owns or operates Harborview Medical Center, Northwest Hospital & Medical Center, Valley Medical Center, University of Washington Medical Center, a network of nine UW Neighborhood Clinics that provide primary care and secondary care, the physician practice UW Physicians, the UW School of Medicine and Airlift Northwest. In addition, UW Medicine shares in the ownership and governance of Children’s University Medical Group and Seattle Cancer Care Alliance, a partnership among UW Medicine, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and Seattle Children’s. Our faculty includes 3 living Nobel Prize winners (5 in our history), 36 National Academy of Medicine members, 32 National Academy of Sciences members and 13 Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigators.

### **For Additional Information**

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