

NEWS RELEASE

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Veterinary Medicine Researcher Wins Prestigious NIH Award

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dr. Kenneth Adler, professor of cell biology in North Carolina State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, has received a prestigious 10-year MERIT Award from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The NIH MERIT (Method to Extend Research in Time) award program was created in 1987 to extend funding to researchers who have "demonstrated a long-term commitment to and success in research." MERIT awards allow researchers to gain up to 10 years of grant support. The grant is worth approximately \$400,000 per year.

Less than 5 percent of NIH-funded investigators are selected to receive MERIT awards. According to the NIH, MERIT awards recognize researchers who have demonstrated "superior competence and outstanding productivity in research endeavors."

Adler's research involves studying the pathogenic mechanisms associated with inflammation in the respiratory airways as seen in asthma, cystic fibrosis and chronic bronchitis.

Adler and several colleagues created a molecule that prevents the buildup of mucus in asthmatic mice. The research, Adler says, could indicate some potentially important novel therapeutic targets in the lung that may be used to treat respiratory diseases in which mucus hypersecretion occurs, such as chronic bronchitis, asthma, and cystic fibrosis.

Normally, when allergic mice are exposed to an allergen, their airways swell and mucus production increases dramatically. Treatment with the anti-mucus molecule prevented this mucus buildup.

According to Adler, the NIH MERIT award allows researchers a degree of freedom to examine a multitude of questions related to disease processes without the worry or time commitment of writing additional grants during that time.

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“I plan on using this award to develop procedures in my lab and increase my collaborative efforts with other researchers here and abroad to look at molecular and cell biology questions with what might be considered ‘high-risk, high-payoff’ types of experiments,” Adler said. “We’re specifically trying to understand the pathogenetic mechanisms of respiratory diseases so that novel types of therapeutic interventions might be developed.”

Dr. Neil Olson, associate dean and director of research and graduate programs in the College of Veterinary Medicine, calls Adler a vital part of the college’s research efforts.

“Dr. Adler is the epitome of what it means to be an outstanding NIH biomedical scientist, not only because of his scientific acumen and creativity, but also because of his selfless attitudes toward helping other budding scientists at the College of Veterinary Medicine. Ken brings tremendous honor and respect to both NC State and the CVM. We are extremely fortunate to have him on our faculty,” Olson said.

Asthma and chronic bronchitis afflict more than 100 million people worldwide, and more mucus means a higher risk of mortality from these diseases, Adler says. He is currently continuing his work in unraveling the problem of mucus buildup.