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Magali Saint-Geniez, PhD, Awarded the ASIP 2016 Cotran Early Investigator Award



The 2016 recipient of the Cotran Early Career Investigator Award is **Magali Saint-Geniez**, of the Schepens Eye Research Institute and Harvard Medical School. The Cotran Early Career Investigator Award is partially supported by an unrestricted educational grant from Elsevier, an ASIP Corporate Partner. This award recognizes early career investigators with demonstrated excellence as an investigator with recently established or emerging independence and with a research focus leading to an improved understanding of the conceptual basis of disease. The award is named in honor of Dr. Ramzi S. Cotran (1933-2000), a leader of pathology, formerly of Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital, and a Past President of ASIP.

Dr. Patricia D'Amore from the Schepens Eye Research Institute acclaims Dr. Saint-Geniez's work by stating, "Prior work from our laboratory had demonstrated that VEGF was expressed in virtually all adult tissues, including the normal adult eye, in spite of the absence of active angiogenesis. We therefore postulated that VEGF might play a role in the eye under normal circumstance." To address this question, Dr. Saint-Geniez "examined the expression of vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) and its signaling receptor VEGFR2 in the adult retina and investigated the effect of systemic VEGF neutralization on the retina." Her findings showed that "both VEGF and VEGFR2 were expressed by a number of different cell types in the adult retina." Furthermore, Dr. Saint-Geniez demonstrated that "VEGF blockade led to significant death of photoreceptor cells." As acknowledgement for her work, Dr. Saint-Geniez received the Director's New Innovator Award from NIH for one of her proposals.

Dr. Jayakrishna Ambati from the University of Kentucky praises Dr. Saint-Geniez's "excellent funding track record." She received the Molecular Bases of Eye Diseases training grant and also the Harvard Catalyst Award. She has received R21 and R01 grants as well. Dr. Ambati highlights Dr. Saint-Geniez's teaching and mentoring abilities. Dr. Saint-Geniez has mentored numerous trainees and has been a regular speaker at "Schepens seminars, Children's Hospital's Vascular Biology Series, the Boston Angiogenesis Meeting, and internationally at ARVO, the 54th National Meeting of the Italian Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in Sicily, and the XX Biennial Meeting of the International Society for Eye Research in Berlin, Germany."

Dr. Gerard Luttjy from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine acknowledges Dr. Saint-Geniez's numerous publications. Dr. Saint-Geniez is the author of twenty seven publications and is the first author on seven of those. She is currently working on "innovative ways to replace lost retinal pigment epithelial (RPE) cells in dry AMD." Collaborating with a group of engineers from Harvard, Dr. Saint-Geniez is helping to develop "an artificial Bruchs membrane and evaluating sources of progenitors that can be trained to be RPE. Her work could permit replacement of this valuable cell type and prevent progression of dry AMD."

Dr. Saint-Geniez received her PhD from the University of Toulouse III in France. She did her fellowship at Schepens Eye Research Institute at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Saint-Geniez has been a member of ASIP since 2010.

Dr. Saint-Geniez will present her award lecture, "How metabolism regulates retinal function: implications for prevention of disease," on Monday, April 4, 2016 at the ASIP 2016 Annual Meeting at Experimental

Biology in San Diego, California. She will receive the Cotran Early Career Investigator Award on Monday, April 4, 2016 at the ASIP Membership Business Meeting and ASIP Awards Presentation.