



American Society for Investigative Pathology
Investigating the Mechanisms of Disease
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Monte S. Willis, M.D., Ph.D. Awarded the 2011 Cotran Established Investigator Award



The Cotran Established 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. The 2011 recipient of this award is **Monte S. Willis, M.D., Ph.D.**, of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Dr. Willis is interested in the role of the ubiquitin-proteasome system in regulating molecular mechanisms of cardiac disease. He completed postdoctoral training in the laboratory of Dr. Cam Patterson, Director of the UNC McAllister Heart Institute, and, as stated by Dr. Patterson, Dr. Willis "picked up several projects investigating the role of ubiquitin ligases in animal models of cardiac disease, extending our laboratory's *in vitro* findings. Since this time, Dr. Willis has established the role of the muscle specific ubiquitin ligases MuRF1 (and atrogin-1) in cardiac hypertrophy, cardiac atrophy, cardiac ischemia/reperfusion injury, and in several aspects of cardiac metabolism *in vivo*. While his initial studies were initially under my close mentorship he has independently developed additional areas of focus mainly in cardiac metabolism, which he has independently driven and published as the senior and corresponding author. His independence is further evidenced by grant awards by the American Heart Association...and the Children's Cardiomyopathy Foundation."

Dr. William Coleman of University of North Carolina explains that Dr. Willis, as a "well-funded and accomplished basic science researcher" has made significant contributions to his field while becoming an "effective and engaged member of the American Society for Investigative Pathology, and a valued member of the larger scientific community." In addition, Dr. Willis was praised by Dr. Lucie Carrier, University of Hamburg, for his "thoughtfulness, thoroughness, and dependability as a scientific collaborator." Satdarshan (Paul) S. Monga of University of Pittsburgh describes Dr. Willis as having "an exceptional, sterling track record as a clinician-scientist...a leader in academic pathology, translational science, and in the development of students of all levels through mentoring and teaching."

Dr. Willis received his M.D./Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska Medical Center in 2001. After completing postdoctoral training and residencies at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center and University of North Carolina, he rose to Assistant Professor at UNC in 2005 as well as Director of Sweat Chloride Testing and Assistant Director of Clinical Core (Chemistry) Laboratory in 2006.

Dr. Willis presented his award lecture "Muscle Ring Finger 1 (MuRF1) Regulation of Cardiac Hypertrophy, Energy Metabolism, and Mitochondrial Function" on Tuesday, April 12, 2011 at the ASIP Annual Meeting in Washington, DC. He received the Cotran Early Career Investigator Award on Monday, April 11, 2011 during the ASIP Awards Presentation and Membership Business Meeting.