

## RI-CART receives \$1.2 million grant to create statewide autism registry and network

EAST PROVIDENCE – The Rhode Island Consortium for Autism Research and Treatment (RI-CART), a group of the state’s leading experts on autism research, education, health and services, has received a \$1.2 million grant to create a first-of-its-kind confidential registry of every individual diagnosed with autism in Rhode Island. Awarded by the Simons Foundation, the grant will help RI-CART create a data and resource continuum for thousands of children and adults in the state with autism spectrum disorders. The RI-CART resource will be used to support critically-needed research projects. Participation in the project will facilitate communication between clinical experts and families as well as provide families with important information for navigating state autism services. The registry project is also supported by funds from the Brown University Institute for Brain Science, the Norman Prince Neuroscience Institute, and the Alpert Medical School Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior which catalyzed RI-CART activities in the fall of 2012.

“This effort will link families and researchers to spur important and innovative research on the causes and treatments for individuals with autism and related conditions,” said **STEPHEN SHEINKOPF, PhD**, a clinical researcher at Women & Infants Hospital, assistant professor at The Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University and co-director of the RI-CART project. “As a partnership between researchers and families, the RI-CART resource will be a uniquely collaborative approach to research.”

As part of the project, members of the RI-CART team with advanced training in autism assessment will offer to administer the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS) to each individual enrolled in the project. Only a fraction of individuals with autism in Rhode Island currently have access to the ADOS, which is considered a ‘gold standard’ measure of autism symptoms. Offering the ADOS to all children and adults with autism could greatly improve the accuracy of autism diagnoses, as well as potentially improve the treatment that families receive. Participants will also have access to resource staff who can provide information on autism and available services, and who can help connect families to resources in the community.

During the next three years, RI-CART hopes to enroll over 1,000 children and adults with autism. This will be the first step in the long-term goal of enrolling all individuals with autism in Rhode Island in this unique research network.

“The Framingham Heart Study – through collaboration between a community and researchers – helped identify many of the major causative factors and characteristics of heart disease. While there has been much hopeful progress in autism research in recent years particularly as a result of ambitious team science, we are behind in our understanding and treatment by comparison to other medical conditions, such as heart disease”, said **ERIC MORROW MD, PhD**, an assistant professor in biology at Brown University and genetics researcher at Bradley Hospital. Dr. Morrow is the principal investigator on the Simons grant. He will lead the project with Sheinkopf, which will also collect DNA, and other bio-samples, including those that will allow studies of environmental exposures.

For more information about RI-CART call 401-432-1200, email RICART@Lifespan.org, or visit [www.AutismRI.org](http://www.AutismRI.org). ❖

## NIH awards URI researchers \$11.4M to continue study on dengue virus

PROVIDENCE – University of Rhode Island Research **PROFESSOR ALAN ROTHMAN** and colleagues in the Institute for Immunology and Informatics have been awarded \$11.4 million from the National Institutes of Health for ongoing research on dengue virus, a potentially deadly mosquito-borne disease.

Working alongside Rothman on the project in Rhode Island will be URI Assistant Research **PROFESSOR CAREY MEDIN** and **DR. JENNIFER FRIEDMAN** of Rhode Island Hospital.

Rothman heads the Laboratory of Viral Immunity and Pathogenesis at URI’s Institute for Immunology and Informatics on the Providence campus. His research involves clinical and basic research studies on pathogenesis and immunity of emerging and re-emerging viral infections.

Field studies for the project will be conducted by collaborators in Thailand and the Philippines who will look at natural dengue virus transmission in humans. This research will also include collaboration with a phase-three vaccine trial. Laboratory research will take place in the United States, Europe and Asia. ❖