News Release

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Genetic Associations in Cystic Fibrosis Studied

The Medical College of Wisconsin received a two-year, $412,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health's National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute to investigate genetic variations that may impact the severity of lung disease in cystic fibrosis patients.

Hara Levy, M.D., assistant professor of pediatrics at the Medical College and a clinician and investigator in pulmonary diseases at Children's Hospital of Wisconsin, is the principal investigator for the study.

Cystic fibrosis is an inherited chronic disease that affects the lungs and digestive system of about 30,000 children and adults in the United States. It is caused by a defective gene and the gene's protein product, which makes the body produce unusually thick, sticky mucus that clogs the lungs and leads to life-threatening lung infections. It also obstructs the pancreas and impairs the body from breaking down and absorbing food. In the 1950s, few children with cystic fibrosis lived to grade-school age. Through advances in research and medical treatments, today many people with the disease expect to live into their 30s, 40s and beyond.

Lung disease in cystic fibrosis patients is characterized by chronic infection by the *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* bacteria, and is the major cause of decline and death in cystic fibrosis patients. In this study, Dr. Levy seeks to identify genetic variants in genes responsible for

fighting infections likely to contribute to the development of lung disease in cystic fibrosis patients, thereby contributing to new therapies for these patients.

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