DOM Announces 2019 Outstanding Early Career Scholars

The University of Colorado Department of Medicine is pleased to announce the 2019 recipients for its Outstanding Early Career Scholar Program, Kristen Demoruelle, MD, PhD and Eric Pietras, PhD.

Kristen Demoruelle, MD, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Rheumatology. Her research focuses on understanding the earliest steps in the development of rheumatoid arthritis (RA). She investigates the development of RA-related autoimmunity during the preclinical period of RA, prior to the onset of joint disease. She is interested in understanding the mechanisms of disease initiation, with the ultimate goal of developing prevention strategies for RA that are specifically targeted to the initial site of immune dysregulation. Dr. Demoruelle will use this award to investigate molecular pathways that trigger RA-related antibody formation in the lung of preclinical RA subjects.

Dr. Demoruelle received her bachelor’s degree from Delta State University, her MD from the University of Mississippi School of Medicine, and later her PhD in Clinical Science from the University of Colorado. She also completed her residency in internal medicine and her rheumatology fellowship at the University of Colorado. She joined the faculty at CU in 2013 as an instructor and became an assistant professor of medicine in 2014.

"Dr. Demoruelle has made groundbreaking discoveries that are highly relevant to our understanding of the molecular origins of rheumatoid arthritis. This is a very well deserved award that will help her advance the science as well as her career. I am very pleased that she has been named a Scholar in this innovative support program" said Dr. Mike Holers, head of the Rheumatology Division.
**Eric Pietras**, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Hematology and is the Cleo Meador and George Ryland Scott Chair of Medicine in Hematology. The focus of his research is on understanding how chronic inflammation impairs the capacity of hematopoietic stem cells to maintain a healthy blood system, leading to leukemia and other hematological disorders. Dr. Pietras will use these funds to address the mechanisms by which pro-inflammatory cytokines alter hematopoietic stem cell fate, driving the earliest stages of acute myelogenous leukemia (AML). His long term goal is to establish a novel therapeutic paradigm in which leukemia onset is prevented or delayed by targeting bone marrow inflammation in at-risk individuals prior to leukemia development.

Dr. Pietras earned his bachelor’s degree from Knox College and his PhD from the University of California, Los Angeles. Following his postdoctoral training at the University of California, San Francisco, he was recruited in 2015 to his current faculty position at the University of Colorado.

“In just a few short years at CU Dr. Pietras has developed a truly outstanding and novel research program. The OECSP award is the ideal mechanism to support him in taking his research to the next level” said Dr. Clay Smith, Associate Chief of the Hematology Division.

The Outstanding Early Career Scholars Program aims to accelerate the careers of promising researchers in the Department of Medicine. The Program was launched in 2012 to invest in talented researchers early in their careers, helping accelerate their career development and allow these promising individuals to embark on new lines of exploration and to elevate and expand the scope of their research enterprise. It was designed to enable these promising individuals to devote 75% of their effort to research or other scholarly activities. Each Scholar receives $75,000 annually for four years (including funds from the Department of Medicine and the Scholar’s division) to support their research or other forms of career development and expansion.

A total of 18 Outstanding Early Career Scholars have been supported by the program since inception:

- 2019: Kristen Demoruelle, MD, PhD; Eric Pietras, PhD
- 2018: Joseph Frank, MD; Kristine Kuhn, MD, PhD; Traci Lyons, PhD; Beth Tamburini, PhD
- 2017: Kristine Erlandson, MD; Kunhua Song, PhD
- 2016: Catherine Lozupone, PhD
- 2015: Steven Bradley, MD; Daniel Pollyea, MD
- 2014: Brian Graham, MD; Sachin Wani, MD
- 2013: Dan Matlock, MD; Eric Schmidt, MD; Rachel Zemans, MD
- 2012: Larry Allen, MD; Mario Santiago, PhD

Applications are reviewed and ranked by an unbiased, NIH-style study section composed of senior faculty outside of the Department of Medicine. Applications for this program are accepted each year in January.
The Department of Medicine thanks the review committee for the 2019 OECSP selection process:

**Review Committee Chair**: Linda Van Dyk, PhD, Department of Immunology and Microbiology, University of Colorado School of Medicine

Heide Ford, PhD, Department of Pharmacology, University of Colorado School of Medicine
Adit Ginde, MD, MPH, Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Colorado School of Medicine
Jens Goebel, MD, Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado School of Medicine
Peter Henson, MD, PhD, Department of Biomedical Research, National Jewish Health
Anne Libby, PhD, Department of Emergency Medicine
Kurt Stenmark, MD, Department of Pediatrics, University of Colorado School of Medicine
Raul Torres, PhD, Department of Immunology and Microbiology, University of Colorado School of Medicine
Dave Riches, PhD, Department of Pediatrics, National Jewish Health