

## URI's Rothman hits NIH jackpot with another \$10M

### *Grant will increase capacity for vaccine research*

PROVIDENCE – A University of Rhode Island biomedical researcher, Research Professor **ALAN ROTHMAN** at URI's Institute for Immunology and Informatics, who was awarded a \$11.4 million grant last month for his research on dengue fever, has been awarded another grant of nearly \$10 million to expand research efforts on vaccines and immunotherapeutics at the Providence campus.

The National Institutes of Health's Institutional Development Award (IDeA) Center of Biomedical Research Excellence, which builds research capacity in states that historically have had low levels of NIH funding, awarded the grant to support basic, clinical and translational research, faculty development, and infrastructure improvements.

Rothman said the grant will enable the Institute to build capacity for basic immunology research on global health issues, with an orientation toward the development of vaccines and therapeutics. "There are common themes in infectious disease, so what we learn about malaria and dengue also applies to infectious diseases that affect Rhode Islanders. We are conducting basic research on important public health problems, which will set the stage for determining the next steps for preventing and treating these diseases," he said.

According to Rothman, a major aim of the five-year grant is to "build a cadre of junior investigators toward independence" by providing them with funding for new research projects. One of the junior investigators supported by the grant is **CAREY MEDIN**, an immunologist at the Institute, who will work on innate immune responses to dengue virus. In addition, the Institute has used grant funds to recruit **BARBARA PAYNE**, an immunologist with 10 years of experience working in Kenya on HIV exposure in developing fetuses, to the Institute. At least one more faculty member will be hired with the new funding.

The grant will also support the development of new partnerships and pilot projects, particularly a collaboration with **JONATHAN KURTIS**, **JENNIFER FRIEDMAN** and colleagues at the Center for International Health Research at Lifespan in Providence, where the grant will support Ian Michelow, a junior researcher who is working to develop vaccines against malaria.

Institute Director and URI Research Professor **ANNIE DE GROOT** is also enthusiastic about the new grant. "Dr. Rothman is a visionary scientist who is committed to training the next generation of vaccine developers," said De Groot. "I am grateful to URI for supporting his move to Providence, and I am pleased that the iVAX suite of vaccine design tools will be put to use for basic research; that is exactly what we had in mind when we established the Institute just a few years ago. I look forward to working with the



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new faculty members on their vaccine research programs."

A resident of Framingham, Massachusetts, Rothman came to URI in 2011 from the University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, where he was awarded an \$11 million grant from the National Institutes of Health in 2008 for additional studies of the dengue virus. ♦



URI Research Professor Alan Rothman (left) briefs Rhode Island's Congressional delegation, from left, Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse, Sen. Jack Reed, Rep. David Cicilline, and Rep. Jim Langevin, about his research on dengue fever in August. Rothman was awarded a research grant of \$11.4 million from the National Institutes of Health in August and another \$10 million this month.