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THE HALPIN FOUNDATION AND THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF NEPHROLOGY ANNOUNCE RECIPIENT OF THE HALPIN FOUNDATION-ASN RESEARCH GRANT

Washington, DC (September 30, 2009) — The Halpin Foundation and the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) proudly announce the recipient of the Halpin Foundation-ASN Research Grant for 2009, created to help young faculty develop independent research careers. This award provides recipients transition funding toward successful application for an NIH RO1 grant.

This year's recipient is Laurence H. Beck, Jr., MD, PhD of Boston University School of Medicine. His research focuses on, "Detection of Anti-Phospholipase A2 Receptor Autoantibodies in Idiopathic Membranous Nephropathy." Autoantibodies in membranous nephropathy develop against the phospholipase A2 receptor (PLA2R), a kidney protein that may present the major target antigen in idiopathic membranous nephropathy and whose identity had eluded researchers for decades.

Dr. Beck notes that "with the funding provided by The Halpin Foundation and the ASN, we will be able to further characterize the circulating autoantibodies to PLA2R in membranous nephropathy. My colleagues and I teamed up with groups in the United States and Europe to study these antibodies in patients who have been treated with various immunosuppressive drugs. We are most interested in how the antibodies behave as markers of disease activity, and if they will allow us to determine whether the potentially toxic immunosuppressive drugs are working or help to define the minimum duration of treatment necessary to eliminate the disease."

Dr. Beck and his colleagues will present their research at a Free Communications Session during ASN's Renal Week 2009 entitled, "Biomarkers and Imaging in Glomerular Disease," which will take place on Thursday, October 29 from 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm in Room 26 of the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, CA.

The Halpin Foundation has dedicated itself to the study of membranous nephropathy since 1989, after the Halpins' 14-year-old son was diagnosed with this rare disorder. To advance research of the disorder and its symptoms, including loss of protein in the urine and a progressive decline in renal function,

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The Halpin Foundation partnered with the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) to promote research relevant to membranous nephropathy in 2004.

The foundation is committed to advancing the medical community's understanding of membranous nephropathy, including whether there is a hereditary predisposition to the disease. In addition, The Halpin Foundation works to raise awareness of membranous nephropathy in the scientific and lay communities.

“Unfortunately, there are many unanswered questions surrounding membranous nephropathy and nephrotic syndrome, and we are grateful to The Halpin Foundation for helping us fund new investigators interested in studying this disease,” said ASN’s President, Thomas Coffman, MD, FASN.

To highlight research advances and stimulate investigations regarding membranous nephropathy, ASN will provide updates on the disease during Renal Week. The Basic and Clinical Science Symposium being presented on October 29 from 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm in Room 6A of the San Diego Convention Center entitled, “Molecular Mechanisms of Nephrotic Syndrome: Novel Insights,” will include a talk by David J. Salant, MD called “Molecular Mechanisms of Nephrotic Syndrome: Novel Insights.

Joan Halpin, President of the Halpin Foundation, is hopeful this program will “attract a diverse audience that will be encouraged to devote time and intellect to the consideration of the pathogenesis and therapy for this disorder.”

Founded in 1966, the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) is the world’s largest professional society devoted to the study of kidney disease. Comprised of 11,000 physicians and scientists, ASN continues to promote expert patient care, to advance medical research, and to educate the renal community. ASN also informs policymakers about issues of importance to kidney doctors and their patients. ASN funds research, and through its world-renowned meetings and first-class publications, disseminates information and educational tools that empower physicians.

ASN Renal Week 2009, the largest nephrology meeting of its kind, will provide a forum for 11,000 nephrologists to discuss the latest findings in renal research and engage in educational sessions related to advances in the care of patients with kidney and related disorders. Renal Week 2009 will take place October 27 – November 1 at the San Diego Convention Center in San Diego, CA.

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