LA JOLLA, Nov. 25 -- The Arthritis Foundation has awarded its annual prize for rheumatoid arthritis research to a Research Institute of Scripps Clinic investigator.

Dr. Dennis Carson, head of the clinical immunology division of the basic and clinical research department, received the $20,000 Lee C. Howley Sr. Prize for Research in Arthritis Nov. 20 at the Arthritis Foundation's national meeting in New Orleans.

"Dr. Carson has made outstanding contributions to the field of arthritis research," said Dr. Frederic McDuffie, the Arthritis Foundation senior vice president for medical affairs. "His work may lead to exciting new discoveries and offer some relief to the millions of people who suffer from rheumatoid arthritis."

Carson has used genetic engineering methods to clone and sequence the exact structure of the two genes responsible for creating human rheumatoid factors - antibodies that attack the patient's own tissue, rather than fight the disease. As a result, the signals creating the rheumatoid factor in humans and causing the body's immune system to turn against itself can be analyzed.

(More)
His identification of the genetic base of human rheumatoid factors may eventually lead to vaccines or other methods of treating rheumatoid arthritis, which affects about 7 million people in the United States.

Carson, known for his research in autoimmune and immunodeficiency diseases and biomechanical and molecular genetics, has been at Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation since 1976. He received his medical degree from Columbia University, and completed postdoctoral training at the Salk Institute and the University of California, San Diego.

The Howley Prize was created from a grant from the Howley family as a memorial to Lee Howley Sr., former chairman of the board of Revco D.S. Inc. He was instrumental in establishing the Revco Arthritis Research Center at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio.

Arthritis refers to more than 100 separate diseases that cause pain and swelling in joints. The Arthritis Foundation is the only national voluntary health organization looking for the causes, cures, preventions and treatments for all the different forms of arthritis, according to foundation officials.

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