ALZHEIMER'S FOUNDATION OF AMERICA PRESENTS RESEARCH GRANT TO WINTHROP-UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL

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Pictured (l.-r.) at the recent check presentation are Allison Reiss, MD, Head of the Inflammation Section at Winthrop; Josie DiChiara, Senior Vice President of External Relations, Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA); Mark Stecker, MD, PhD, Chairman of the Department of Neurosciences at Winthrop; Bert Brodsky, Chairman of the Board at AFA; Iryna Voloshyna, PhD, Research Associate at Winthrop; and Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr., AFA's President and CEO.

Representatives from the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) recently awarded Winthrop-University Hospital a grant for $23,123. The grant will assist researchers Allison Reiss, MD, Head of the Inflammation Section of the Winthrop Research Institute, and Mark Stecker, MD, PhD, Chairman of the Department of Neurosciences at Winthrop, along with their team in conducting an innovative study called "Platelet-Rich Plasma in the Study of Alzheimer's Pathophysiology."

"We are grateful to be working with the Alzheimer's Foundation of America in research that may have such significant benefits to patients in the future," said Dr. Stecker. "We strongly feel that partnerships like this one will have a tremendous impact on the health of the population."

Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is a progressive, irreversible brain disorder with no known cure. The team at Winthrop − which also includes Michael Littlefield, BA, and Isaac Teboul, BA, Laboratory Technicians at Winthrop; and Iryna Voloshyna, PhD, Research Associate − will be studying platelet-rich plasma of patients with and without AD, as well as interactions of the blood with neural progenitor cells (manufactured cells that behave like neurons from a person's brain). The study is expected to help researchers predict who is at risk for AD, and aid in developing treatments for this disease.

"We are delighted to award Winthrop-University Hospital a grant to fund this very important research project," said Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr., AFA's President and CEO. "The federal government's historic National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease has a goal of finding a cure or meaningful treatment of it by 2025. Studies such as Winthrop's are a step forward in helping to achieve that goal."

The study will focus on amyloid, an abnormal protein that accumulates in the brains of AD patients and is thought to be part of what kills healthy brain cells. Amyloid is also made in platelets, which are cell fragments without a nucleus found in large numbers in blood, and are involved in clotting. There are significant systemic abnormalities in patients with AD, according to Dr. Reiss. Platelets from patients with AD produce too much amyloid, and studies have shown that levels of secreted amyloid are high even in the blood of patients with only mild cognitive impairment.

"The study is based on the belief that Alzheimer's is not just going on in the brain, but that it is a whole body disease," said Dr. Reiss.

This research has potential in both biomarker development—diagnosing who is at risk early on—and developing drug therapies to treat AD.

"If you have faulty machinery for amyloid in the brain, you most likely have faulty machinery in your platelets," added Dr. Reiss. "This study will have incredible implications for predicting who may be predisposed to Alzheimer's, and for testing drugs to help fight the disease."