

# NAAF Awards \$175,000 in Biomedical Research Grants for 2002

## *NAAF Has Now Awarded Over \$2.5 Million to Date for Research*

*Sandra Frum, Chair of the NAAF Board of Directors, announced the recipients of the 2002 NAAF biomedical research grant awards on May 29. The Board reviewed the recommendations of NAAF's Scientific Advisory Council before making these award selections. NAAF thanks the volunteer members of the Scientific Advisory Council for their devotion to reviewing the applications. The 2002 award recipients follow.*



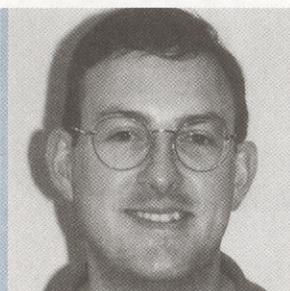
*Dr. Angela Christiano*

**Angela Christiano, PhD**, from Columbia University in New York, New York, will continue her "Genome-wide Search for Alopecia Areata Susceptibility Genes" using the National Alopecia Areata Registry. Critical to the success of any genomic initiative is access to a large body of well-characterized and well-organized patient material like that now being collected in the registry. This study is an initiative to perform a genome-wide search for linkage from sibling pairs enrolled in the registry.



*Dr. Marie Demay*

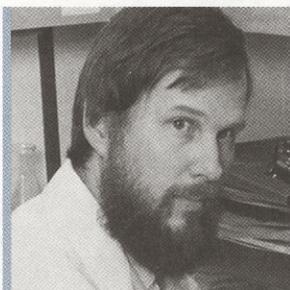
**Marie Demay, MD**, and **Janet Tsang**, from the Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, were awarded a grant to study "Regions of the Vitamin D Receptor Required for Post Morphogenic Hair Cycling." Their studies will examine what part of the vitamin D receptor is required to prevent hair loss in mice. The mice they raise also will provide a source of cells for further studies of how the vitamin D receptor maintains the hair cycle and prevents hair loss. The receptor has been shown to act in several ways, including preventing diseases associated with autoimmunity in mice. Demay and Tsang expect the results of their study to define mechanisms that are also operative in other disorders that lead to hair loss.



*Dr. Kevin McElwee*

**Kevin McElwee, PhD**, and **Rolf Hoffman, MD**, of the University of Marburg in Marburg, Germany will study the "Immune Regulatory Cell Dysfunction in Human and Rodent Model Alopecia Areata." They hope to confirm their observations that certain cell deficiencies may be important in alopecia areata susceptibility. Using the mouse model, they intend to define the

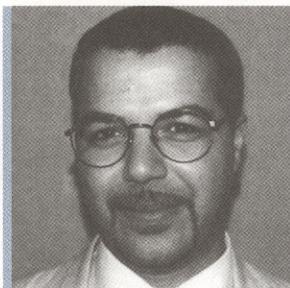
functional significance of different cell types in the induction of alopecia areata and promotion of alopecia areata tolerance. Once we understand which specific cells can inhibit or promote alopecia areata, it should be possible to suggest new approaches to treatment.



*Dr. John Sundberg*

samples will be put on a glass slide for microscopic comparisons and protein and molecular analyses. Up to 49 distinct tissue samples from biopsies can be analyzed at once. These slides will be tested to verify that these tissues can be accurately tested using immunohistochemistry or other modern research assays. Slide sets will be provided to the National Alopecia Areata Registry for appropriate collaboration efforts.

**John Sundberg, DVM, PhD**, from The Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, Maine, was awarded a grant for the "Creation, Testing, and Distribution of Alopecia Areata Tissue Arrays." He will produce tissue arrays from skin selected from humans with and without alopecia areata. The same will be done from animals that also are susceptible to forms of alopecia areata. Small tissue



*Dr. Rachid Tazi-Ahnini*

evidence that genes on Chromosome 21 are involved in causing alopecia areata. There is another rare autoimmune disease that is common in people with alopecia areata that is also found on Chromosome 21, and the gene responsible is AIRE. Tazi-Ahnini and McDonagh will now study AIRE genetics and function in people with alopecia areata and their families. This may eventually provide opportunities to design new treatments that attack the root cause of alopecia areata rather than just suppressing it. ■

**Rachid Tazi-Ahnini, PhD**, and **Andrew McDonagh, MB, ChB, FRCP**, from the University of Sheffield Medical School in Sheffield, England, will continue their indepth studies of "The Determination of AIRE Risk Haplotypes in Families with Alopecia Areata." They know that several genes may be involved in causing alopecia areata. With their 2000 NAAF grant they found specific