MCubed Funds New Collaborative Research Projects with Geriatrics Faculty

Four research teams that include Geriatrics Center and Institute of Gerontology faculty are among the first to receive funds from U-M’s recently launched program, MCubed. MCubed is an opportunity for researchers to explore some of their most innovative ideas with new collaborators from a wide range of disciplines. The goal of the program is to promote projects which partner three researchers from at least two different areas. The MCubed program provides a $60,000 grant to each team. So far 167 new multidisciplinary projects have been sponsored, including these four connected to the Geriatrics Center and Institute of Gerontology:

- **Understanding the Role of the Built Environment for Older Adult Mobility using Mobile Technology**, with collaboration between Drs. Neil Alexander, Professor of Internal Medicine, Philippa Clarke, Research Assistant Professor at Survey Research Center, and Robert Adams, Associate Professor of Architecture. The team will look to understand the features in the built environment (e.g., discontinuous sidewalks, ramps, etc.) that impede or enhance independent mobility among older adults. Their study will include older adults who use a cane or wheelchair or other mobility device, as well as those who walk.

- **A Pill That Mimics Exercise? Exploiting Sestrins as Exercise Mimetics to Extend Healthspan**, with collaboration between Drs. Jun Hee Lee, Assistant Professor of Molecular and Integrative Physiology, Robert Wessells, Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine, and Catherine Collins, Assistant Professor of Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology. They will try to understand the underlying beneficial effects of exercise, and to explore whether Sestrin proteins can be used to mimic exercise, and to mitigate age-/injury-related tissue deterioration.

- **The Aging Brain: Network Changes and Functional Consequences**, partnering Drs. Rachael Seidler, Associate Professor of Kinesiology, Scott Peltier, Associate Research Scientist in Functional MRI Laboratory, and Patricia Reuter-Lorenz, Professor of Psychology. The team will use cutting edge brain imaging techniques to study how network connectivity strength changes as people age, and to assess the relationship between those changes and declining brain functions.

- **Did the Housing Bubble Affect Long-Term Care Insurance Purchases?** Partnering Drs. Richard Hirth, Professor of Health Management and Policy, Helen Levy, Research Associate Professor, Survey Research Center, and Kenneth Langa, Professor of Internal Medicine. They will explore whether home equity can be a substitute for long-term care insurance, since this equity represents a substantial fraction of the wealth of many older people.