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HHMI Awards International Research Grants to 28 Scientists

Tamás Freund, a Hungarian neuroscientist, and 27 other exceptional scientists in eight countries have been selected to receive international research awards from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI). This is Freund's third HHMI research grant. His first, in 1995, was pivotal in his decision to stay in Hungary despite prestigious job offers in the West. A second grant in 2000 enabled him to build a relatively large, well-equipped, internationally competitive lab.

Now director of the Institute of Experimental Medicine of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, Freund will use his new HHMI grant to explore the role in neuron signaling of a mind-altering compound naturally produced in the human body. He hopes the research will lead to new drugs to treat anxiety and new ways to combat drug dependence.

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— **Thomas R. Cech**

The new grants underscore HHMI's ongoing commitment to fostering scientific research excellence in the Baltics, Central and Eastern Europe, and Russia. The 28 awards total \$14 million over five years. More than 400 scientists applied for the competitive awards.

The grants will support the research of scientists in Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, and Slovakia. Each scientist will receive \$100,000 a year for the five-year term. Sixteen of the 28 researchers were selected to become HHMI international scholars in 2000 as well.

Well known in the United States for identifying top scientific talent and encouraging those researchers to push the boundaries of biomedical science, HHMI has also supported promising researchers in the Baltics, Eastern and Central Europe, Russia, and Ukraine since 1995. The grants have enabled the best scientists in that region to remain in their own countries and conduct internationally competitive research.

"It is vital to invest in the scientific capacity of economically less advantaged countries because science is a global enterprise," said Thomas R. Cech, HHMI president and Nobel Prize-winning chemist.

The impact of HHMI's international grants goes beyond the research of individual scientists. Part of each award is earmarked for equipment, supplies, and other support for the scientists' home institutions. Funds also are used to provide training opportunities for students, electronic journal subscriptions, collaborative research, and travel to scientific meetings.

"These awards bolster the scientific infrastructure of the scientists' countries, providing resources to help them conduct world-class research at home, and connects them to a global network of some of the very best minds in science today," said Peter J. Bruns, HHMI vice president for grants and special programs.

In addition to supporting scientists in the Baltics, Eastern and Central Europe, and Russia, HHMI awards competitive grants to researchers in Latin America and Canada and supports infectious disease and parasitology research worldwide. The Institute has awarded a total of \$129 million to 353 scientists in 39 countries since 1991.

The 2005 awardees are:

Croatia Astrid Krmpotic **Czech Republic** Jana Kašpárková Zdena Palková Michal Pravenec Leos Valašek **Estonia** Maia Kivisaar Maris Laan **Hungary** Miklós Erdélyi Tamás F. Freund Lajos Haracska Ferenc Nagy László Nagy Gabor Tamás Beáta G. Vértessy Ervin Welker **Lithuania** Česlovas Venclovas **Poland** Edward B. Darzynkiewicz Marta Miaczynska **Russia** Peter M. Chumakov Olga A. Dontsova Alexei V. Finkelstein Maria Borisovna Garber Mikhail Gelfand Pavel Georgiev Alexander A. Konstantinov Sergey Lukyanov Andrey Zaraisky **Slovakia** Josef Nosek