



health sciences & services authority of spokane county

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**HSSA Contacts:**

**Nancy Isserlis**, HSSA Board Chair  
Winston & Cashatt Lawyers  
[nli@winstoncashatt.com](mailto:nli@winstoncashatt.com)  
509.838.6131

**Susan Ashe**, HSSA Acting  
Executive Director  
[susanashe@comcast.net](mailto:susanashe@comcast.net)  
509.358.2113 or 509.995.8356

**WSU Contacts:**

**Gary Pollack**, Ph.D.  
WSU VP for Health Sciences  
[gary.pollack@wsu.edu](mailto:gary.pollack@wsu.edu)  
509.335.4750

**Lorraine Nelson**, WSU Health Sciences  
Communications Director, School of Pharmacy  
[lanelson@wsu.edu](mailto:lanelson@wsu.edu)  
509.335.4776

**Iasis Molecular Sciences Contact:**

David J. Vachon, Ph.D., CEO/Founder  
[djvchon@iasismolecular.com](mailto:djvchon@iasismolecular.com)  
509.210.0736

**HSSA Awards \$1.7 Million for Local Health Sciences Research:  
\$1.18 Million for WSU Spokane Researchers, Core Lab Equipment;  
\$486,000 to Iasis Molecular Sciences**

**Largest HSSA Award to Date Helps Grow Research Capacity, Improve Local Economy**

SPOKANE, Wash. – The **Health Sciences & Services Authority** (HSSA) of Spokane County has announced its Board has awarded nearly \$1.8 million for local health sciences research. HSSA’s Board recently approved \$1,177,863 in four grants to Washington State University (WSU) Spokane, and \$486,038 to Iasis Molecular Sciences. The WSU grants help the university hire two nationally-renowned health science researchers and fund critically needed core laboratory equipment at the Spokane campus.

“HSSA is pleased to announce that its commitment to growing health sciences research in Spokane is clearly represented by these awards, all of which will genuinely help catapult research capacity in our region and add jobs to our local economy,” said **Nancy L. Isserlis**, HSSA Board Chair.

“We are extraordinarily fortunate to have HSSA as a partner in developing health sciences research capacity in Spokane,” said **Gary M. Pollack**, Ph.D., Vice Provost for Health Sciences and Dean and Professor, College of Pharmacy, Washington State University. “HSSA’s commitment will help us attract top talent and fund core laboratory infrastructure, both critical elements to serve as a nucleus to build upon for us to attract even more scientists,” he said. “The build-out of the College of Pharmacy in Spokane over the next five to seven years will add 135 new pharmaceutical scientists and support a \$15 million annual research enterprise.”

The WSU awards were made from the responses to the fifth request for proposals (RFP) issued by HSSA, specifying the intent of the grant competition is to **invest in human capital to accelerate Spokane’s health sciences research capacity**. The HSSA will award up to \$4.5 million under RFP #5. Individual project budgets may total up to \$500,000 per year for two years and are open to all academic institutions with active health sciences research programs or those intent on establishing active research programs in Spokane County. Eligibility requirements include research faculty devoting a minimum of 65% of their time to clinical, basic, applied or translational science research and a maximum of 35% of their time teaching or involved in academic service work; transferring up to \$1.5 million in currently active research funding to his/her new position here. All requests must document that the applicant organization will provide 1:1 matching financial support to HSSA grants, and the grants will be monitored for compliance. The next grant funding opportunity under RFP #5 is in May.

The four WSU awards are discussed in more detail in an [attached document](#).

The fifth HSSA award is to Iasis Molecular Sciences, Spokane, and it relates to **HSSA’s RFP #6** which intends to **fund research to expedite commercialization and spur job growth**. The \$4.5 million HSSA fund targets both for-profit and non-profit companies with innovative research who will develop and commercialize in Spokane County. The HSSA considers federal Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR), Small Business Technology Transfer (STTR), or other comparable awards from other recognized funding sources for matching grant requests for up to the full amount of Phase I and up to 50% of Phase II awards or \$500,000, whichever is greater, from established “proof of concept” funders. The match is a requirement of HSSA funding.

**“Infection-Control Solutions of At-Risk Patients”** is the title of research that will be conducted by Dr. Dave Vachon, CEO and Founder of Iasis Molecular Sciences. HSSA has awarded Vachon \$486,038, which is matched by federal grant funds Iasis has already received, to develop and commercialize a new family of antimicrobial additives that can be utilized with any variety of polymeric biomaterials to prevent or minimize health care acquired infections.

We are very pleased with this award,” said Vachon. “Every year it costs the U.S. health care system roughly \$46 billion to address health care-acquired infections from bacteria that find their way onto devices used in the body – catheters, ventilation-assist devices, and surgical repair devices for example, and the aim of our translational research is to commercialize this technology to provide a viable solution to help reduce the number of those infections,” said Vachon.

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#### About HSSA:

The **Health Sciences & Services Authority (HSSA) of Spokane County** was established in 2007 by the Washington Legislature, authorized county-wide by Spokane County in late 2008 to promote bioscience-based economic development, and began operating in 2009. HSSA invests funds to create and support a nationally competitive health sciences research cluster in Spokane County, and works to catalyze higher education research and the health sciences industry to lead to higher wage jobs, long-term sustainability and economic diversification. For more information, visit our website at [www.hssaspokane.org](http://www.hssaspokane.org), or contact Susan Ashe, Acting Executive Director at 509.358.2113 or [susanashe@comcast.net](mailto:susanashe@comcast.net).

## HSSA GRANT COMPETITION RFP #5

### Invest in Human Capital to Accelerate Spokane's Health Sciences Research Capacity

The four WSU grant recipients based on proposals in response to RFP#5 are as follows:

**Dr. Phil Lazarus**, contingent on a successful WSU recruit, will serve as WSU Chair of Pharmaceutical Sciences, based at the Spokane campus. HSSA's contribution to the recruitment package will be \$500,000 over two years, pending finalization of the recruitment. Dr. Lazarus has been a full tenured professor for the past decade, and most recently was a member of the faculty at the Penn State College of Medicine. He successfully developed a multi-million dollar Center for Pharmacogenetics in the Penn State Cancer Institute, and maintains a vigorous independent, federally-funded research program.

In his proposal, Dr. Gary Pollack, WSU Vice Provost for Health Sciences, said, "Dr. Lazarus' impact as a department chair will be more profound than the impact of his individual research, which will be significant in its own right." Dr. Pollack said that the College of Pharmacy growth model has Dr. Lazarus hiring 10 new faculty in the first five years beginning immediately, all of whom will be research-active 70-75% of their time. At the end of five years, WSU expects that Pharmaceutical Sciences will generate annual funding at \$10 million, will have 40 Ph.D.-seeking students, and will have a total research staff (faculty, students and technical support) of 75 scientists, a combined significant contribution to Spokane's economy.

**Dr. Mike Gibson** will lead the new WSU Spokane Section of Clinical Pharmacology in the College of Pharmacy, Division of Health Sciences. He will be appointed as a full professor with tenure in the College of Pharmacy, and will hold a joint appointment in the emerging Medical Sciences unit in Spokane. HSSA's contribution to the recruitment package will be \$200,000 over two years, pending finalization of the recruitment.

"Dr. Gibson is a high-end researcher who will bring his research program with him to Spokane. He has three new federal proposals pending for approximately \$750,000 per year in new direct expenditures," Dr. Pollack said. His most recent assignment was at Michigan Technological University as Professor and Chair, Department of Biological Sciences. He also spent several years at the University of Pittsburgh as a professor in the areas of human genetics, pediatrics and pathology. Dr. Pollack added that Dr. Gibson is an accomplished scientist and researcher who will bring significant value to Spokane in his ability to build a research-intensive unit focused on clinical/translational sciences, a crucial underpinning for drug development research. He will recruit five new faculty into Clinical Pharmacology over a five-year period beginning immediately. Each position will be research-active with 70-75% devoted to research. At the end of five years, Clinical Pharmacology will generate annual extramural funding of \$5 million, will have 20 Ph.D.-seeking students, and will have a total research staff of 45 scientists, a significant contribution to the area economy.

In total, Dr. Pollack estimates that Drs. Lazarus and Gibson will account for a minimum of 130 new jobs in the local economy by 2020.

**Mass Spectrometry Core Laboratory** to be created with HSSA's assistance of \$234,500, or one-half the cost for the "mass spec" to detect small-molecule (drug and metabolite analysis by liquid chromatography/mass spectroscopy (LCMS)). This technology is critical to support a range of

experimentation in cellular or other in vitro model systems, in preclinical animals, and in human subjects (normal volunteers and patient populations) at very low concentrations. Virtually all scientists working in the pharmaceutical sciences will need the LCMS technology.

**Microscopy Core Laboratory**, also to be created with HSSA's financial assistance of \$243,363, to purchase a laser scanning confocal microscope with a four-year service contract and technical support to meet current research requirements and projected need of faculty recruits into the WSU Division of Health Sciences. The capability of confocal microscopy is performing optical sectioning of thick biologic samples (tissues or cells) and three-dimensional reconstruction of images that are collected. The existing Medical Sciences faculty will use this equipment to image the spatial localization of proteins involved with telomere maintenance, critical components of signal transduction in sperm, cytokine receptors in neurons associated with sleep, and dynamic changes in these and other systems. Confocal imaging capability is also required for current and future College of Pharmacy faculty use.

A condition for HSSA support for these core laboratories at WSU Spokane is that the technology is available to public and private researchers from the area.

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