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Federal grant funds Alzheimer's Disease Research

PEORIA, Ill. (November 30, 2015) – The University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria recently was awarded more than \$440,000 by the National Institutes of Health to expand a study focusing on dysfunction in the brain's immune system and how this impacts the development of Alzheimer's Disease.

The research focuses on specific immune cells found in the brain. As the function of these immune cells decrease, deposits of a toxic plaque called amyloid increases. This amyloid plaque is believed to be responsible for the mind-robbing effects of Alzheimer's Disease, said Ken Fukuchi, the study's principal investigator.

"Think of these immune cells like a scavenger that eats up waste in the brain, but as we age – and particularly for those with Alzheimer's – this function decreases allowing the build-up of amyloid," said Dr. Fukuchi, a medical doctor with a PhD in genetics who has spent nearly 30 years researching Alzheimer's Disease. "We're very excited to be able to expand this research since we've seen good outcomes in our initial findings, and we believe this will lead to new types of treatment for Alzheimer's."

The NIH grant will fund the expanded study over the next two years. This is one of three research projects Fukuchi currently has in Alzheimer's at UICOMP.

While only 10 percent of people 65 and older are diagnosed with Alzheimer's, the numbers explode as people continue to age. About one-third of those who are age 85 and older have Alzheimer's, and the number of affected people is expected to be 15 million by 2050, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

As part of the largest public medical school in the United States, the University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria is a leader in education and research. Located in Downtown Peoria, UICOMP educates more than 150 medical students annually, offers 11 medical graduate residency programs six fellowships and is home to the cutting-edge Cancer Research Center. UICOMP physicians also provide care to thousands of patients each year.

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