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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Caroline Cornish

207-662-5146 / ccornish@mmc.org

Maine Medical Center Research Institute Awarded \$11M by the NIH

Funding from the National Institutes of Health will establish a center of biomedical research excellence at MMCRI

PORTLAND, Maine – The Maine Medical Center Research Institute (MMCRI) has been awarded a five-year, \$11 million Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) grant by the National Institutes of Health. This funding will establish a multidisciplinary research center at MMCRI to model the basis of human metabolic diseases. This program includes partnerships between Maine Medical Center and the University of Maine, the University of New England and Brown University.

This award comes just 7 weeks after the NIH announced a separate \$20 million award to MMCRI and two partnering institutions to establish the Northern New England Clinical and Translational Research Network. These two new programs at Maine Medical Center will complement each other and expand MMCRI's capacity to translate basic laboratory research discoveries into clinical care for patients.

Researchers at MMCRI have been studying how metabolically active tissues, including fat, bone and the brain use energy and control overall metabolism in the body. The COBRE award provides funding to four young investigators to conduct cellular, molecular, biochemical and clinical research. The award also supports the expansion of state-of-the-art technology, including advanced protein and lipid analysis and bone measurements, and the assessment of physiology and body metabolism.

As the new scientists obtain independent grant funding, additional new junior investigator projects will be added to the program, providing a process to recruit new research talent into Maine. The overall goal

of the program is to address obesity, osteoporosis and diabetes – all metabolic diseases common in Maine – by understanding pathways that lead to these disorders.

“One feature of this COBRE award is that it supports young investigators as they embark upon independent research projects,” said MMCRI Faculty Scientist and Program Director Lucy Liaw, Ph.D. “We have established a network of mentors and consultants to provide strong support for these investigators as they launch their careers. Fostering and maintaining talent in Maine is crucial for the growth of biotechnology in our state.”

The foundational research these investigators will be conducting will contribute to the development of cures for metabolic diseases and obesity. In 2015, the CDC listed Maine as having an obesity rate of 30 percent, the highest in New England.

“This award by the National Institutes of Health to MMCRI recognizes the importance of this area of research to the health of our communities and the significant capabilities of our Research Institute to make key contributions to the field,” said Donald St. Germain, M.D., Director of the Maine Medical Center Research Institute and Vice President of Research at Maine Medical Center. “The grant also will allow MMCRI to continue to offer a training pipeline for students at all levels to gain biomedical research experience that could lead to professional employment here in Maine.”

About Maine Medical Center

Maine Medical Center (MMC), recognized as a Best Regional Hospital by U.S. News and World Report for 2017-2018, is a complete health care resource for the people of Greater Portland and the entire state, as well as northern New England. Incorporated in 1864, MMC is the state’s largest medical center, licensed for 637 beds and employing nearly 7,500 people. MMC's unique role as both a community hospital and a referral center requires an unparalleled depth and breadth of services, including an active educational program and a world-class biomedical research center. As a nonprofit institution, Maine Medical Center provides nearly 23 percent of all the charity care delivered in Maine. MMC is a member of the MaineHealth system, a growing family of health care services in northern New England. For more information, visit www.mmc.org.

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