BOSTON – January 19, 2021- The VHL Alliance (VHLA) today announced the 2021 recipients of the VHLA Competitive Research Grant Program. This year, three grantees were chosen. Scientists are increasingly aware that curing von Hippel-Lindau disease, a genetic form of cancer – is a key step to curing cancer, leading to a significant increase in the quality of research grant applicants in the program year after year.

Over 20 top VHLA researchers from across the US, Canada, and Europe were involved in reviewing and selecting those projects which have the greatest potential to make advances toward Curing Cancer through VHL. For the second year in a row, responding to the increase in quality applications, the VHLA Board of Directors voted to expand the annual budget for research.

This year's grant recipients were:

- **Amit Tirosh, MD**, Head of Neuroendocrine Tumors Services, Institute of Endocrinology, Sheba Medical Center, Tel Aviv, Israel
- **Eric Jonasch, MD**, Professor, Department of Genitourinary Medical Oncology, Division of Cancer Medicine, The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, TX; and
- **David Zagzag, MD, PhD**, Professor of Pathology and Neurosurgery, NYU Langone Medical Center, New York, NY

Dr. Tirosh proposes to investigate the microenvironment of pancreatic neuroendocrine cancers using computational biology. Dr. Jonasch will test in the laboratory whether VHL-associated kidney cancers respond to a new class of medication that exploits DNA stress. Finally, Dr. Zagzag will test whether a
change in a specific protein expressed in hemangioblastomas can determine their growth rate.

“The VHL Alliance is proud to fund basic scientific and translational research of the highest quality, poised to shed light into the mechanisms of VHL tumors and lead to discovery of new ways to prevent and treat VHL patient tumors,” said Othon Iliopoulos, MD, PHD, board member and chair of the VHLA Research Council, and Clinical Director, Von-Hippel Lindau Disease/Familial Renal Cell Cancer Program, Associate Professor of Medicine, Center for Cancer Research, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA.

“Once again, the VHL Alliance Research Council was impressed with the range and quality of grant applications received. We have seen a growing interest among researchers in solving the mystery of the VHL gene - an important key to unlocking the mechanisms of tumor growth and ultimately, cancer,” said Chandra Clark, Executive Director of the VHL Alliance. “VHL disease affects 1 in 36,000 people around the world regardless of gender, race, socioeconomic, or geographic circumstances, and finding a cure will benefit thousands of cancer patients.”

For more information about the VHL Alliance or the 2021 VHLA Competitive Research Grant Program, please visit vhl.org. For a list of precious grantees, please visit https://www.vhl.org/researchersb/past-recipients-of-the-vhl-alliances-competitive-research-grants/

About VHL
VHL or von Hippel-Lindau disease is a genetic form of cancer. VHL patients battle a series of tumors throughout their lives. The VHL gene controls the major feeding pipeline of every tumor. Curing VHL is one step closer to curing many other forms of cancer. There are currently 8 drugs being used to effectively treat cancer, mainly kidney cancers, which are direct results of VHL research.

About the VHL Alliance
The VHL Alliance (VHLA) is the preeminent resource and clearinghouse for those affected by von Hippel-Lindau disease, including patients, caregivers, researchers, and the medical community. VHLA is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization founded in 1993, which is dedicated to research, education, and support to improve awareness, diagnosis, treatment, and quality of life for those affected by VHL. VHLA is the leading funder of VHL research, funding over $2.6 million in grants to support studies designed to find a cure. The VHL Alliance’s vision is Curing Cancer through VHL.

About the VHLA Competitive Research Grant Program
The VHLA’s Competitive Research Grant program awards two types of Grants: Pilot Grants ($25,000 for one year), designed to help researchers prepare the basic modelling required to then pursue larger grants; and Research Grants ($150,000 over three years), designed to obtain sufficient data to apply for government funded resources. Previous grants have contributed to our understanding of how the \textit{VHL} gene contributes to the tumorigenesis including how to overcome the body signaling and response to what it perceives as a hypoxic (low oxygen) environment.

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