FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Contact: Emily Ford, communications specialist
Duke Translational Medicine Institute
MURDOCK Study
704-642-2208 mobile
emily.ford@duke.edu

MURDOCK Study investigator named to MS national hall of fame

KANNAPOLIS, N.C.—Nov. 21, 2014—An investigator for Duke University’s MURDOCK Study at the North Carolina Research Campus has been inducted into the National Multiple Sclerosis Society’s Volunteer Hall of Fame for his work to help end the disease that affects more than 2.3 million worldwide.

Dr. Simon Gregory, principal investigator for the MURDOCK Multiple Sclerosis Study and associate professor at the Duke Molecular Physiology Institute at Duke University School of Medicine, received the honor earlier this month in Fort Worth, Texas.

Dr. Simon Gregory, an investigator with Duke University’s MURDOCK Study, is inducted into the National Multiple Sclerosis Society’s Volunteer Hall of Fame for scientific research.
Gregory is pictured with Eli Rubenstein, board chairman, and Cyndi Zagieboylo, president and CEO, both of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

With no cure or diagnostic test, multiple sclerosis remains a mysterious and unpredictable disease with symptoms ranging from numbness and tingling to blindness and paralysis.

Gregory’s work in genetics opened up a new field of research into how the IL7R gene contributes to the development of MS after he and his collaborators identified the gene’s association with the disease, forming the basis of ongoing study to understand the mechanism and signaling of IL74.
“It was an honor to be inducted into the volunteer’s hall of fame, as I’ve had a great relationship with the NMSS over the more than 10 years I’ve worked on MS at Duke,” Gregory said. “Meeting people with MS to describe my research in the context of the greater drive to find a cure has been both rewarding and challenging.

“Above all, I’ve wanted to convey to them that there are thousands of researchers out there pushing the frontiers of our understanding of the disease and not to give up hope.”

Gregory leads two substudies of the MURDOCK Study, Duke’s long-term medical research project based in Kannapolis. His team is working to recruit 1,000 people with multiple sclerosis and 100 people with Primary Progressive MS to understand disease development and progression at the molecular level.

The Gregory lab is involved in several collaborative research projects to identify the genetic underpinnings of complex diseases like MS. His team wants to generate biomarkers—measurable molecular indicators in the body—that would allow researchers to reclassify MS and lead to the development of tests that physicians would use to diagnose the disease and determine which treatments are best based on a patient’s genetic profile.

Gregory takes great interest in educating people about advances in MS research and regularly provides updates to people affected by the disorder. He also has engaged donors and secured millions of dollars in private funding for MS research, as well as encouraged young researchers to focus on the disease.

To better understand the disease and its progression, Duke needs about 450 more people diagnosed with MS to enroll in the Kannapolis-based research project. Volunteers contribute small samples of blood and urine, as well as two questionnaires related to medical history, demographics and MS diagnosis.

Researchers also need about 90 more people afflicted by Primary Progressive MS. This effort is one of the few of its kind in the world.

The MURDOCK Study has no geographic limitation for recruitment into either MS study. Anyone who suffers from multiple sclerosis may enroll, regardless of home address.

To learn more or start the enrollment process, call 704-250-5861 or visit www.murdock-study.org. This is not a drug study, so participants will not receive any form of treatment. Enrollment takes less than an hour, and volunteers are compensated.

The MURDOCK Study stands for the Measurement to Understand the Reclassification Of Disease in Cabarrus/Kannapolis. Duke launched the study in 2007 with a $35 million gift from David H. Murdock, founder and developer of the North Carolina Research Campus and chairman of Dole Foods.

Researchers are enrolling 50,000 people in a community registry to identify links across major diseases and disorders and find ways to treat and even defeat some of today’s leading causes of illness and death. MURDOCK Study researchers are working to improve treatments for heart disease, obesity, osteoarthritis, hepatitis C, osteoarthritis and Alzheimer's, as well as multiple sclerosis.