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Duke VTEU Names Valley Fever External Advisory Panel

DURHAM, N.C. – The Duke Vaccine and Treatment Evaluation Unit (VTEU) recently received an initial award of approximately $5 million from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) to support further research on valley fever pneumonia. Total funding could be up to $9 million over the course of the contract if all contract options are exercised.

As part of this award, the Duke VTEU team is developing a clinical protocol in collaboration with the NIAID Division of Microbiology and Infectious Diseases to study valley fever pneumonia.

Susanna Naggie, M.D., director of Infectious Diseases Research at the Duke Clinical Research Institute, and Emmanuel Walter, M.D., principal investigator of Duke’s VTEU, will lead the study.

The Duke VTEU has selected a panel of experts in valley fever to assist with the protocol development process. The Duke Valley Fever External Advisory Panel will be co-chaired by John Perfect, M.D., Duke University, and John Galgiani, M.D., University of Arizona.

Other members of the panel are Neil Ampel, M.D., University of Arizona; Antonino Catanzaro, M.D., UC San Diego; and George Thompson, M.D., UC Davis. The External Advisory Panel will be consulted to ensure that the proposed valley fever study addresses key issues related to valley fever diagnosis and treatment.

Valley fever is caused by a fungus indigenous to soil in the southwestern United States and parts of Central and South America. Inhaling the airborne Coccidioides fungal spores can cause an infection known as valley fever, which is characterized by flu-like symptoms that can last weeks or months. In rare cases, the infection can lead to meningitis or even death.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that valley fever causes more than 20,000 illnesses a year in the United States, with many more cases likely undiagnosed.

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