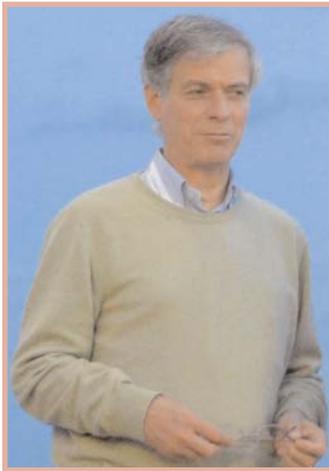


\$25,000 Grant Awarded to Advance Noninfectious Virus Detection in Polio Survivors



Dr. Antonio Toniolo

“Amid the international economic crisis and the general shrinkage of research funds, the assignment of the 2008 PHI grant for research on the post-polio syndrome came somehow unexpected to my group.”

SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI – The Research Fund of Post-Polio Health International (PHI) has awarded its fifth grant to a team of researchers from the University of Insubria Medical Center, Varese, Italy, led by Antonio Toniolo, MD, PhD, Professor of Medical Microbiology and Virology. The \$25,000 award, funded by PHI’s Post-Poliomyelitis Research Grant, is for work to be completed in 2009-2011.

The study, entitled *“Persisting Noninfectious Fragments of Poliovirus in PPS Patients: Virus Detection and Susceptibility to Antiviral Drugs,”* will complete the sequencing of the genome of persistent fragments of poliovirus strains and compare them to wild-type polioviruses. The last year of the study will test the susceptibility of the persistent fragments of poliovirus in vitro to antiviral drugs.

PHI’s Board President, Lawrence Becker, PhD, comments, “The application from the team in Italy impressed the panel as having real promise for tracking down the etiology of post-polio syndrome. And if it turns out that these viral fragments play a major causative role, the study will not only help develop an important diagnostic tool, but may point the way toward an effective treatment.”

Dr. Toniolo states, “We really appreciated the generous effort of PHI and will certainly do our best to clarify the role of persisting genomic poliovirus fragments in patients hit by polio many decades ago. Our fondest hope is to assess whether newer antivirals may be of any help to the many sufferers of this disabling condition.

We are also particularly proud of conducting part of the study with prestigious investigators of the Columbia University.”

Members of the research team include: Dr. Toniolo; Andreina Baj, MD, PhD; Giuseppe Maccari, MS; and Angelo Genoni, BS. Participants for the study will be selected from two clinics that treat post-polio patients – the University of Verona Medical Center, headed by Salvatore Monaco, MD, and the Rehabilitation Hospital “Villa Beretta,” Costamasnaga, Italy, headed by Franco Molteni, MD.

“Research funds to specifically study post-polio problems are hard to find,” says Joan L. Headley, Executive Director of Post-Polio Health International. “Generous donations from PHI’s Members over the last decade have helped us fill the gap, so research can help answer the questions that affect them in a very personal way. Dr. Toniolo’s team wisely has combined the PHI funds with funds from several other sources. We will update the post-polio community periodically of the progress of the two-year study.” ▲