

The Virginian-Pilot

EVMS | *Goal is human testing for diabetes treatment*

MEDICINE

NEW EVMS LEADER PRESCRIBES MORE RESEARCH DOLLARS



Dr. Jerry Nadler brings his diabetes work and new staff to Eastern Virginia Medical School.

By Nancy Young
The Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK

Dr. Jerry Nadler starts today as head of Eastern Virginia Medical School's Department of Internal Medicine, bringing with him new staff and possible local clinical trials for a promising new diabetes treatment.

EVMS hired Nadler away from the University of Virginia with an \$8 million package in the hopes that he will bring in more research dollars, new talent and better health care, particularly for diabetics and those with cardiovascular disease.

Nadler said he was seeking funding and Food and Drug Administration approval for human tests of a treatment for Type I diabetes that has proved successful in mice.

In Type I diabetes, the body's immune system mistakenly begins attacking insulin-producing cells in the pancreas that help

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control blood sugar. It used to be thought that the body's ability to make those cells was permanently destroyed, Nadler said, but research has shown that the body often continues to make them. The problem is the body's immune system destroys them before they can take hold.

The new treatment combines two well-established drugs: the anti-inflammatory Lisofylline and INGAP, which was developed at EVMS and helps stimulate the growth of insulin-producing cells.

The hope is that by using them together, the Lisofylline will reduce the effect of the body's immune response to the insulin-producing cells, allowing the INGAP to do its rebuilding work.

In a clinical trial on mice, the combination reversed diabetes. The next step is to test it on humans to see if it works as well, but FDA approval and funding are needed.

"That trial, if you do it right, you'll probably need several million dollars," said Nadler, adding that he hopes both the approval and funding will be in place in time to start local

clinical trials in 2009.

Before coming to EVMS, Nadler was chief of the endocrinology and metabolism division at the University of Virginia that in 2007 was ranked eighth in the nation among comparable departments by U.S. News and World Report.

EVMS invested \$8 million – \$1.5 million of which came from Sentara Healthcare – to bring Nadler and his research program to EVMS. In addition to his salary, the money will cover facilities and the recruitment of other researchers. Nadler is expected to bolster EVMS' share of research grants from the National Institutes of Health, considered the gold standard.

EVMS was ranked 115th out of 123 medical schools in terms of research dollars received from NIH in 2005, the latest year NIH provided a ranking. The University of Virginia ranked 33rd.

"Thank you again for recruiting me," Nadler told EVMS' Board of Visitors at its June meeting. "I can't wait to start all the missions."

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