



Media contacts:

Monell Center: Leslie Stein, Director of Communications, stein@monell.org, 267.519.4707

Univ of Florida: Todd Taylor, Assistant Director of Communications, tmtaylor4@ufl.edu

Univ of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus: David Kelly, Media Relations Manager, david.kelly@ucdenver.edu, 303-724-1525

New Scientific and Patient-Focused Conference to Address Treatments for Taste and Smell Disorders

Conference will lead to group consensus statement on directions for gene therapy and stem cell-based research

PHILADELPHIA (June 27, 2018) – The Monell Center, in partnership with the University of Florida Center for Smell and Taste and the Rocky Mountain Taste and Smell Center at the University of Colorado School of Medicine, will host an interdisciplinary two-day conference in November 2018 to establish a roadmap for treatment-focused research on smell and taste disorders. The groundbreaking meeting, entitled “Identifying Treatments for Taste and Smell Disorders,” will include sessions focused on the science of sensory disorders and their treatment and also on patient education.

Smell and taste disorders, including anosmia – complete loss of the sense of smell -- occur in more than 12 percent people worldwide. These ‘invisible’ disorders affect patients’ quality of life and health due to the inability to appreciate food flavor, detect environmental hazards, or fully engage with social networks and surroundings.

Causes of taste and smell dysfunction include receptor or nerve damage from viral infections such as the common cold, head trauma, cancer treatments including radiation therapy, and inborn genetic disorders. Although anyone can be affected, these conditions remain under-recognized.

“There currently are tenfold more research studies and federal research projects on the regeneration of hearing and vision than for taste and smell. Our goal is to learn about fruitful therapeutic approaches being pursued in other sensory systems to stimulate new patient-oriented research in taste and smell disorders,” said Monell Center olfactory neurobiologist Joel Mainland, PhD.



Identifying Treatments for Taste and Smell
<http://www.ittsd2018.org>



When healthy, the sensory cells that respond to taste and smell molecules renew frequently during a person's lifetime. Despite this remarkable quality, there currently are few or no evidence-based treatment options available to patients when these senses are damaged or lost.

“Understanding how disease and therapies disrupt taste and smell at the cellular level is crucial to devising treatments to ameliorate or prevent taste and smell loss” said Linda Barlow, PhD, Professor of Cell and Developmental Biology and member of the Rocky Mountain Taste and Smell Center, University of Colorado School of Medicine.

The *Identifying Treatments for Taste and Smell Disorders* conference will for the first time bring together scientists developing gene therapy and stem cell treatments in the auditory, visual, and dermatological fields with leading smell and taste researchers and clinicians to exchange research ideas and strategies. The outcome will seed a group consensus statement on directions for treatment-focused research for smell and taste disorders.

A second aim of the conference is to educate patients and the clinicians who provide care for them about the science and clinical practice related to these disorders. During a patient-focused session on the second day of the conference, a summary talk will explain the previous scientific presentations in non-technical terms, enabling patients to understand the research, ask questions and receive clear answers.

Patients are invited to present their stories during the same session. These five-minute presentations will inform scientists and clinicians about the many forms taste and smell disorders can take and about their impact on quality of life. Additional talks from patient advocates and clinicians will educate patients about currently available resources.

“This conference will contribute significantly to our efforts to educate and engage patients with smell or taste disorders. By partnering with Monell and the CU School of Medicine’s Rocky Mountain Taste and Smell Center, we can leverage the expertise of the three major National Institutes of Health-supported research centers for the study of smell and taste to facilitate the exchange of ideas and build new collaborations with both scientists and patients,” said Steven Munger, PhD, Director of the University of Florida Center for Smell and Taste.

The *Identifying Treatments for Taste and Smell Disorders* conference is being organized by Barlow, Mainland, and Munger. Also on the organizing committee are Danielle Reed, PhD, Associate Director of Monell, otolaryngologist Edmund Pribitkin, MD, Chief Medical Officer of Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia, and patient advocate Christine Kelly, who runs the site smelltraining.co.uk.

To promote scientific training opportunities in taste and smell disorders, graduate students and postdocs are invited to attend and submit abstracts for five-minute talks.





There is no charge for scientific or patient registration. The conference has a strong commitment to inclusion and will offer four minority domestic travel scholarships.

The conference, which will be held in Philadelphia on November 14-15, 2018, is funded through a grant (R13 DC017387) from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders of the National Institutes of Health. Additional funding is being supplied by Kerry.

Visit the conference website at <http://www.ittsd2018.org> for details on the program, to submit a patient or student abstract, and to register to attend.

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The Monell Chemical Senses Center is an independent nonprofit basic research institute based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Founded in 1968 and now celebrating its 50th anniversary, Monell builds on its legacy of advancing scientific understanding of the mechanisms and functions of taste and smell to benefit human health and well-being. Using an interdisciplinary approach, scientists collaborate in the programmatic areas of sensation and perception; neuroscience and molecular biology; environmental and occupational health; nutrition and appetite; health and well-being; development, aging and regeneration; and chemical ecology and communication. For more information about Monell, visit www.monell.org.

The University of Florida Center for Smell and Taste (UFCST) brings together researchers and educators from across the University with interests in the chemical senses. The UFCST mission is to make new discoveries in smell and taste; to translate those discoveries to benefit UF, the State of Florida and the world; to train the next generation of chemosensory scientists; and to educate the public about the chemical senses. UFCST scientists conduct fundamental and translational studies in areas of human health, flavor perception, neurobiology, agriculture, feeding, pest control and sensor technology. The new UF Health Smell Disorders Program provides patient care and educational support for people with a loss or impairment of the sense of smell. For more information about the UFCST, visit cst.ufl.edu.

The Rocky Mountain Taste and Smell Center (RMTSC) at the University of Colorado's state-of-the-art Anschutz Medical Campus brings together multidisciplinary investigators to examine the fundamental cellular processes that underlie the chemical senses, including their dysfunctions and clinical implications. The program includes collaborative, multifaceted studies on the neurobiology of the senses of taste and smell in humans and other vertebrates, with a focus on elucidating basic biological mechanisms of chemosensory function and addressing clinical problems related to chemical senses.



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