

Three UF researchers win [diabetes](#) award

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A trio of University of Florida scientists has been honored for their research into [type 1 diabetes](#) at the annual [Juvenile Diabetes Research Conference](#) in Washington, DC.

They received the sixth annual "Excellence in Clinical Research" award from Mary Tyler Moore and her husband, Dr. S. Robert Levine.

The recipients are Mark Atkinson, director of the JDRF Gene Therapy Center for Diabetes and Diabetic Complications at the University of Florida and University of Miami; Dr. Michael Haller, professor of pediatrics in the UF College of Medicine; and Dr. Desmond Schatz, medical director of the Diabetes Center of Excellence and associate director of UF's General Clinical Research Center.

The three researchers are involved in several JDRF-funded studies to accelerate the development of a cure for type 1 diabetes, including using umbilical cord blood stem cells as a potential therapy and investigating [drug treatments](#) used in tandem to provide immune suppression while boosting the regeneration of insulin-producing cells.

"Their willingness to challenge conventional wisdom and consequent ground-breaking work in translating novel scientific insights into new, potentially life-changing therapies and cures represents the sort of leadership we value most," Moore said in presenting the award at the recent meeting.

Atkinson has spent 25 years in the field of type 1 diabetes research. He is an internationally-recognized authority and a past JDRF chair for medical science research. His work focuses on disease prediction and prevention, environmental factors in the onset of the disease and the study of gene therapy to cure diabetes and prevent its complications.

Haller has spent his research career developing safe and effective

therapies to prevent and reverse type 1 diabetes. He is an active investigator in research funded by the National Institutes of Health.

Schatz has been involved in type 1 diabetes research since the 1980s, focusing on prediction, natural history, genetics and prevention of the disease, as well as the management of children and adolescents with type 1 diabetes. He is the principal investigator on several JDRF and NIH projects and co-principal investigator on a JDRF-funded project studying the origin and development of type 1 diabetes.

More than 700,000 Americans have type 1 diabetes, which strikes suddenly and requires multiple injections of insulin daily or a continuous infusion of insulin through a pump. Insulin, however, is not a cure for diabetes, nor does it prevent its eventual and devastating complications, which may include kidney failure, blindness, heart disease, stroke and amputation.

Since its founding in 1970 by parents of children with type 1 diabetes, JDRF has awarded more than \$1.16 billion to diabetes research, including more than \$137 million in the last fiscal year, when it funded 700 centers, grants and fellowships in 20 countries.

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