Young Investigator Award – Dr. Tuan Trang

Dr. Tuan Trang is Associate Professor of Physiology and Pharmacology at the University of Calgary. Tuan’s research focuses on discovering the fundamental molecules and processes involved in chronic pain and enhancing the utility of opioid drugs in treating pain conditions. A strong focus of his research is the role of microglia, the immune cells in the central nervous system, and the complex interplay between microglia and neurons in chronic pain and opioid analgesia. Understanding the key molecules and processes that underlie chronic pain and that contribute to the unwanted side effects of opioid use is a major step towards improving current therapies and identifying novel targets for creating entirely new, more effective strategies for treating pain.

Dr. Trang graduated with first-class academic distinction from his undergraduate (1999) and graduate studies (2005) at Queen’s University, one of the top Canadian academic institutions. He then completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the laboratory of Dr. Michael Salter, a world leading pain researcher at Toronto’s SickKids Hospital. Tuan's productivity as a trainee was exemplary. From his postdoc alone he published 8 peer-reviewed articles, including first authored articles in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, *Nature Neuroscience*, and *Nature Medicine*. This adds to 8 papers published as a graduate student, 7 of which as first author in excellent journals such as *Pain* and *British Journal of Pharmacology*. He has published a total of 29 peer-reviewed articles and has a rising h-index of 18. Tuan’s high level of achievement is evidence by prestigious scholarships and awards at each and every stage of his training.

Since arriving in Calgary, Tuan has been remarkably successful in obtaining competitive grants, including grants from NSERC and CIHR. Not only did he land a CIHR grant on his first attempt, but also his grant was the top ranked grant on the Pharmacology and Toxicology committee. Adding further to his success, Tuan has received numerous prestigious awards, including a CIHR New Investigator Award, and a Rita Allen Foundation Award in Pain, which is given to outstanding new investigators in Canada and the United States for distinguished achievement in pain research.

Tuan has built a vibrant and young lab with an upward trajectory. Most impressively, he recently published a senior authored paper in *Nature Medicine* – this is an outstanding achievement at any career stage, but it is especially remarkable for a young investigator only four and half years into a faculty position. He also has published a paper in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, and currently has manuscripts under review at the Journal of Clinical Investigation, and Pain. Tuan has therefore established a highly productive independent research program that is taking the opioid and pain research field in exciting new directions.