



Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine

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Annual Schwartz awards given to two life scientists

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Renata Ivanek

Two female researchers in the College of Veterinary Medicine, an epidemiologist and a bacteriologist, have received awards for their cutting-edge work.

The annual [Schwartz Research Fund for Women in Life Sciences](#), endowed by Joan Poynter Schwartz '65 and Ronald H. Schwartz '65, has awarded \$15,000 each to [Renata Ivanek](#), Ph.D. '08, associate professor of epidemiology, and [Jeongmin Song](#), assistant professor of microbiology and immunology.

The annual grants support female life scientists engaged in innovative, creative research.

"We are grateful to the Schwartz's for their continued commitment to and passion for funding faculty who are looking to take risks in innovative areas of research" said Yael Levitte, associate vice provost for faculty development and diversity, who oversees the

award selection committee.

Ivanek is a veterinary epidemiologist who specializes in food safety and zoonotic diseases, pathogens that infect across species. Her training has been in the modeling of infectious disease transmission. She also studies bacterial, viral and parasitic pathogens in humans, cattle, pigs, poultry and dogs, as well as non-infectious diseases.

Ivanek will use the funds to continue her research on the foodborne pathogen *Listeria monocytogenes*. Control strategies are aimed at reducing *L. monocytogenes*, but Ivanek's preliminary results suggest that from a public health perspective, some exposure to *L. monocytogenes* may actually be beneficial. That's because repeated exposures to the pathogen may boost immune response and prevent severe disease when people are re-exposed. Ivanek plans to evaluate the population level benefits, and risks of re-exposures, whether natural or vaccine-based.

Song's lab is focused on answering fundamental questions relating to *Salmonella Typhi*, the pathogen that causes typhoid fever. Attention on the disease is important because multidrug resistant *S. Typhi* strains are spreading. For the past three years, Song and her colleagues have made significant progress addressing the question of what makes the ancient disease *S. Typhi* so pathogenic and persistent. She plans to use the Schwartz award funds for pilot studies to better understand the relationship between *S. Typhi* and the human host, and why the pathogen is so successful in



Jeongmin Song

people. She believes that cracking S. Typhi's code for how it has endured so long within human populations could open the door for effective treatments and eradication.

Three other researchers each received \$1,500 travel grants to support conference travel for graduate students in each of their labs. These were: [Taryn Bauerle](#), associate professor in the School of Integrative and Plan Science (SIPS), Horticulture Section; [Sarah Pethybridge](#), assistant professor in SIPS, Plant Pathology & Plant-Microbe Biology Section; and [Gerlinde Van de Walle](#), assistant professor of microbiology and immunology in the veterinary college.

Ron and Joan Schwartz each had long careers at the National Institutes of Health and are now retired.

By Krishna Ramanujan

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