LRI Chairman’s Innovation Fund Nets High-Yield Return for Crohn’s Disease: The second week of February, 2012, was a big week for Christine McDonald, PhD, Pathobiology. Not only did she receive word that her research findings were accepted for publication in *Gastroenterology*, the highly respected and official journal of the American Gastroenterological Association, but she also was given approval for $750K from the Department of Defense (DOD) to fund her ongoing studies.

She credits the support of $50K from the LRI Chairman's Innovation Award in June, 2011, as being instrumental to these achievements by providing resources for refining her scientific approach and allowing her to recruit top-notch personnel to drive the studies’ exciting momentum.

This excitement is due to the fact that her laboratory discovered a way, using an existing human cancer drug in experimental models, to restore function of a gene called *NOD2* that is often dysfunctional in Crohn’s patients. Since the drug has already been deemed safe in humans, the potential translation of Dr. McDonald's laboratory studies into a pre-clinical trial is greatly accelerated.

For many years, Dr. McDonald has been researching Crohn’s disease, a chronic, debilitating inflammatory bowel disorder that affects 700,000 individuals in the United States. With no cure, these individuals currently rely on anti-inflammatory therapies to help lessen the recurrent effects of the disease. However, Dr. McDonald’s preliminary research has uncovered a way to address a fundamental mechanism causing the disease rather than treating disease symptoms.

"Without the support of the LRI Chairman's Innovation Award, we would have had to delay working on this project until we had sufficient funds. Unfortunately, that often puts investigators into a "catch-22" situation where, in order to get funding, you need significant preliminary data that you can't afford to generate until you get funding. The LRI Chairman's Award helps to fill this gap and provides the critical resources to successfully launch novel, innovative projects," says Dr. McDonald. "I can't thank the donors to the LRI Chairman's Innovative Research Fund enough for their support."