



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Medical Center
500 West Fort Street
Boise ID 83702-4598

October 16, 2017

Dong Xu, PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences
College of Pharmacy
Idaho State University
Meridian, ID 83642

Dear Dr. Xu,

I am writing to confirm that I will be very pleased to serve as your research mentor on the ITHS Translational Research Scholars Program entitled "*Repurposing FDA-approved drugs as anti-Clostridium Sordellii exotoxin agents*".

As Chief of the Infectious Diseases Section and Director of Research and Development at the Boise Veterans Affairs Medical Center, I have a successful track record of mentoring young scientists at early stages of their career. In 2015 I secured a 5-year, \$10 million Center of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) award from the NIH's National Institute of General Medical Sciences as the principal investigator. One of the specific aims of this grant is to mentor and support junior Infectious Diseases researchers and transition them to research funding independence. Dr. Mike Aldape, who will be collaborating with you on this the ITHS grant, is one of the junior researchers already mentored by me in the NIH COBRE award. Thus, it makes a lot of sense to be your mentor on this collaboration.

Your proposal demonstrates an innovative translational research approach whereby cutting-edge computer-aided drug design is integrated with state-of-the-art molecular and cell microbiology to advance the design of new therapeutics. Development of small-molecule based anti-toxins for mitigating circulating exotoxins and improving patient survival in lethal *C. sordellii* infections is an entirely unexplored area. The new published work by you and Dr. Aldape has laid out a solid foundation for this drug discovery project. By screening and repurposing FDA-approved medications, the proposed project will yield promising anti-toxin drug candidates and generate important data for you and Dr. Aldape to pursue NIH research grants.

During the course of this ITHS project, I plan to hold weekly meetings with you and Dr. Aldape via phone, e-mail, or in person to discuss project progress and direction. I will be also available to advise you and Dr. Aldape whenever there is a question regarding science and career development. In addition to my mentorship, I want to offer my strongest support to your ITHS Translational Research Scholars grant proposal as I am confident that this project will succeed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dennis L. Stevens".

Dennis L. Stevens, Ph.D., M.D.
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