



REWARDING HEART RESEARCH

More than 50,000 people die from heart disease each year in Florida, and statewide hospitalization costs related to the disease add up to about \$19 billion annually.

No wonder novel approaches to treating the problem are needed.

Jose Pinto, assistant professor of biomedical sciences, has built



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a career developing an understanding of the molecular basis of muscle function. While the bulk of the hospitalization costs are related to taking action after the illness has inflicted damage, Pinto is quickly becoming a leader in explaining the underlying mechanism of heart disease.

In August he was named the Stop Heart Disease Researcher of the Year by the Florida Heart Research Institute (FHRI). The award is given to a Florida researcher judged to be having the broadest impact in advancing knowledge about the diagnosis and/or treatment of cardiovascular disease.

“Dr. Pinto is paving the way to novel approaches to our understanding and treatment of heart muscle dysfunction – a major component of congestive heart failure,” said Paul Kurlansky, M.D., director of research at the FHRI.

Pinto and his team attempt to understand how inherited mutations in the proteins responsible for regulating contraction of the heart lead to aberrant disease phenotypes.

“We are interested in understanding the consequences of certain cardiac ‘poison peptides’ on skeletal muscle physiology and function,” he said. “Our ultimate goal is to develop a more effective, targeted therapeutic strategy which can be used to counter heart disease.”

The award includes a \$25,000 stipend to be applied toward future cardiac research projects in Florida.