NEWS RELEASE

Foundation Announces 2012 Recipients of Postprofessional Doctoral Scholarships and Fellowship Totaling $190,500

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ALEXANDRIA, VA, June 12, 2012 - The Foundation for Physical Therapy Board of Trustees recently awarded a total of $190,500 in Promotion of Doctoral Studies (PODS) I & II Scholarships and a New Investigator Fellowship Training Initiative (NIFTI) to 11 physical therapists.

“The level of excellence of our scholarship and fellowship applications continues to grow,” said Foundation Board of Trustees Chair William G. Boissonnault, PT, DPT, DHSc, FAPTA, FAAOMPT. “The Foundation is proud to support such outstanding physical therapists as they begin their research careers.”

As part of its post-professional Doctoral Opportunities for Clinicians and Scholars (DOCS) program to fund the most highly-qualified doctoral and post-doctoral students preparing for research careers, the Foundation awards PODS I Scholarships of $7,500 each year to physical therapists or physical therapist assistants who have completed at least two full semesters or three full quarters of their coursework toward a postprofessional doctorate degree. PODS II Scholarships of up to $15,000 each are awarded to physical therapists or physical therapist assistants who have been formally admitted to post-professional doctoral candidacy. These scholarships are funded in part by APTA’s “Supporting the Profession Fund.”

Congratulations to the 2012 PODS I Scholarship recipients: Sarah Gilliland, PT, DPT, University of California, Irvine; Amy Kimball, MPT, University of Iowa; Andrew Kittelson, PT, DPT, University of Colorado, Denver; Kristan Leech, PT, DPT, Northwestern University; and Bahar Shahidi, PT, DPT, University of Colorado, Denver.

Kristan Leech, PT, DPT, Northwestern University, is the recipient of the 2012 Mary Lou Barnes – Patricia Leahy Award for her outstanding application in post-professional studies within neurology. This award is given in memory of APTA Section on Neurology members and accomplished physical therapists, Mary Lou Barnes, PT, FAPTA, and Patricia Leahy, PT, MS, NCS. Barnes was the founding
director of the West Virginia University physical therapy program and served as chair of Georgia State University’s program, both of which received national recognition under her leadership. Leahy was a professor at the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia and was one of the first physical therapists ever to receive the Neurologic Certified Specialist (NCS) certification. She was also an alumnus of the Foundation. This scholarship has been generously supported by members of the **Neurology Section** through the Foundation’s **Neurology Endowment Fund**.

Special thanks are extended to the **California Physical Therapy Fund** for its sponsorship of the PODS I scholarship for **Sarah Gilliland, PT, DPT**, University of California, Irvine.

The 2012 PODS II Scholarship recipients are Meryl Alappattu, PT, DPT, University of Florida; Jessica Cassidy, PT, DPT, University of Minnesota; Ericka Merriwether, PT, DPT, Washington University in St. Louis; Miriam Rafferty, PT, DPT, NCS, University of Illinois at Chicago; and Christopher Thompson, PT, DPT, University of Illinois at Chicago.

**Christopher Thompson, PT, DPT**, University of Illinois at Chicago has been named as the recipient of the Pittsburgh-Marquette Challenge Award for exceptional achievement within a PODS application. This award was made possible by the 2010-2011 Pittsburgh-Marquette Challenge. Physical therapist and physical therapist assistant students from schools across the country participate in this annual grassroots fundraising effort coordinated by Marquette University physical therapy students. The Challenge has raised over $2 million and funds a PODS scholarship and supports Foundation research grants each year.

**Meryl Alappattu, PT, DPT**, University of Florida, has been named the Viva J. Erickson Award recipient, for exceptional academic and leadership achievement within a PODS II application. The award is generously funded by the Viva J. Erickson Fund established in 1995 in memory of this accomplished physical therapist and APTA leader.

The $78,000 New Investigator Fellowship Training Initiative (NIFTI) was awarded to **Stacey DeJong, PT, MPT, MS, PhD, PCS**, of the University of Kansas Medical Center for her research project, “Changes in Corticomotor Divergence and Upper Limb Synergies after Neural Injury.” DeJong’s fellowship training will focus on examining the neural basis of abnormal movement patterns that persist after neural injury. She will be under the mentorship of Dr. Randolph Nudo, director of KUMC’s Landon Center on Aging. This award is funded in part by APTA’s “Supporting the Profession Fund.”

The NIFTI supports post-professional, doctorally prepared physical therapists as they begin their research careers. It is designed to accommodate both traditional postdoctoral and new faculty applicants for a closely mentored research experience.

The Foundation for Physical Therapy was established in 1979 as a national, independent nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the quality and delivery of physical therapy care by providing support for scientifically-based and clinically-relevant physical therapy research and doctoral scholarships and fellowships.
Contributions to the Foundation for Physical Therapy are tax-deductible and can be made online at Foundation4PT.org or sent to its headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. The mailing address is 1111 N Fairfax St, Alexandria, VA 22314. For more information, e-mail Info@Foundation4PT.org or call 800/875-1378.

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