

**OREGON MEDICAL LASER CENTER  
AT PROVIDENCE ST. VINCENT RECEIVES GRANT  
TO HELP HEAL WOUNDED SOLDIERS**

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**PORTLAND, Ore.** – It’s a grant that could help restore limbs – and lives.

Oregon Medical Laser Center (OMLC), located at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center is the Northwest’s only research facility to receive a portion of the U.S. Army’s \$85 million grant to develop cell therapies to help heal wounded soldiers. OMLC was awarded \$1.5 million – \$300,000 a year for five years. OMLC will collaborate with research facilities across the country to form the Armed Forces Institute of Regenerative Medicine (AFIRM). AFIRM will be dedicated to repairing battlefield injuries through the use of regenerative medicine, science that uses the body’s natural healing powers to restore or replace damaged tissue and organs.

OMLC Medical Director Kenton Gregory, M.D., was chosen to be a lead researcher in this project. Dr. Gregory and his team at OMLC will work to develop therapies to help heal battlefield trauma to the arms and legs. As many as 20,000 American men and women have these wounds. “Due to the extensive use of explosive devices, this war has caused unprecedented damage to our soldiers. They will have disabilities for the rest of their lives if we don’t find a way to help them,” says Dr. Gregory.

OMLC will focus on the most common extremity wound – compartment syndrome. Compartment syndrome is acute swelling following a blow to the body. The swelling causes pressure that cuts off blood supply, which can lead to irreversible nerve and muscle damage.

OMLC scientists have been developing strategies to enhance healing and replace and regenerate damaged tissues using adult stem cells derived from bone marrow or fat for the past 10 years. Pre-clinical data show remarkable potential that the stem cells can regenerate and repair muscle, nerve and blood vessel cells.

The \$85 million research project will be directed jointly by Wake Forest University School of Medicine, the University of Pittsburgh, the Cleveland Clinic and Rutgers University. Therapies developed by AFIRM also will benefit people in the civilian population with burns or severe trauma.

"For the first time in the history of regenerative medicine, we have the opportunity to work at a national level to bring transformational technologies to wounded soldiers, and to do so in partnership with the armed services," said Anthony Atala, M.D., director of the Wake Forest Institute for Regenerative Medicine. "This field of science has the potential to significantly impact our ability to successfully treat major trauma."

Dr. Gregory says the AFIRM grant supplements recent support by Oregon's congressional delegation. "Without the combined support of the U.S. Army and members of Oregon's congressional delegation, we would not be able to move forward with this important research that could make a dramatic difference in the lives of tens of thousands of soldiers," he says.

The Oregon Medical Laser Center with its U.S. Army Battlefield Surgical Research Program is one of the country's leading research facilities for developing technologies to save soldiers' lives on the battlefield and repair battlefield wounds through tissue replacement and regeneration. Founded in 1991 at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center in Portland, Ore., OMLC has developed laser, biomaterials, hemorrhage control technologies and regenerative medicine with a proven record of saving lives on the battlefield.

OMLC made headlines around the world with the development of the HemCon Bandage<sup>®</sup> that can stop life-threatening bleeding. With the military's support, the bandage received the second fastest approval in FDA history. Today every U.S. soldier carries these chitosan dressings manufactured by HemCon Medical Technologies, Inc., located in Portland.

OMLC's Battlefield Surgical Research Program is entering its 10th year in collaboration with the U.S. Army Combat Casualty Care Program, Special Operations Medical Units and the Institute for Surgical Research.

The OMLC team is comprised of physicians, chemists, biologists, biomaterial engineers, clinicians, physicists and administrative staff who collaborate freely to achieve breakthrough biomedical research that has resulted in lifesaving medical applications used around the world.

Dr. Gregory, the founder of OMLC and the U.S. Army Battlefield Surgical Research Program, sees the AFIRM program as the breakthrough initiative to bring regenerative new therapies to injured troops – to give them a full functional recovery with productive active duty and civilian lives. “My top priority is taking care of injured U.S. soldiers with wounds that will haunt them for the rest of their lives,” says Dr. Gregory. “They are risking their lives for us. It’s something our country owes them.”

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*The Oregon Medical Laser Center (OMLC) is one of the country’s leading biomedical laser research facilities and the only center of its kind in the Pacific Northwest. Based at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center, OMLC researches and develops innovative uses for lasers to diagnose and treat heart attack, stroke and cancer; produces biocompatible tissues for research in the repair and replacement of diseased and injured arteries and skin; and has successfully developed a bandage that stops severe external bleeding, with future research focused on developing a similar bandage suitable for internal use. The center collaborates with Oregon State University, Portland State University and Oregon Health & Science University, as well as several commercial firms in many of its research endeavors.*