

Joint press release by the International Society for Research in Human Milk and Lactation (ISRHML) and the Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation (FLRF)

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## **The International Society for Research in Human Milk and Lactation and the Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation advance careers of promising young researchers through their joint Trainee Expansion Program**

**In its second year of existence, ISRHML and FLRF have awarded nine scholarships for students and postdoctoral fellows in the field of human milk and lactation. The Trainee Expansion Program (TEP) - funded by the Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation - brought gifted young scientists from four different continents to renowned research centers worldwide. The applications have diversified and now include natural science and social science projects. In addition, one TEP winner has been awarded a prestigious fellowship program following the TEP.**

As a merit-based program, TEP provides trainees with the unique opportunity to address innovative research questions outside their area of expertise, while being mentored by world experts in the field of human milk and lactation research. The program has two components, the Trainee Bridge Fund – a one-year scholarship of up to \$100'000, and the Trainee Travel Fund of up to \$10'000 – a three months' exchange program, both for research projects in the field of human milk and lactation.

In 2017, two gifted young scientists have been awarded the Trainee Bridge Fund. Cassandra Harding, a postdoctoral associate at Yale School of Public Health, will move to Ghana to implement, monitor and evaluate a breastfeeding social media marketing campaign through Facebook and Twitter. Further, she will test different paths to disseminate campaign messages incorporating social network targeting methods. The second awardee, James Butcher, a postdoctoral fellow at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario, will move to the University of Ottawa, Canada, to develop profiling techniques that are suited to the breastmilk's inherently low number of microorganisms. This will help to assess how alterations in breastmilk composition change the important microorganisms that are passed on from mother to child. Microorganisms in the mother's milk are important to colonize the gut of a new-born infant to help establish a healthy gut flora - all bacteria present in the gut and essential for human digestion and uptake of nutrients. In addition, TEP awarded seven promising students with Trainee Travel Funds, allowing them to pursue their research projects in different research centres worldwide.

"The TEP funds not only bench and clinical research projects," remarked Dr. Meghan Azad, President of the TEP Committee. "The scope of the program also encompasses other fields, such as Public Health and Health Economics. We have recently observed a diversification in applications, including Social Science projects like Awardee Cassandra Harding's study on breastfeeding promotion by social media. We are dedicated to supporting human milk and lactation research from all research disciplines."

Dr. Alecia-Jane Twigger, winner of the Trainee Bridge Fund in 2016, has a new success story to tell. The scholarship allowed the Australia-based postdoctoral fellow to move to the Helmholtz Zentrum München in Germany to conduct research on single-cell comparison

between resting and lactating human mammary cells. The Centre recognised her exceptional talent and awarded her with the prestigious Helmholtz Postdoctoral Fellowship Program, which trains highly talented early-career scientists for leadership positions in health and environment research.

Dr. Lars Bode, President of ISRHML, is delighted: “TEP, now in its second year of existence, has made great progress. The fact that Alecia-Jane is awarded this prestigious fellowship, emphasizes TEP’s importance in advancing the next generation of talented scientists and helping them develop a future pipeline of research projects.”

Dr. Katharina Lichtner, Managing Director of the Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation, adds: “TEP helps to broaden the group of excellent talent focused - or starting to focus - on human milk and lactation. To bring them together with the world’s leading-edge researchers expands the global network in human milk research. We are very pleased with TEP’s achievements so far.”

### **International Society for Research in Human Milk and Lactation**

The International Society for Research in Human Milk and Lactation (ISRHML) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of excellence in research and the dissemination of research findings in the field of human milk and lactation. Established in 1988, it strives to accomplish its goals by fostering communication among members and established liaisons with government agencies, public health authorities, industry, and other organizations interested in human lactation. ISRHML holds a biennial international meeting, and annual symposia and mini-symposia to discuss research finding and cultivate international and interdisciplinary collaborations. [www.ISRHML.net](http://www.ISRHML.net)

### **Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation**

The Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation is an independent, charitable foundation established to fulfil the family’s vision of a world in which every child is granted an optimum start in life through the benefits of human milk. Founded in 2013 and based in Zug, Switzerland, its primary focus is on promoting and supporting human milk feeding. The Foundation’s mission is to make human milk a matter of course worldwide. The Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation accomplishes its mission through its own programmes and by supporting the campaigns of other non-profit organisations. It invests globally in interdisciplinary projects and promotes research, thus instigating discovery, new knowledge and recognition of human milk as the best nutrition for newborns. With every endeavour, the foundation strives for sustainable impact by placing the highest value on the long-term well-being of mother and child. [www.larsson-rosenquist.org](http://www.larsson-rosenquist.org)

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