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Pitt gets \$8 million NIH grant

By The Tribune-Review Monday, August 13, 2007

The University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine announced this morning that it has received an \$8 million federal grant to lead a worldwide study of a rare, mysterious auto-immune disorder that causes a person's immune system to attack itself.

Dr. Chester V. Oddis, professor of medicine at Pitt, is leading the study, which involves 36 other scientists from 18 states and five countries, including Canada, the Czech Republic, Sweden, England and the United States. According to Pitt, it is the largest-ever research effort into the disorder, called myositis.

The study will evaluate a drug called rituximab in adults and children with certain symptoms of myositis. The drug has been approved since 1997 by the Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of B-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and has been approved since 2006 for adult rheumatoid arthritis patients.

Myositis refers to several conditions that are characterized by muscle weakness and thought to be autoimmune diseases. This means that the body's immune system, which normally fights infections and viruses, for unknown reasons turns on itself and attacks muscle tissue and sometimes skin, joints and lungs, causing rashes, arthritis and shortness of breath.

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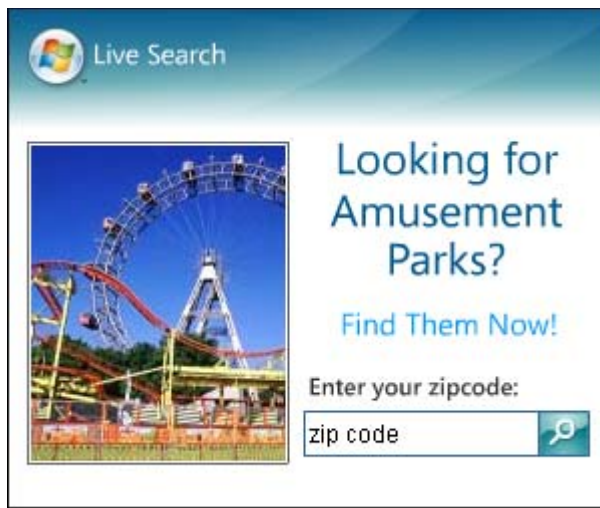
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A total of 202 people -- 152 adults and 50 children -- will be enrolled in the study. For more information or to enroll, call Sherrie Pryber at 412-647-3241.

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