



International Conference

Steven D. Townsend, Ph.D., Wins the Ruth A. Lawrence Investigator Award for Research in Human Milk Science

PASADENA, Calif., Aug. 31, 2018 – The International Conference on Human Milk Science and Innovation (ICHMSI) announced today that Steven D. Townsend, Ph.D., is the recipient of the second annual Ruth A. Lawrence Investigator Award for Research in Human Milk Science.

The award was established in 2016 by ICHMSI to support original research and the advancement of emerging researchers in the area of human milk science and breastfeeding medicine. It is named in honor of Ruth A. Lawrence, M.D., a pioneer in the field of human lactation and breast milk.

Dr. Townsend's research, entitled "Human Milk Oligosaccharides Exhibit Antimicrobial and Antibiofilm Properties Against Group B *Streptococcus*," was selected by an independent panel of expert judges for the award. Dr. Townsend's research focuses on components of breast milk called human milk oligosaccharides (HMO), a family of structurally diverse sugars that are highly abundant in and unique to human milk. Although the best-characterized function of HMO is their prebiotic activity, where they promote colonization of the intestine by commensal ("good") bacteria, Dr. Townsend's research is the first to show that HMO may also prevent group B *streptococcus* (GBS) biofilm formation and exert antimicrobial activity by also blocking infection by GBS. GBS is a leading cause of severe bacterial infection in all newborns, although premature newborns are particularly at risk. Dr. Townsend's findings may have significant implications for how human milk feeding and HMO in particular help prevent GBS infection in newborns.

Dr. Townsend will accept the award and present his research at the sixth annual International Conference on Human Milk Science and Innovation in Pasadena, California, Sept. 5-7, 2018. He will also receive a \$10,000 award and travel expenses to attend the event.

Dr. Townsend has served as an assistant professor of chemistry at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee, since 2014. He is a graduate of Oakland University in Rochester, Michigan, and received his Ph.D. in organic chemistry from Vanderbilt University, where he was awarded predoctoral fellowships from Pfizer and the United Negro College Fund/Merck. He also completed a National Cancer Institute postdoctoral fellowship at New York City's Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and Columbia University before joining the faculty at Vanderbilt University. Recently, he was awarded the Chancellor's Award for Research at Vanderbilt.

About the Ruth A. Lawrence Investigator Award for Research in Human Milk Science

Award applicants must be trainees (students, postgraduate trainees/residents/fellows) or physician/academic researchers who are within the first five years of completion of their postgraduate training.

Research must be original and related to, but not limited to, one or more of the following topics:

- (1) Biologic activities of human milk or its components
- (2) Applications of human milk or its derivatives to clinical medicine
- (3) The impact of environment (broadly speaking) on breast milk production, lactation, or breast milk content

The award was created by ICHMSI to pay tribute to Ruth A. Lawrence, M.D. Dr. Lawrence received her medical degree from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry at a time when few women pursued degrees in medicine. Lawrence is a founder of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) and founder and first editor-in-chief of the ABM official journal, *Breastfeeding Medicine*. She helped establish the neonatal intensive care unit at Rochester's Strong Memorial Hospital and served as the distinguished professor of neonatology, obstetrics, and gynecology at the University of Rochester Medical Center School of Medicine and Dentistry and as the medical director of the Breastfeeding and Human Lactation Study Center.

About the International Conference on Human Milk Science and Innovation

The International Conference on Human Milk Science and Innovation, sponsored by [Prolacta Bioscience](#), is the premier forum covering the latest in scientific and clinical research related to human milk. Renowned scientists and clinicians from around the world attend this annual event to present and discuss the scientific potential of human milk and raise awareness of its clinical applicability.

www.humanmilkscience.org

About Prolacta Bioscience

Prolacta Bioscience, Inc. is a privately-held life sciences company dedicated to Advancing the Science of Human Milk®. The company pioneered the development of human milk-based neonatal nutritional products to meet the needs of critically ill, premature infants in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Prolacta leads the industry in the quality and safety of nutritional products made from donor breast milk and operates the first and only pharmaceutical-grade manufacturing facility for the processing of human breast milk.

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