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[Washington Research Foundation](#) (WRF) has awarded a \$100,000 grant to [Pacific Northwest Research Institute](#) (PNRI) in honor of David J. Galas, Ph.D., who helped to create the WRF Postdoctoral Fellowship program in 2017 and served on the WRF board of directors from 2010 until his death in May. The grant will support the continuation of work begun by Galas and his colleague Lisa Stubbs, Ph.D., investigating the genetic links between stress and a range of health disorders.

Galas was a renowned expert in molecular biology and human genetics. He was a leader in the Human Genome Project and a key contributor to the technology that enabled one of the earliest rapid tests for COVID-19. In 2012, he joined PNRI as a senior investigator.

Inspired to apply his novel computational approaches to find ways to improve the human condition, Galas, together with PNRI senior investigator Stubbs, launched the groundbreaking [Decoding Stress Study](#) in 2021. The goal of the study is to pinpoint the exact genes, gene networks and patterns of mutations responsible for how humans' brains and bodies respond to chronic stress and to identify how an individual's unique genetic makeup contributes to their risk of developing stress-related diseases, such as anxiety, depression, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Galas and his team focused on developing and applying innovative mathematical methods, providing new computational tools to seek out and validate genetic interactions significant to this research. The findings of the Decoding Stress Study will ultimately provide the basis for new genetic screens to identify people who are at the greatest risk of developing stress-related disease, as well as to guide doctors in choosing the right treatment for each person.

With support from WRF's grant, Stubbs will continue to lead this project.

"We are honored to continue pursuing David's vision—that of using an individual's unique genetic make-up to identify those at greatest risk of stress-related diseases—with the goal of developing tailored therapies to identify and treat them. This is David's legacy gift to all humanity," said Stubbs.

In addition to his roles with PNRI and WRF, Galas was chair of the Hertz Foundation board of directors, a lifetime National Associate of the National Academy of Sciences, and an entrepreneur who held 20 issued U.S. patents and authored more than 180 scientific publications. He was also an accomplished artist and poet.

Brooks Simpson, WRF's board chair, said, "David was an incredible board member and mentor to all of us. We are better board members, stronger staff and an enriched organization because of him. As an example, David's insight and belief in postdocs led to the creation of our fellowship program. That will always remain a hallmark of our contributions to the research engines in the region."

"WRF's generous gift is a profound testament to David, who never stopped discovering and pushed the boundaries of our knowledge about genetics right up to the end of his life," said Diane Isonaka, Galas' widow. "This gift will ensure that the innovative methods and tools that David introduced in the Decoding Stress Study will continue to shape the field of genetics and benefit generations to come with improved healthcare, personalized treatments and a deeper understanding of life itself."