

Tradition scientist receives multimillion dollar grant for AIDs research

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Rafick-Pierre Sekaly

PORT ST. LUCIE — VGTI Florida Scientific Director Rafick-Pierre Sékaly has won a five-year, multimillion-dollar grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse for his HIV eradication research.

Sékaly is one of only four scientists to receive the Avante-Garde Award from NIDA, which is a branch of the National Institutes of Health. His lab, based now in Tradition, will receive \$500,000 per year, plus associated facilities and administrative costs, for five years.

The Avante-Garde Award is given to scientists whose research will lead to new avenues for prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS among drug abusers. Earlier this year, Sékaly announced a breakthrough in HIV research, having discovered where the human immunodeficiency virus hides in certain memory T-cells.

With the cash from NIDA, Sékaly will try to discover how and why HIV is able to store itself in those immune system cells.

VGTI Florida, a branch of the Vaccine and Gene Therapy Institute at Oregon Health & Science University, is building a facility at Tradition. In the meantime, VGTI Florida scientists are working from spare labs at Torrey Pines Institute for Molecular Studies.

For more information FNIDA's HIV/AIDS Research Program, go to www.drugabuse.gov/AIDS.

