uBiome Awards Microbiome Impact Grant to Explore Effects of Heavy Drinking and Smoking on Oral Microbiome

*uBiome, the leader in microbial genomics, awards scientific grant to Dr. Renato Polimanti of the Yale University School of Medicine, who will investigate the impact of heavy smoking and drinking behavior on the oral microbiome.*

San Francisco, CA (PRWEB) December 03, 2016 -- Microbial genomics leader uBiome is awarding in-kind scientific grants to ground-breaking microbiome studies. A microbiome impact grant award has been made to Dr. Renato Polimanti of Yale University School of Medicine, who will study the effect of heavy smoking and drinking on the oral microbiome. Grant proposals have been vetted by the company’s scientific review committee.

Dr. Polimanti is a genetic epidemiologist working in the Division of Human Genetics of the Department of Psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine. The grant will enable him to perform microbiome analyses of 1,000 samples from two studies into the genetics of alcohol and drug dependencies. Both of these studies contain genome-wide data and detailed information regarding smoking and drinking behaviors. These studies include subjects recruited for studies of the genetics of alcohol and drug (led by PI Joel Gelernter, MD; Yale University School of Medicine) and a nationally representative sample of US military veterans (led by PI Robert H. Pietrzak, PhD, MPH; US Department of Veterans Affairs National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Yale University School of Medicine).

Although it is already understood that the composition of the oral microbiome can be affected by smoking and drinking behaviors possibly leading to conditions such as cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and inflammatory bowel diseases, no genome-wide investigation has been made to understand the biology of this interactive mechanisms. This study aims to address this possible correlation. Diseases directly attributable to smoking and drinking lead to approximately 8.5 million deaths every year worldwide.

Dr. Polimanti, who received his PhD and MS in Evolutionary Biology from the University of Rome “Tor Vergata”, has co-authored over 60 peer-reviewed scientific papers. He is currently Associate Research Scientist at Yale University School of Medicine. Dr. Polimanti has a wide range of scientific interests, including biological psychiatry, evolutionary biology, medical genetics, and computational biology.

uBiome employs next generation high-throughput DNA sequencing technology to generate detailed analyses of the human microbiome, the ecosystem of trillions of microorganisms living in and on the human body. Many of these microorganisms play crucial roles in supporting life. For example, gut bacteria aid digestion and enable the synthesis of vitamins. Pathogenic bacteria, however, can be associated with a range of conditions. In the case of the oral microbiome, these can include upper oral and esophageal cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and inflammatory bowel diseases.

uBiome is perhaps best known for its work on the gut microbiome, but the company also provides microbiome testing for four other sites on the human body – mouth, nose, genitals, and skin. The company has recently launched SmartGut™, the world’s first sequencing-based clinical microbiome test -- a doctor-ordered, insurance-reimbursable test processed in its CAP-accredited lab -- that is indicated for patients with chronic bowel issues.
Award winner, Dr. Renato Polimanti, Associate Research Scientist at Yale University School of Medicine, says: “Scientists in the early stages of their career, like me, sometimes have difficulty obtaining funding for novel research without being able to show preliminary results. But, of course, you can’t get results without doing research, so it leads to a Catch-22 situation. I’m therefore grateful to uBiome for making this important work possible. Dependence on alcohol and nicotine leads to a wide range of serious diseases. By revealing the presently unknown interactions between host and oral microbiome, the study should lay foundations that could ultimately contribute to saving many lives.”

Dr. Jessica Richman, co-founder and CEO of uBiome, says: “We’re pleased to be collaborating with Dr. Polimanti on his oral microbiome research. I want to congratulate Dr. Polimanti for his excellent proposal, which made a strong impression on our scientific review committee. uBiome’s goal is to fund important research that will have a profound impact on our understanding of the microbiome and human health.”

Founded in 2012, uBiome is the world’s leading microbial genomics company. uBiome is funded by Y Combinator, Andreessen Horowitz, 8VC, and other leading investors. uBiome’s mission is to explore important research questions about the microbiome and to develop accurate and reliable clinical tests based on the microbiome.

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