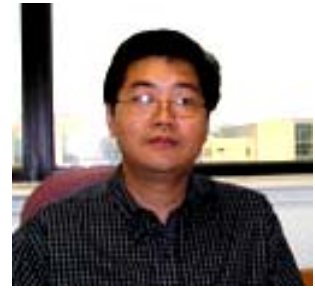


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Dr. Zhang received his MD in China in 1987 and his PhD in viral immunology at Washington State University in 1998. He did his post-doctoral training in molecular and viral biology at University of Michigan from 1998-2003.

Dr. Zhang's current research interest focuses on the molecular mechanisms of neurodegenerative diseases and develops neuroprotective strategies to slow down the disease progression. Specifically, we are interested in identifying the genetic factors that are involved in the pathogenesis or are neuroprotective for the involved specific neurons. Two of the novel genes, attractin (Atrn) and Mahogunin (Mgrn1) are being studied for their involvement of widespread age-dependent progressive neurodegeneration in animal models. We demonstrated that these two gene products are neuroprotective for dopaminergic neurons using both in vitro and in vivo models of Parkinson's disease.

Another major gene product that is being investigated in Dr. Zhang's lab is leptin. Leptin is an important hormone that regulates food intake and body weight, however, there is also evidence that leptin may act as a neurotrophic factor. The novel neuroprotective role on dopamine neuron of leptin is being determined.

Recent Publications:

Garza JC, Guo M, **Zhang W** and Lu X-Y (2008). Leptin promotes adult hippocampal neurogenesis *in vivo* and *in vitro*. **Journal of Biol Chem** (in press).

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Liu J, Garza J, Truong H, Henschel J, **Zhang W**, Lu X-Y (2007) The melanocortinergic pathway is rapidly recruited by emotional stress and contributes to stress-induced anorexia and anxiety-like behavior. **Endocrinology**, 148(11): 5531-40.

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