CHOP, Penn Health System, Rutgers researchers win Science Center grants

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The Science Center made its second round of awards Wednesday under its QED Proof-of-Concept program. The recipients, all working to advance gene therapy and treatments for heart disease, were researchers from The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, the University of Pennsylvania Health System and Rutgers University.

Each recipient will receive $100,000 from the Science Center, a $100,000 match from their supporting institution, and business advice for one year.

The Science Center program was created to bridge the gap between research grants and commercial seed investment.

Dr. Robert J. Levy, a professor of pediatrics and pharmacology at Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, received a grant to support his work developing a technology that is expected to significantly reduce the 100,000 surgeries performed each year in the United States to replace blocked stents. Levy’s proposed technology, called vascular magnetic intervention, uses magnetically charged nanoparticles to deliver circulation-preserving drugs to implanted stents.
A group at Penn health system headed by Dr. Joseph H. Gorman III, an associate professor of surgery, received funding for its work in developing a minimally invasive technique for replacing damaged heart valves. Its development, if successful, will make heart-valve replacement possible for 10 times as many patients, many of whom are too sick to tolerate the surgical procedure in use today.

Also receiving Science Center support was a team at Rutgers University, led by Samuel I. Gunderson, that is working on a new method for silencing genes associated with disease.

“These technologies represent innovative solutions to perplexing problems,” said Stephen S. Tang, president and CEO of the Science Center. “By adding business advice to the mix, we are helping these researchers accelerate their journey to the marketplace.”