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December 23, 2008

Andrea Kardonsky Boidman
Chief Operating Officer
Deafness Research Foundation
641 Lexington Avenue, Fl 15
New York, NY 10022

Dear Andrea,

It is a great pleasure and an honor for me to write a very strong letter of appreciation to the Deafness Research Foundation for all they have done over the last 22 years to advance my research and to make a huge difference to a great number of young (both in age and at heart) scientists and clinicians in the field of hearing research. So many of us owe our starts to the seed grants that launched us on our way to success.

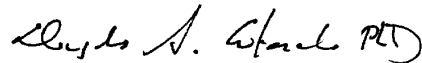
In my case, the DRF funded my first grant application describing my discovery of hair cell regeneration in 1986 when I was just beginning my career as an Assistant Professor of Otolaryngology at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, SC. The DRF took a risk on these early studies that showed just the early inklings of the results that would eventually lead to the recognition of the existence of hair cell regeneration in the avian cochlea and its implications as a potential pathway for inducing regeneration in the mammalian, and eventually even the human, cochlea. While some critics have scoffed that "it's been over 20 years and we still haven't solved regeneration in mammals", I feel that this work from so many labs in the field have brought us an incredibly long way in a relatively short time.

Since my start in the field in 1986, DRF has continued to fund a wide variety of research from many promising young investigators who have later gone on to receive funding from NIH. These young scientists have gone on to become the new leaders in the field and have generated entirely new areas of research in Otolaryngology.

In addition to supporting new and novel research grants for young scientists, DRF has made a major contribution to the field by providing the funding for travel awards for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to attend the Midwinter Meeting of the ARO. In 1999 Sue Greco, then the DRF Director asked me how DRF could best help support research in the field and we came up with the idea of the travel awards to the ARO MWM. Since the 2000 MWM, DRF has sponsored 15-20 travel awards a year to help defray meeting costs for both US and International graduate students and postdocs not in MD programs. Before this time, there were no funds available to help these students attend the ARO to present their outstanding science. Not surprisingly, many of these travel grant awardees have gone on to submit successful DRF grants, NIH Postdoctoral Fellowship Awards and NIH RO3 grants. So once again, DRF has been there to support the scientists in our field from their very earliest steps in their careers.

I know that DRF was instrumental in allowing me to get started in this field. Moreover, I have seen many of my students and those of my colleagues get their first real boost in their careers by support from the DRF at critical points in their careers. So many of the best scientists and clinicians in our field got their first grant from DRF and I am confident that many more of the future stars of our field will also benefit from this marvelous organization.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas A. Cotanche PhD". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

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