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MEDIA RELEASE

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NOTED MICROBIOLOGIST APPOINTED RESEARCH PROFESSOR AT UM

MISSOULA--

A microbiologist from Harvard Medical School who has received over \$2½ million in grants since 1961 to study the effects of aging has been named research professor at the University of Montana.

Barbara E. Wright, formerly an associate professor of microbiology and molecular genetics at Harvard Medical School and research director of the Department of Developmental Biology at the Boston Biomedical Research Institute, has brought to UM over \$325,000 in grants from the National Institute on Aging to continue her research.

Wright was the first biochemist to study the aging process in Dictyostelium, an organism with only two cell types that serves as a simple model for understanding the aging process in more complex organisms. Humans, by contrast, have 150 different cell types.

"To have a rational basis for slowing the aging process, we must understand the mechanisms involved," she said. "Higher organisms are so complicated that the multiple causes underlying aging are difficult to recognize and analyze."

The biochemical changes seen in simple organisms, such as Dictyostelium, are likely to occur in more complex ones due to the process of evolution.

"The whole point is not to be immortal but to understand the mechanisms of decay in each part of the body so that the individual remains functional and effective until the time of his death," she said.

(over)

Noted Microbiologist-- add one

Wright holds a Ph.D. degree in microbiology from Stanford University. She did postdoctoral work in Copenhagen, Denmark, and afterwards served as a biologist for the National Heart Institute in Bethesda, Md., from 1953 to 1961.

She was a research associate in bacteriology and immunology and an associate biochemist at Massachusetts General Hospital from 1961 to 1969. She taught at Harvard Medical School from 1966 until coming to UM in May.

An editor and an author, Wright has written a book and over 100 scientific papers. She is a past member of the editorial board of the "Annual Review of Microbiology," and is currently an editor of "Experimental Mycology" and a consultant to Miles Laboratories.

She is married to Dr. Kenneth Fremont-Smith, a rheumatologist at Western Montana Clinic.

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