2015 Young Investigator Award of the American Physiological Society Renal Section

JENNIFER SULLIVAN, PhD, Associate Professor at Georgia Regents University (Fig. 1), is the recipient of the Young Investigator Award of the American Physiological Society (APS) Renal Section for 2015. Dr. Sullivan is an exceptional scientist in the field of renal physiology, and those who have met her know that she displays unlimited energy and enthusiasm for her research and all aspects of her academic endeavors.

Dr. Sullivan has distinguished herself as a national and international leader in her efforts to uncover mechanisms for sexual dimorphism of renal physiology and pathophysiology. This ability is evident not only through her outstanding publications but also in her activities within the greater scientific community including APS and the American Heart Association (AHA). Her PhD work with Cathy Davidson at Albany Medical College was some of the first to describe the impact of estrogen on endothelial cell function. This led to her postdoctoral research with Jennifer Pollock at the Medical College of Georgia, where she dug more deeply into sex differences in vascular and renal function. Her work uncovered much of what we now know about nitric oxide (NO) regulation in the kidney as it pertains to blood pressure control.

As Dr. Sullivan moved from fellow to faculty, she was able to uncover new insights into how male and female spontaneously hypertensive rats have different levels of hypertension, due in part to differences in the non-classic renin-angiotensin system. In 2010, she demonstrated that sex differences in angiotensin II-dependent hypertension were due to females having a larger role for the angiotensin 1–7 mas receptor compared with males. She has also described important sex differences in oxidative stress and NO bioavailability in hypertension. Most recently, Dr. Sullivan has uncovered critically important sex differences in the renal T cell contribution to hypertension.

Dr. Sullivan has demonstrated a remarkable ability to build a wide variety of bridges in her research program. Her collaborators range from traditional immunologists to human exercise physiologists. She has always taken the technical approach that answers the scientific questions rather than finding questions that fit her approach. Her expertise spans a wide range, from analytical biochemistry to in vivo renal and vascular function.

Dr. Sullivan has been consistently awarded for her outstanding achievements at the local and national level. Both APS and the AHA consistently awarded her for her outstanding presentations at national meetings. An NIH R03 grant as well as an AHA Scientist Development Award propelled her transition from the American Heart Association to faculty status. Within the first year of her faculty appointment, she was able to obtain an R01 from NIH. She also serves as the animal model core leader on a P01 grant as well as project leader on another P01 currently under development.

Last but not least, Dr. Sullivan is a role model. She has been a member of numerous PhD thesis committees, served as course director in the graduate school, consistently participated in APS PhUn Week, and served as the campus leader for the annual Go Red for Women Symposium, held each year to acknowledge the fact that cardiovascular disease kills more women than men each year. She has attracted many students to her laboratory by creating an open environment where research in hypertension and renal physiology is viewed as an exciting, rewarding, and important career. Like Dr. Sullivan, her students have all been rewarded for their presentations at meetings and with fellowships. More importantly, however, Dr. Sullivan has been able to accomplish all this while meeting the demands of raising two beautiful girls, Maggie and Kelly, along with her husband, Greg. She is clearly an outstanding choice for the APS Renal Section Young Investigator Award.