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**Institute for Aging Research Awarded
\$2.7 Million Grant to Investigate “Dowager’s Hump”**

Study Will Determine Causes and Impact of Hyperkyphosis

BOSTON — The Institute for Aging Research of Hebrew SeniorLife, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, today announced that Dr. Lisa Samelson and the Institute were awarded a \$2.7 million grant from the National Institute on Aging to conduct a five-year study to better understand the cause of hyperkyphosis, a condition that causes extreme forward curvature of the spine.

“Despite the severe impact hyperkyphosis can have on an individual’s health, there are no recognized guidelines for its prevention, treatment or management,” said Lisa Samelson, Ph.D., principal investigator for the study, assistant scientist in the Institute’s Musculoskeletal Research Center and assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. “By determining the causes and clinical impact of hyperkyphosis, this study will help bridge this knowledge gap. We can ultimately use the findings from this project to test and develop ways to prevent this condition.”

Hyperkyphosis, which is thought to affect as many as 40 percent of older adults, causes a bulge on the upper back commonly referred to as a “dowager’s hump” or a “hump back.” This condition is often regarded as an inevitable physical symptom of aging. However, hyperkyphosis can pose serious problems including breathing and digestion difficulty, limitations in mobility, increased risk of falls and fractures, pain and disfigurement.

Working with the Framingham Heart Study, Dr. Samelson will lead a team of scientists at the Institute for Aging Research, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Boston University School of Medicine to conduct the study of 2,000 men and women between the ages of 50 and 85 and use the results to identify the causes and clinical consequences of hyperkyphosis. During the course of the study, researchers will determine the natural progression of the curvature of the upper spine; the spinal features that contribute to hyperkyphosis such as

intervertebral disc narrowing, facet joint osteoarthritis and vertebral fracture; and the effect of hyperkyphosis on a person's health and quality of life.

“This grant from the National Institute on Aging allows our musculoskeletal research team to investigate another common and poorly understood condition that significantly impacts quality of life for older adults and is potentially preventable,” said Lewis A. Lipsitz, M.D., director of the Institute for Aging Research and Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School. “Our researchers will be able to investigate the underlying causes of hyperkyphosis that can ultimately lead to prevention strategies and treatments.”

Scientists at the Institute for Aging Research seek to transform the human experience of aging by conducting research that will ensure a life of health, dignity and productivity into advanced age. The Institute for Aging Research carries out rigorous studies that discover the mechanisms of age-related disease and disability; lead to the prevention, treatment and cure of disease; advance the standard of care for older people; and inform public decision-making.

About Hebrew SeniorLife

Founded in 1903, Hebrew SeniorLife, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, is a non-sectarian, nonprofit organization devoted to innovative research, health care, education and housing that improves the lives of seniors. For more information, visit www.hebrewseniorlife.org.

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