Dr. Li has been investigating mechanisms that modulate glucose homeostasis since she was a Ph.D student in 2000. She has used electrophysiological, and cellular and molecular approaches to investigate how genetic and environmental factors regulate glucose homeostasis and insulin sensitivity. In the past few years, she used several animal models including trauma and hemorrhage, and learned-helplessness mouse models to understand how acute physiological and psychosocial stresses impair glucose homeostasis and induce insulin resistance. In the past 18 months, Dr. Li has been working on the impacts of early life stress on the development of obesity. Dr. Li has made a number of important original contributions in understanding the mechanisms in these two field and has more than 20 peer-reviewed publications reflecting her research achievements. She is now expanding these studies into human studies. The objective of this study is to determine the impacts of psychological stress including early life stress (with and without depression) and acute stress on obesity and diabetes risk by examining the roles of immune system and the HPA axis. The preliminary data are very promising, and this proposal will lay a critical foundation for a NIH grant application.

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