DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health
National Institute of Child Health
and Human Development
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

July 30, 2004

USCIS Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Welden St.
Saint Albans, VT 05479

To whom it may concern,

It is an honor to recommend Dr. Li-Xia Yang for permanent residence in the United States. Dr. Yang has made outstanding contributions in the fields of neurobiology, endocrinology and molecular genetics throughout her career in clinical and basic research. She has dedicated her life to medical research and is sure to continue to make significant contributions for many years to come. The United States would do well to have her working here within our research community.

I am Staff Scientist at the National Institutes of Health in the Laboratory of Developmental Neurobiology of the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. I am one of the world's leading researchers in the field of molecular control of melatonin synthesis; melatonin is the hormone produced in response to the body's 24-hour biological clock. I have published over 50 papers in this and other fields, many of them in top ranked journals such as Science and the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. Prior to coming to the National Institutes of Health, I was a member of the Research Faculty at the University of Maryland, College Park in the Zoology Department, which was ranked one of top ten in the United States. Thus, I have known many renowned scientists in both government and academic research. Within this context, I feel Dr. Yang is an excellent and productive scientist.

I have known Li-Xia for more than four years since she was here at the Laboratory of Developmental Neurobiology at the National Institute of Health. Li-Xia is a highly dedicated scientist; she is very focused and persistent in her pursuit of the project at hand. This dedication, coupled with a wide variety of experiences, has endowed Li-Xia with an impressive arsenal of biochemical and molecular biological techniques. Not only is she technically proficient, but is also capable of developing new techniques. Li-Xia has an ability to focus her prolific basic research toward results with an impact on human health. The scope of projects with which she has worked, covering from clinical to molecular, gives her a unique range of perspectives and expertise that make her a valuable asset in the scientific community.

Dr. Yang has already had an illustrious career. Early in her investigations, while working in China, she unraveled the mechanisms of deafness in endemic cretinism. Toward this goal she developed an animal model cretinism which allowed her to advance her theories of the causative effects of iodine deficiency and hypothyroidism in this disease. The value of this research is evidenced by the awards she received as a result.

Another field in which Li-Xia has made significant contributions is toward understanding the mechanisms through which glial derived neurotrophic factor (GDNF) can regulate neuronal survival in the brain. This research lead to the discovery of novel forms of receptors for GDNF. These gene sequences and others (14 in all) have been deposited by Dr. Yang in the GenBank database for public access. This outstanding research by her may ultimately lead to treatments for neurodegenerative diseases of the brain, such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases.

Dr. Yang's most recent accomplishments, here at the National Institutes of Health, have helped elucidate ways in which neuronal activity, mediated through the action of glia cell line-derived neurotrophic factor (GDNF), can affect the structure of other nerve cells, or muscle cells, to which the active nerves are connected. This outstanding and detailed work has involved a staggering array of techniques, some of which she has had to develop herself. Li-Xia has demonstrated imagination, creativity and flexibility that set her above most other scientists.

Dr. Yang now has a position at the University of Pittsburgh where she has begun researching how insulin may play a role in regulating the amount of lipoprotein lipase (LPL) that is produced. Abnormalities in the abundance and function of LPL are associated with increased risk of coronary heart disease. She also plans to pursue other lines of functional genomic research to investigate human genetic diseases such as neurodegenerative and autoimmune diseases, and diabetes. In addition to the valuable contributions of her work to human health, she will impart her expertise to students and faculty at the University of Pittsburgh.

A good measure of the importance and quality of Dr. Yang's work is the number of papers that she published in high quality peer-reviewed journals. She also has an impressive record of presentations at national and international conferences. These demonstrate that she is a recognized expert in her fields of research. The United States should be anxious to have her working on our behalf, in our research institutions.

Li-Xia truly loves research and conveys this passion when she communicates; she is an advocate for science. When speaking with her it is clear that she comprehends fundamental concepts underlying her research and has a precise, though flexible, plan of attack. Li-Xia exhibits a clarity of purpose that is rare and valuable. She has an inquisitive mind and is not afraid to ask questions, nor is she reluctant to undertake new directions. You will rarely find a more enthusiastic and dedicated scientist. I'm sure that Dr. Yang will continue to make fundamental advancements in medical research that will be a great benefit to the American people.

Beyond her value as a pure researcher, it is clear from Li-Xia's previous experiences, especially in China, that she is a capable leader and teacher. This is readily apparent when you meet her. She has a strong self-concept and carries herself with confidence. She will bring a burst of energy to a team effort. Her love of research and the capacity for organizing and implementing it will be motivational. Her influence will extend beyond her immediate environment. The value of having Li-Xia as a permanent resident of the United States will be multi-faceted. Again, I think that Dr. Li-Xia Yang is a world-class scientist that will be a great asset to our American community. I strongly endorse Dr. Yang's classification as an Alien Worker with Extraordinary Ability in the field of Medical Science under INA Section 203(b) (1).

If you have further questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Steven L. Coon, PhD.

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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

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March 3, 2005

Mr. Paul Novak
Director
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Vermont Service Center
75 Lower Welden Street
Saint Albans, Vermont 05479

Dear Mr. Novak:

I am writing this letter to support the University of Pittsburgh's application for permanent resident status based on Dr. Li-Xia Yang being an Alien of Extraordinary Ability.

I am currently the Associate Director of the Imaging Sciences Program in the NIH Clinical Center. I am in charge of the Departments of Radiology, Nuclear Medicine, Positron Emission Tomography, the Laboratory of Diagnostic Radiology Research and Molecular Imaging Laboratory. There are more than 250 staff members at various levels in this program and the annual budget is close to $40 million. I have been a clinician, researcher and an administrator for over 10 years with over 200 publications. I have also mentored many medical students, graduate students and fellows. Before joining the NIH two years ago, I was a tenured faculty member in Stanford University, with which I was associated for 10 years. I am a world recognized, established, senior investigator in the field of Molecular Imaging and I am involved in making policy decisions at the national and international level.

Dr. Yang was recruited by us to work in our program as a NIH Imaging Scientist Training Program fellow. The first time I met Dr. Yang was in December of 2002, I was already very impressed by her knowledge base, her enthusiasm and the ease with which she interacted with people. I jumped at the chance to have her join our program and I was very glad that she agreed to have me as her mentor. However, there was a NIH wide reduction in the number of FTE positions imposed early in 2003. Because of this new restriction, we had to eliminate many FTE positions including many ISTP fellow positions. As a result, we can no longer offer a FTE position to Dr. Yang which is needed for her H-1 visa application and that is the reason why she has to look for a new job quickly after joining our program for a very short period of time. This situation is definitely not her fault and I wish I have the FTE position to keep her longer.

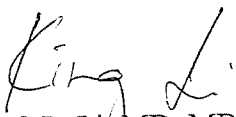
Dr. Yang is now part of the Imaging Sciences Program where we have scientists from multiple disciplines including Radiology, Nuclear Medicine, Chemistry, Physics, Molecular Biology, Molecular Pathology and Functional Genomics and Proteomics. We also interact with scientists from 17 different institutes at the NIH. Dr. Yang fits in very well and works closely with people from diverse background and levels of training. She is a very experienced bench researcher who has multiple skills which make her invaluable to many different projects. Her knowledge in medicine, pathology and many molecular biology techniques makes her an unusual asset to any multidisciplinary program.

As you can see from Dr. Yang's record, she was trained and worked as a Clinical Pathologist. In addition, she also went through a PhD program and has worked on many research projects in Japan and the NIH. Dr. Yang is an internationally recognized scientist in Molecular Biology and Genetics, having published and presented widely in national and international meetings. Dr. Yang has been an independent investigator since 1987 and she has been very prolific in her career.

There is ample evidence of meritorious achievements in Dr. Yang's record. She has authored 21 publications in very selective journals. During her career in Japan, Dr. Yang identified and published for the first time 3 novel isoforms of GDNF receptor alpha 1 which makes a significant impact on the diagnosis and understanding of Parkinson's and other neurodegenerative diseases. During her time at the NIH, she demonstrated for the first time that neurotropic factor GDNF regulates not only the presynaptic differentiation but also the postsynaptic effect of GDNF. These accomplishments make her one of the rising stars in her field. For this she was awarded the Young Investigator Award for recognition of outstanding neuropeptide research in the 22nd Annual Winter Neuropeptide Conference held in Colorado in 2001. She also received the prestigious NIH Fellows Award for Research Excellence in 2002. She is a member of the prestigious Society for Neuroscience in the US, the Molecular Biology Society of Japan, the Japanese Biochemical Society, the Japanese Society of Pathology and the Chinese Society of Medicine.

In summary, I believe that Dr. Yang is well qualified to be an Alien of Extraordinary Ability. If there is any further information that I can provide, please feel free to contact me.

Yours truly,



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