



American Heart Association | American Stroke Association

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# RESEARCH Saves Lives.

## RESEARCHER PROFILE

### Haijun Chen, Ph.D. SUNY at Albany, New York

Growing up in China, Haijun Chen, Ph.D., did not have an easy path to his career as a scientist.

"Many years ago in China, most young people didn't have the chance to get a higher education," said Dr. Chen, now an assistant professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at SUNY at Albany. "Growing up, I had no idea what my future was."

But Dr. Chen distinguished himself as a student and, understanding that China was on the brink of major industrialization, he set his sights on becoming an engineer. His diligence paid off – he gained acceptance to the prestigious Huazhong University of Science and Technology (Dr. Chen said that, at that time, only about three percent of Chinese students went on to college), where he studied biomedical engineering.

Then, in his fourth year, during an internship at a hospital, he saw a patient at the hospital who changed the direction of his career. The young woman needed a kidney transplant, but Dr. Chen said the procedure was almost impossible to perform in China in the 1980s.

"I knew then that I needed to shift my focus to medical school," Dr. Chen said. "I thought, 'Maybe I can help people through biomedical research.'"

Dr. Chen went on to graduate from China's Tongji Medical University. He also earned a Ph.D. in Physiology at Max-Planck Institute in Germany and received postdoctoral training in Yale Medical School, where he learned about molecular cardiology.



Haijun Chen, Ph.D.

Additionally, he is a recipient of the American Heart Association's national Scientist Development Grant, and he is using those funds to study a class of molecules that play a key role in controlling the rate of a human's heartbeat.

"What I want to know is, how do they function?" Dr. Chen said.

"Knowing this may help us find a new treatment method or drug for cardiac arrhythmia."

Any disturbance in the normal beating pattern of the heart is called an arrhythmia, or irregular heartbeat.

"Ten years ago, we didn't understand why cardiac arrhythmia was happening," Dr. Chen said. "Now, thanks to years of biomedical research by many labs, we partially understand why it's happening. I want to keep building on the knowledge of cardiology."

## American Heart Association Funding in New York: \$35,270,000

Institution	# of Studies	Total Value	Institution	# of Studies	Total Value
Albany Medical College, Albany	3	\$1,020,000	Ordway Research Institute Inc., Albany	1	\$260,000
Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx	8	\$1,774,000	Research Foundation/CUNY, New York City	1	\$198,000
Burke Medical Research Institute, White Plains	1	\$198,000	Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy	2	\$520,000
City University of New York, New York City	1	\$198,000	Rockefeller University, New York City	1	\$198,000
Clarkson University, Potsdam	1	\$260,000	St. Francis Hospital, Roslyn	2	\$520,000
Columbia University, New York City	26	\$6,261,000	SUNY Downstate Medical Center, Brooklyn	5	\$754,000
Cornell University, Ithaca	7	\$1,111,000	SUNY Upstate Medical University, Syracuse	5	\$680,000
Cornell University, New York City	4	\$736,000	SUNY, Buffalo	10	\$1,655,500
Fordham University, Bronx	1	\$198,000	SUNY, Stony Brook	13	\$3,432,000
Montefiore Medical Center, Bronx	1	\$198,000	The Feinstein Institute, Manhasset	3	\$656,000
Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York City	7	\$2,058,000	University of Rochester Medical Center, Rochester	22	\$4,272,000
New York Medical College, Valhalla	11	\$2,461,500	VA NY Harbor Health Care System, Brooklyn	1	\$260,000
New York University, New York City	18	\$3,797,000	Weill Medical College of Cornell University, New York City	7	\$1,334,000
New York State Dept. of Health, Rensselaer	1	\$260,000			