

## Orthopedic researchers join forces with Scripps

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JUPITER — — The BioMotion Institute for Mobility and Longevity, an orthopedic research group based at Good Samaritan Medical Center in West Palm Beach, is partnering with Scripps Florida to find answers to why aging muscles and bones fall apart.

The partnership will create the Center for Skeletal Aging Solutions, which will occupy 1,000 square feet at the main Scripps building slated to open in Jupiter next month.

The center will be headed by Roy Smith, a former vice president at drug giant Merck & Co. and an internationally recognized expert on human aging. He was recruited by Scripps this summer from Baylor University in Houston, where he founded the Huffington Institute on Aging.

Smith is best known for his work on synthetic small molecules, which can help the body rejuvenate how it uses growth hormone.

Improving the body's use of natural growth hormone holds the promise of greatly improving how the elderly maintain muscle mass, skin texture, immune function, and memory, Smith said. That research area will be a key focus for the new center.

About a dozen principal researchers will be recruited to the center, as part of a total staff of about 120.

"This is going to push us ahead at light speed," said Dr. Andrew Hodge, an orthopedic surgeon and founder and chief medical officer of the BioMotion Institute for Mobility and Longevity.

Three members of the BioMotion Institute's advisory board, including Alexander Dreyfoos Jr., are also members of The Scripps Research Institute Board of Directors.

Under the collaboration, the institute will provide tissue samples from local patients and those around the world, which Scripps scientists can comb through to better understand genetic underpinnings.

The Scripps Florida-BioMotion Institute team initially will study osteoarthritis and osteoporosis, examining how such factors as growth hormones, stress, diet, exposure to toxins, radiation and chemicals cause diseases affecting muscles and bones.

Smith praised Scripps Florida as representing "the future of biomedical research," enabling collaboration here as well as with scientists at its La Jolla, Calif., campus.

Three of six researchers from the BioMotion Institute will relocate to Scripps Florida in Jupiter next month.

Most of the funding for the center will come from government grants and philanthropic support, Hodge said.