



JAY A. NELSON, PH.D.
Executive Director and Vice President

Jay A. Nelson, Ph.D., is the founder and Executive Director of Vaccine & Gene Therapy Institute of Florida (VGTI-FL) as well as the VGTI at Oregon Health & Sciences University in Portland, Ore. Dr. Nelson also serves as Director of the Pacific Northwest Regional Center of Excellence, one of 11 centers in the United States that form a national network called the Regional Centers of Excellence for Biodefense and Emerging Infectious Diseases. The network brings together the country's top infectious disease experts to develop research programs, training and education on agents that could be used for bioattacks and emerging or re-emerging infectious diseases that threaten human health.

Dr. Nelson is a senior molecular virologist who has published more than 170 articles in high-profile scientific journals on how viruses cause disease. His work spans multiple different pathogens including the herpesviruses, HIV, West Nile and Dengue Viruses. Dr. Nelson's primary research focus over the years has centered on the molecular processes of disease development by cytomegalovirus (CMV), which can cause life-threatening illness, and is especially dangerous for people with depressed immune systems. His work has contributed to major advancements in the understanding of vascular disease, AIDS and West Nile virus. His work has led to the discovery of the hiding place of CMV during its dormant phase, the use of CMV as an effective vaccine delivery vehicle for protection against HIV, and more recently, the generation of a humanized mouse (genetically altered mice with human immune systems) to study molecular aspects of human CMV dormancy and reactivation.

He has earned numerous awards and distinctions for his research. He has received Faculty Awards from the American Cancer Society, and he's a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology. Dr. Nelson has served on multiple committees at the National Institutes of Health, American Cancer Society, and the American Foundation for AIDS Research. He's an editor for the Journal of Virology and Future Virology, and associate editor for PLOS Pathogens. He received his bachelor's degree in biological sciences and biochemistry from California State University, Hayward. He earned his doctorate in microbiology from Oregon State University, and was a post-doctorate fellow at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle. Following postdoctoral work, Dr. Nelson was an Assistant Professor at The Scripps Research Institute in La Jolla CA in 1984 followed by promotion to Associate Professor. He was recruited to the Oregon Health Sciences University in 1992 as a Professor in the Department of Molecular Microbiology and Immunology.