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Jericho Senior Named Intel Finalist One of only 40 Nationwide

By Denise Nash

Neil Mehta, a senior at Jericho High School was named a finalist in the 2012 Intel Science Talent Search, which represents the nation's most promising high school seniors with the greatest potential to solve pressing challenges in the world. Mehta is one of only 40 students nationwide to be named a finalist.

Mehta's project, entitled "Co-restoration of Type III Nrg1 back signaling through depolarization: Implications for schizophrenia," analyzed a mutation of the protein Type III Nrg1 statistically linked to schizophrenia, and how a novel tool in neurology called optogenetics, which uses light to depolarize cells, can be used to restore the defects present, ultimately implying a novel path for schizophrenia therapy.

"The idea for my project came from my Intel International Science and Engineering Fair 2011 project, where I was actually partners with Savina Kim, another Intel Finalist this year from Commack," said Mehta. "We looked at Type III Nrg1 effect on neuronal receptors. After reading, we both formed our own questions and interests, and conducted separate projects this past summer."

"It is an amazing feat to have students from Jericho High School acknowledged as Intel STS finalists for two consecutive years," said Jericho's Science Research Coordinator Serena McCalla, referring to Neil and last year's finalist from Jericho Matthew Lam. "Neil exemplifies the standard of excellence which makes our science research program extraordinary. Our research program continues to stimulate and encourage young adults to identify solutions for issues faced by our country today and in the near future. I congratulate Neil, his family, Jericho High School teachers and administration whose collaborative effort has ensured such a noteworthy accolade."

Mehta, who plans on majoring in neuroscience in college and pursuing a career in either neurobiological research or neurosurgery, is humbled by his selection as a finalist.

"My project was the result of my previous research, a lot of time reading of science journals, and amazing guidance by my mentors Dr. David Talmage and Dr. Lorna Role, whose expertise was vital to my success, and of course because of Ms. McCalla, with whom I discussed future projects and led me to the right path," said Mehta. "I also want to thank my parents and family, and especially my mother, who let me travel to Stony Brook at the oddest hours of the day for research, sacrificing their time for my research. This is just so surreal and I am truly amazed."



Neil Mehta