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Portland, OR The Northwest Health Foundation (NWHF) has selected Dr. Louisa Silva, MD MPH, of Salem, as this year's Mark O. Hatfield Research Fellowship recipient. Funded by NWHF, the fellowship focuses on autism research and awards up to \$150,000 annually. The funding will aid Silva in her ongoing research of Chinese Qigong massage as an early intervention for autism.

"Dr. Silva's work with autistic children made her a natural candidate for this year's fellowship grant," said David Rebanal, program officer at NWHF. "We are pleased to help her continue in the quest to help families and young children who are dealing with this challenging disorder."

Over the past seven years, results from Silva's published research points to a marked improvement among young children with autism in their social behavior and communication abilities. Trained parents and early intervention therapists achieved equal results as did Silva, who has 20 years experience in Chinese medicine.

"I partnered with Western Oregon University's Teaching Research Institute and with Educational Service Districts in Oregon to conduct the preliminary studies," Silva said, "and this grant is very helpful in continuing that work. My research has shown that with Qigong massage training and support, parents and other family members can become effective in their children's treatment. Children are having fewer sensory problems, are calmer, transition better, and have improvements in sleep and digestion as well."

Currently, Silva is director of the Traditional Chinese Medicine Clinic in Salem where she treats acute and chronic illnesses. She is also founder and medical director of La Clínica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, a non-profit community health clinic in Salem. The grant will pay for research to improve training methods and provide support for parents and Early Intervention staff.

An article describing Silva's work in Oregon is in the current issue of the American Journal of Occupational Therapy.

The Mark O. Hatfield Research Fellowship was established in 2005 in order to advance the research career of health practitioners in Oregon and southwest Washington. The program's focus on autism research honors the legacy of former Oregon Governor, Senator, and NWHF founding chairman Mark Hatfield.