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Media contact: Joshua Poupore  
Corning Place Communications  
518.330.2250 / [jpoupore@corningplace.com](mailto:jpoupore@corningplace.com)

## **Dr. Maria Kontaridis Named as New Director of Research at Masonic Medical Research Laboratory**

*Harvard scientist to grow and expand cardiac research center*

**UTICA, NY** – The Masonic Medical Research Laboratory (MMRL) today announced the appointment of Maria Kontaridis, Ph.D. as the new Director of Research. She will be just the fourth Director of Research, and the first woman to serve in that role, in the history of the 60 year old institution. Dr. Kontaridis comes to MMRL from Harvard Medical School, where she is currently an Associate Professor of Medicine, and the Director of the Basic Cardiovascular Research Program at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC), one of the nation’s preeminent academic medical centers.

“Through her extensive leadership and research expertise, Dr. Kontaridis’ vision will position the Masonic Medical Research Laboratory as one of the top cardiac research centers in the country and around the world,” said David F. Schneeweiss, President of the MMRL Board of Directors. “We look forward to this exciting new chapter in the history of MMRL, and together we will make our internationally recognized programs truly world class.”

Dr. Kontaridis received her undergraduate degrees (B.A. and B.S.) from the University of Florida in Classics and Chemistry, and subsequently, went on to Yale University where she obtained her master’s degrees in Pharmacology (’99) as well as Biomedical and Biological Sciences (’01), and her Ph.D. (’02). In 2003, Dr. Kontaridis left Yale and continued her work as a postdoctoral fellow at the BIDMC. Her work as a postdoctoral fellow garnered extramural support from the American Heart Association (AHA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). In 2007, Dr. Kontaridis was promoted to Instructor, and in 2008, she was recruited to the Department of Medicine, Division of Cardiology at BIDMC at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Kontaridis’ research focuses on the fundamental mechanisms underlying both congenital heart disease and end-stage heart failure, and the processes that lead to abnormal development, aberrant signaling and disease onset. Her work has, so far been awarded grants totaling over 7.5 million dollars, with funding supported by the Milton Foundation, the Children’s Cardiomyopathy Foundation, the Saving Tiny Hearts Foundation, the Penn Center for Orphan Disease Research and Therapy, the Harvard Stem Cell Institute, the Alliance of Lupus Research and the National Institutes of Health, as well as has garnered support from industry and pharmaceutical companies. In December of 2010, Dr. Kontaridis was appointed Fellow of the American Heart Association.

“I am honored to have the opportunity to lead the Masonic Medical Research Laboratory during this pivotal time in its history,” said Dr. Kontaridis. “MMRL is already an internationally recognized center for cardiac electrophysiology research, and it is my goal to expand upon its reputation in this area of research and build additional areas of expertise in the cardiovascular space. Over the next few years, we will be bringing on new teams of researchers in cardiac development, metabolism and heart failure, as well as establish collaborations with the top universities and hospitals from our area and around the country.”

“Dr. Kontaridis' background includes an impressive body of cutting edge research and leadership skills which make her particularly well suited to lead a world class research institution such as MMRL,” said Dr. Michael Kelberman MD, FACC, Director of research at Central NY Cardiology and Director of Clinical Cardiology at Mohawk Valley Health System. “Hiring Dr. Kontaridis is an extraordinary win for MMRL, and will help ensure that Utica, NY remains at the forefront of cardiac research worldwide for many years to come.”

“The appointment of Dr. Kontaridis is great news for MMRL and the Mohawk Valley,” said Scott H. Perra, president/CEO of the Mohawk Valley Health System (MVHS). “I look forward to welcoming Dr. Kontaridis and working with her as we develop the relationship between MMRL and MVHS and look to the future with the creation of a new regional healthcare campus.”

At BIDMC, Dr. Kontaridis was actively involved in the administration of her department; she co-organized the departmental seminar series and the annual Cardiology Retreat. She also served as a member of the Cardiology Fellowship Selection Committee, the Committee for the Advancement of Women Faculty in the Department of Medicine, and as Chairman of the Research Safety Committee at BIDMC.

Dr. Kontaridis also serves as a member of the Harvard Medical School Biomedical and Biological Sciences Faculty Program, where she has a joint appointment in the department of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology and with the Leder Human Biology and Translational Medicine Program of Harvard Medical School. Dr. Kontaridis is also the immediate past-chair of the Joint Committee on the Status of Women at Harvard Medical School.

Dr. Kontaridis will officially take over day-to-day operations of MMRL in January and will move to the Mohawk Valley with her family in July of 2018.

### **About the Masonic Medical Research Laboratory**

The Masonic Medical Research Laboratory is a not-for-profit institute founded by the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in the State of New York in 1958 and is dedicated to improving the health and quality of life for all. The Laboratory is also committed to providing education and training to basic scientists, clinical researchers and students who will perpetuate and extend the fight against disease. Please visit [www.mmrl.edu](http://www.mmrl.edu) to learn more.

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