Karina Yoon, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology and associate scientist in the Cancer Cell Biology Program of Cancer Center, has recently been awarded a $40,000 Young Investigator Grant from the Young Supporters Board of the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center.

The award, supported by the Board's fundraising events, was established to help young scientists, who have limited funding opportunities, to jumpstart their research. With this grant, specifically looking at a protein called ICAM-2, Yoon hopes to understand the biological processes that control the spread of neuroblastoma.

Neuroblastoma is one of the most common cancers in children usually occurring in infants and children under the age of five, with a survival rate of only 20-40 percent in children with high-risk metastatic neuroblastoma. Although current treatments can stabilize the disease temporarily, nearly all the children who relapse develop additional tumors and then do not respond to

treatment. Yoon’s long-range goal is to design therapies that induce long-lasting rather than transient clinical responses.

With even established investigators having difficulty obtaining funding in today's economic climate, the chances of young researchers receiving substantial grants are even less likely - only around 10 percent. Because of this, the Young Supporters Board established the Young Investigator Grants for young scientists who have been at the Cancer Center for no more than five years in order to jumpstart their research. The board has raised more than $229,000 over the past few years to contribute to these efforts. Dr. Yoon is the third scientist to receive one of the grants.

“The Young Supporters Board is proud to fund the work of such talented cancer investigators as Dr. Yoon," said Sam Todd, president of the Young Supporters Board. "As young professionals ourselves, it is especially gratifying that we are able to support the work of young scientists who are just beginning their research careers. We believe that the Young Investigator Grants are critical to the future of cancer research.”

The Young Supporters Board of the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center was established in 2006 to introduce the next generation of Alabamians to the importance of cancer research and awareness. The board is comprised of up-and-coming professionals between the ages of 22 and 35, all of whom have been touched by cancer in some way.