A University of Toledo microbiologist will receive nearly $2 million in federal research funds to study *Borrelia burgdorferi*, the causative agent of Lyme disease, and develop new therapies for treating patients affected by the condition.

The National Institute of Health’s National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases awarded Dr. Mark Wooten, UT professor of medical microbiology and immunology, $1,948,415 over five years to identify the mechanisms that allow *B. burgdorferi* to evade immune clearance in skin and other host tissues.

“Traditionally, it has been difficult to study this bacterium since it can only survive within animals and not in artificial cultures,” Wooten said. “Our group has been able to develop advanced microscopy models that allow us to directly observe the bacteria within the skin of living mice over extended periods of time without harming the animal. We will use these methods to continuously monitor how the infection develops, which we believe will identify the key mechanisms that allow the bacteria to evade the host’s immune response.”

Wooten said data gathered from the study could be used to provide new targets for Lyme disease therapies.

“This is further national recognition for the important research being done at The University of Toledo,” Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur said. “Lyme disease affects 300,000 Americans each year, a number far greater than previously thought, and 40 percent of whom end up with long-term, serious health concerns. There are no current tests available to definitively prove if the Lyme organism is eradicated or that the patient is cured. Research such as this will help us to know more about Lyme disease.”