

The Multiple System Atrophy Coalition® Awards \$422,000 to Fund Ten Promising Multiple System Atrophy Research Projects

Greater collaboration and financial growth give hope of a research breakthrough for this devastating disease.

Charlotte, NC – October 1, 2015: The Multiple System Atrophy Coalition has announced its latest round of funding for researchers pursuing a cure for the devastating neurodegenerative disorder multiple system atrophy (MSA). Ten grants were awarded totaling \$422,000. The research projects and recipients are as follows:

- "Global MSA Registry & Natural History Study": Gregor Wenning, M.D., Ph.D. (Innsbruck Medical University) and Lucy Norcliffe-Kaufmann, Ph.D. (New York University)
- "Combination of immunotherapy against alpha-synuclein and anti-inflammatory treatment for Multiple System Atrophy": Eliezer Masliah, M.D. (University of California San Diego)
- "Targeting a-synuclein pathology with the molecular tweezer CLR01 in MSA": Nadia Stefanova, M.D, Ph.D. (Innsbruck Medical University)
- "Understanding the degradation of alpha-synuclein protein in MSA": Janice Holton, M.D, Ph.D. (University College of London)
- "Mechanisms of Selective Neuronal Death in MSA: Focus on blood pressure controlling areas": Eduardo Benarroch, M.D. (Mayo Clinic Rochester)
- "Gene expression & methylation as a route to MSA biomarkers and drug targets": Henry Houlden, Ph.D. (University College of London)
- "Glucagon like peptide-1 agonists for treating MSA: a preclinical POC study": Wassilios Meissner, M.D, Ph.D. (University of Bordeaux)
- "Defining diagnostic brain MRI markers in early MSA with a novel toolbox": Florian Krismer, M.D. (Innsbruck Medical University)
- "Preclinical Evaluation of Novel Therapeutic for MSA": Ruth Perez, Ph.D. (Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center)
- "Detection of pathological alpha-synuclein aggregates in CSF by qRT-QuIC": Armin Giese, M.D. (Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich)

"We are very excited and proud to announce the latest MSA research grant recipients and we are thrilled with the growth of The MSA Coalition's research grant program", said Judy Biedenharn, President of The Multiple System Atrophy Coalition. "The depth of talent in the scientific community and their willingness to partner with us to bring those talents to bear on solving multiple system atrophy is very encouraging. We are ever mindful of the sense of urgency that exists for MSA patients everywhere."

The MSA Coalition more than doubled the number of grant proposals received this year over last. Projects submitted included explorations of new

biomarkers that might allow earlier and more accurate diagnosis, genetic studies, pre-clinical validation of potential disease modifying drugs in transgenic mouse models as well as important pathological studies pursuing the underlying cause of MSA. Several of the awarded projects were collaborations involving multiple MSA research labs around the world including the United States, Austria, France, Germany and the UK.

“It was particularly exciting to receive so many collaborative proposals this year”, stated Pam Bower, Board Secretary and Research committee co-chair. “Collaboration is something The MSA Coalition works to actively encourage and this was facilitated by our participation at several high profile scientific conferences this past year including the Las Vegas Global MSA Research Roadmap meeting (inspired by the late MSA advocate and “Iron Chef”, Kerry Simon) and the Alpha-Synuclein Symposium in Innsbruck, Austria which attracted representatives from the Michael J. Fox Foundation.”

As a result of these connections, The MSA Coalition has become recognized globally as a change agent in the search for a cure not only for multiple system atrophy but for other related alpha-synuclein diseases. This heightened recognition has also attracted larger investments from organizations and individuals. A generous anonymous donor was inspired to give \$100,000 to the MSA Coalition in 2015 which was earmarked 100% to research. The MSA Coalition is now encouraging named grants to be established with the organization in honor or in memory.

This year the MSA Coalition has received a huge boost in support through their partnership with the Blandford-Rees Foundation. Kirk Blandford, Trustee of the foundation explains, “The Blandford-Rees Foundation issued a challenge in 2015 to match dollar for dollar all designated MSA Coalition research funds received up to a maximum of \$50,000. It was Jim Rees's (a former MSA patient) wish to encourage greater research funding to support finding a cause and a cure for multiple system atrophy and I am pleased his desire to give others hope through research is being facilitated by the MSA Coalition as a recipient of this matching challenge grant.”

“The research awards we have provided thus far are “seed grants” of up to \$50,000 each and are intended to jump start MSA research allowing these projects to generate enough preliminary data to warrant future funding from the larger research funding agencies”, stated Carol Langer, CPA – Board Treasurer and Research committee co-chair. “Thanks to the generous support of so many donors, both here in the US and overseas, we were able to nearly double our research budget over last year. We look forward to our

continued financial growth and increased collaboration with research funding partners and scientists alike.”

The Multiple System Atrophy Coalition first established a dedicated MSA research fund in 2011. In 2013, the organization launched its MSA Research Grant Program and recruited a world class Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) made up of leading scientists and clinicians in the MSA field. The goal of the MSA Research Grant Program is to identify and fund MSA research projects that have potential to uncover the cause, discover disease modifying treatments, and hopefully lead to a cure. Through a rigorous peer review process, the SAB ensures that The MSA Coalition is funding the most promising next steps that can lead to breakthroughs in MSA research. At present, a minimum of 75% of every donation received by The MSA Coalition goes directly into the research fund. The remaining 25% goes toward much needed support and education programs including a toll-free support hotline (1-866-737-5999), educational materials, an annual patient/caregiver conference (also live-streamed on the web), continuing medical education about MSA for healthcare professionals as well as important advocacy and awareness initiatives.

About Multiple System Atrophy

Multiple system atrophy (previously known as Shy-Drager Syndrome) is a rare and fatal neurodegenerative disorder with less than 15,000 Americans diagnosed and 35,000 undiagnosed at any given time. According to the National Institutes of Health, "Multiple system atrophy is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder characterized by symptoms of autonomic nervous system failure such as fainting spells (neurogenic orthostatic hypotension) and bladder control problems, combined with motor control symptoms such as tremor, rigidity, and loss of balance and muscle coordination. MSA affects both men and women primarily in their 50s. MSA tends to advance rapidly over the course of nine to 10 years, with progressive loss of motor skills, eventual confinement to bed, and death. There is no remission from the disease. There is currently no cure available."

About The Multiple System Atrophy Coalition®

The Multiple System Atrophy Coalition is a positive beacon of hope standing up to a little known, rare, insidious disorder. Made up of dedicated volunteers, The MSA Coalition has a primary purpose of facilitating and funding research to find a cure. The MSA Coalition also provides much needed patient and caregiver support, educational resources, and advocacy

to create awareness and to fight for issues important to the MSA community. At present, a minimum of 75% of all donations received go directly into a dedicated Multiple System Atrophy Research Fund which now supports a growing research grant program. The MSA Coalition has established a world-class Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) to review and award research grants to the most promising MSA research proposals to facilitate discovery of a treatment or cure.

For more information or to donate to The Multiple System Atrophy Coalition, please visit: www.MultipleSystemAtrophy.org