



The American Parkinson Disease Association Awards \$1.6 Million in Research Grants. Prestigious Cotzias Fellowship Awarded.

New York, NY, August 3, 2016 – The American Parkinson Disease Association is pleased to announce that it has awarded \$1.6 million toward research for the 2016-2017 funding cycle. Included in this year's support is a prestigious George C. Cotzias Fellowship, named in honor of the scientist who had a critical role in developing Levodopa as a treatment for Parkinson's disease (PD) and awarded with the purpose of encouraging young neurologists to follow in his footsteps.

The \$240,000 Cotzias Fellowship has been awarded to Vivek Unni, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Neurology at the Parkinson Center of Oregon, and Jungers Center for Neurosciences Research at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland, Oregon. This funding will support Dr. Unni's work utilizing powerful, new imaging approaches to study molecular mechanisms of Lewy body pathology-associated cell death in Parkinson's disease (PD). By monitoring the living brains of PD mouse models, Dr. Unni's team is able to distinguish between the many types of alpha-synuclein protein aggregates, which can either be protective or toxic, and this work can potentially lead to new treatments which may slow the progression of the disease.

Funding was also awarded to support three Post-Doctoral Fellowships, seven Research Grants to junior investigators, and eight APDA Centers of Advanced Research.

The grants are awarded through a competitive application process and reviewed by APDA's Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). The SAB is comprised of scientists with a wide array of backgrounds and expertise in all areas relevant to PD research. A scoring process and rigorous review of the applications is conducted by the SAB when it convenes annually to review the proposals. In order to be considered for funding, only applications which meet the highest quality are recommended for approval by the SAB.

"The objective of APDA and the SAB is to invest in the best science," commented David G. Standaert, MD, PhD, John N. Whitaker Professor, Chair of Neurology and Director, Division of Movement Disorders at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Chairman of the SAB. "As we evaluate these proposals we focus on funding researchers who are at the start of their Parkinson's research career, and seek to attract the best and brightest minds to work on this

important problem. Our aim is to accelerate research and support translational ideas that have the potential to truly improve the quality of life for persons living with PD."

APDA has been a funding partner in most of the major Parkinson's scientific discoveries in the last 50 years including the work of Dr. George C. Cotzias, which led to establishing the effectiveness of Levodopa in treating PD; this treatment remains the gold standard in PD treatment today.

Three Post-Doctoral Fellowships were awarded to support post-doctoral scientists whose research holds promise to provide new insights into pathophysiology, etiology and treatment of Parkinson's disease:

- Hazem Abdelkarim, PhD, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL
- Vinita Ganesh Chittoor, PhD, Oregon Health & Science University, Portland, OR
- Mahsa Malekmohammadi, MS, PhD, University of California, Los Angeles, CA

Seven Research Grants were awarded to investigators affiliated with and performing Parkinson's disease research at major academic institutions across the United States.

- Shankar Chinta, PhD, Touro University, Novato, CA
- Fabio Demontis, PhD, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Memphis, TN
- Hannes Devos, PhD, Kansas University Medical Center, Kansas City, KS
- Beom-Chan Lee, PhD, University of Houston, Houston, TX
- Ian Martin, PhD, Oregon Health and Science University, Portland, OR
- Coro Paisán-Ruiz, PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, New York, NY
- Jason Schapansky, PhD, Brigham and Women's Hospital/Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA

APDA Centers for Advanced Research support large research programs which include research trainees, fellowship programs, early stage discovery programs and later stage clinical translation. These Centers facilitate research which is at the forefront of investigation into the cause, treatment and ultimately cure for Parkinson's disease.

- Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, MA
- Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA
- Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson School of Medicine, New Brunswick, NJ
- University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL
- UCLA School of Medicine, Los Angeles, CA
- University of Pittsburgh, PA
- University of Virginia Medical Center, Charlottesville, VA
- Washington University, St. Louis, MO

Leslie A. Chambers, President & CEO of APDA stated that, "The main focus of APDA's research program is to fund the best scientists with the brightest ideas to help solve the mystery of PD. These researchers all exemplify this profile and we are extremely pleased to be able to fund this range of important work. We are equally pleased with the on-going support of our long-time ADPA donors who make this work possible."

Browse all APDA funded investigators by visiting <http://www.apdaparkinson.org/research/2016-17-funded-research/>

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About the American Parkinson Disease Association

The American Parkinson Disease Association (APDA) was founded in 1961 with the dual purpose to *Ease the Burden - Find the Cure* for Parkinson's disease. In that time, APDA has raised and invested more than \$89 million to fund research, patient services and education, and elevate public awareness. As the country's largest Parkinson's grassroots organization, APDA aims to *Ease the Burden* for the more than one million Americans with Parkinson's disease and their families through a nationwide network of Chapters, Information and Referral (I&R) Centers, and support groups. APDA pursues its efforts to *Find the Cure* by funding Centers for Advanced Research and awarding grants to fund the most promising research toward discovering the cause(s) and finding the cure for Parkinson's disease.