

First-Ever Diversity-Focused Research Grant Among Fresh Crop of Grants Awarded by the American Parkinson Disease Association

From Levodopa-induced dyskinesias to modeling Parkinson's disease progression, \$1.4 million in innovative research to be funded for 2020 – 2021 year

NEW YORK, NY, September 1, 2020 – The [American Parkinson Disease Association](#) (APDA) has just awarded \$1.4 million to support cutting-edge Parkinson's disease (PD) research for the 2020-2021 funding year. Investigating everything from deep brain stimulation to the genetics of PD, these researchers are among the most dedicated and innovative in the PD field. Grants have been awarded in the form of three Post-Doctoral Fellowships; five Research Grants; APDA's first-ever *Diversity in Parkinson's Disease Research* grant; and eight APDA Centers for Advanced Research. With someone diagnosed with PD every nine minutes, this research is critical as we push for better treatments and ultimately, a cure.

The new APDA *Diversity in Parkinson's Disease Research* grant is the direct outcome of the first-of-its-kind Diversity in Parkinson's Disease Research Conference hosted by APDA in May 2019. "The APDA Diversity in Parkinson's Disease Research Conference explored the unique and urgent needs surrounding PD in diverse and under-represented communities" commented David G. Standaert, MD, PhD, John N. Whitaker Professor and Chair of Neurology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, School of Medicine, and Chairman of APDA's Scientific Advisory Board. "We are proud to award the first grant of this kind to encourage and support a researcher who is committed to diversity-focused research so we can learn more about how the disease affects different populations and ultimately better serve people with PD from all communities."

All APDA grants are awarded through a competitive application process and reviewed by [APDA's Scientific Advisory Board \(SAB\)](#) which is comprised of scientists with a wide array of backgrounds and expertise in all areas relevant to PD research. The SAB meets annually to review all grant proposals and set the scientific direction of APDA's annual research investment. "APDA is steadfast in our research focus – identifying and supporting researchers early in their careers to encourage them to either commence or continue dedicating themselves to PD research, as well as to help established investigators pursue new and novel ideas" states Rebecca Gilbert, MD, PhD, Vice President and Chief Scientific Officer, APDA. "We are excited for these researchers to commit themselves to their work and have hope for meaningful outcomes that can make a difference for people living with PD."

The 2020-2021 APDA Research Grants

APDA Diversity in Parkinson's Disease Research Grant:

- **Chantale Branson, MD, Morehouse School of Medicine**
Understanding racial demographics of Parkinson's disease among African Americans

Post-Doctoral Fellowships are awarded to support post-doctoral scientists whose research holds promise to provide new insights into the pathophysiology, etiology and treatment of PD. This year's awardees are:

- **April Darling, PhD, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine**

Engineering therapeutic TRIM11 disaggregases

- **Judit Pallos, PhD, Oregon Health and Science University**
Mechanisms of LRRK2-induced neurodegeneration
- **Monika Sharma, PhD, The Brigham and Women's Hospital**
Systems biology of a novel neuronal mitochondrial mechanism: relevance to Parkinson's disease therapies

Research Grants are awarded to investigators performing innovative PD research at major academic institutions across the United States. This year's awardees are:

- **Kevin Beier, PhD, University of California, Irvine**
Mapping circuit-level pathology evoked by dopamine depletion
- **J. Nicole Bentley, MD, University of Alabama at Birmingham**
Investigating prefrontal biomarkers of action control and effects of theta-burst deep brain stimulation in Parkinson's disease
- **Annie Hiniker, MD, PhD, University of California San Diego**
Elucidating pathways of LRRK2 turnover as therapeutic targets for Parkinson's disease
- **Karen L. Eskow Jaunarajs, PhD, University of Alabama at Birmingham**
A cell type-specific transcriptional profile of the development of L-DOPA-induced dyskinesia
- **Andrew Sharp, PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai**
Identifying novel repeat expansions as a cause of Parkinson's disease

"A cornerstone of APDA's research funding strategy is to provide support to early career researchers with meritorious new ideas. With funding from APDA, these researchers can further develop their theories and obtain significant pilot data and initial proof of concept that enables them to apply for and receive larger grants from the National Institutes of Health and other funding institutions," states Gilbert. "Without this initial funding from APDA, some research projects might never get off the ground."

In addition, continued funding was granted for eight [APDA Centers for Advanced Research](#) in order to support large PD 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 PD. The current APDA Centers for Advanced Research are:

- Boston University School of Medicine, Boston, MA
- Emory University School of Medicine, Atlanta, GA
- Mayo Clinic, Jacksonville, FL
- Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, New Brunswick, NJ
- The Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, MA
- University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Medicine, Birmingham, AL
- University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, PA
- Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, MO

Learn more about these grantees and the exciting work they are doing and browse all APDA-funded research by visiting www.apdaparkinson.org/research/what-we-fund/.

Researchers and physicians who are interested in applying for APDA funding can visit www.apdaparkinson.org/research for details on the 2021-2022 funding opportunities.

Those who want to support APDA's critical research with a donation can do so by visiting www.apdaparkinson.org and clicking the DONATE button, or mailing a check payable to APDA to: APDA, PO Box 61420, Staten Island, NY 10306.

The American Parkinson Disease Association (APDA) is the largest grassroots network dedicated to fighting Parkinson's disease (PD) and works tirelessly to help the more than 1 million people in the United States with PD live life to the fullest in the face of this chronic, neurological disorder. Founded in 1961, APDA has raised and invested more than \$207 million to provide outstanding patient services and educational programs, elevate public awareness about the disease, and support research designed to unlock the mysteries of PD and ultimately put an end to this disease. To join us in the fight against Parkinson's disease and to learn more about the support APDA provides nationally through our network of Chapters and Information & Referral (I&R) Centers, as well as our national Research Program and Centers for Advanced Research, please visit us at www.apdaparkinson.org.

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