



ALS Research Forum e-Newsletter Vol. 168

March 14, 2017

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Research News

[Pee P75: A Potential Biomarker of ALS Progression?](#)

A new urine test may help clinicians track the progression of ALS according to a new study published on February 22 in *Neurology*. The study, led by University of Miami's **Michael Benatar** in Florida and Flinders University's **Mary-Louise Rogers** in Australia, found that the levels of p75^{ECD}, a marker of motor neuron degeneration, increased 0.19 ng/mg creatinine per month ($p < 0.0001$) in people with ALS. The assay is now being validated in larger longitudinal study in collaboration with the CReATe consortium. The test, according to experts, may be especially helpful in detecting efficacy of potential ALS therapies in clinical trials. The assay is the first biofluid-based test to show the potential ability to monitor progression of the disease.

[Clinical-Grade Stem Cells Fail to Replicate Benefit of Research Lines](#)

More preclinical testing of potential stem cell therapies may be needed before evaluating them in the clinic according to results published on February 14 in *Stem Cell Reports*. The studies, led by University of California's **Aileen Anderson** and **Mathew Blurton-Jones** in Irvine, found that clinical grade HuCNS-SC neural stem cells (NSCs) failed to replicate the benefit of research-grade NSCs in mouse models of neural injury and disease. The experimental therapy, developed by the now defunct Stem Cells Inc., failed at phase 2 as a potential treatment for spinal cord injury. The results, according to some experts, illustrates the importance of mandating preclinical testing of potential stem cell therapies post-manufacture.

[Could some emerging SMA therapies help protect motor neurons in ALS?](#)

A drop in levels of survival of motor neuron protein (SMN) may make motor neurons more vulnerable to ALS according to a study published on February 7 in *Cell Reports*. The study, led by Harvard Stem Cell Institute's **Lee Rubin** in Massachusetts, found that the levels of SMN in ALS patient-derived neurons varied up to 4-fold and correlated with their longevity - at least in culture. What's more, increasing levels of SMN by blocking its degradation promoted the survival of these motor neurons. The results suggest that SMN may help protect motor neurons against ALS. Therefore, some emerging SMA therapies that boost SMN levels may help reduce motor neuron loss in people with the disease.

[Read more](#) about the potential role of SMN in ALS.

[A new resource may help RNA researchers go long in ALS](#)

A new genomic resource may help researchers unravel the role of key RNA-binding proteins in ALS. The atlas, developed at the Riken Institute in Yokohama, Japan, contains 27,919 long non-coding RNAs - including 19,175 potentially functional RNAs in the human genome. Many of the genes encoding these RNAs are expressed in the central nervous system and overlap disease-linked single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNPs) including ALS, suggesting that these RNAs may play a role in these diseases. The compendium, published on March 1 in *Nature*, is the largest human long non-coding RNA atlas created to date.

[Read more](#) about long non-coding RNAs and their potential role in ALS.

[It's MAGIC: Yeast Mitochondria Make Cytosolic Protein Aggregates Disappear](#)

Mitochondria may also dispose of cytoplasmic protein aggregates according to a new study published on March 1 in *Nature*. The study, led by Johns Hopkins University's **Rong Li**, found that some proteins that clumped up were imported in the mitochondria and degraded by proteases - at least in yeast. The disposal process, known as MAGIC, is one of a growing number of mechanisms that cells used to destroy protein aggregates. The findings may suggest a potential link between mitochondrial dysfunction, protein buildup and neurodegenerative disease.

Check out [our website](#) to read more of the latest research advances in ALS including [a new feature](#) on NfL, an emerging biomarker that may help stratify patients in clinical trials.

Funding Opportunities:

March 2017

[Arthur J. Hudson Translational Team Grant](#). ALS Canada. LOI: March 17, 2017.

[NIH-Industry Partnership Initiative: Repurposing Existing Drugs](#). In collaboration with AstraZeneca and Janssen Pharmaceuticals. LOI: March 17, 2017.

[Transformational Research 2017](#). FTD. Weston Brain Institute. LOI. March 31, 2017.

[Identify and Characterize Potential Environmental Risk Factors for ALS and Evaluate Their Impact on ALS Disease Incidence and Progression](#). Applications are due by Mar 31, 2017.

April 2017

NEW! [NeuroNext Clinical Trials](#). National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). Application due: April 4, 2017.

NEW! [Stem Cells. Translational Research Projects](#). California Institute of Regenerative Medicine. Application due: April 5, 2017.

NEW! [Biomarker Development/Validation](#). The CReATe Consortium in partnership with the ALS Association. ALS and related diseases. LOI: April 7, 2017.

NEW! [Diagnostic Characterization of Rare Diseases](#). European Commission (Horizon 2020). Application due: April 11, 2017.

NEW! [Postdoctoral Scholars 2017](#). Weston Brain Institute. FTD. Application due: April 11, 2017.

[ALS Canada Trainee Program](#). Clinical, Postdoctoral and Graduate Fellowships. LOI: April 14, 2017.

[UK: Novel Biomarkers 2017](#). FTD. Weston Brain Institute. LOI. April 19, 2017.

NEW! [Clinical Management Grant](#). ALS Association. Includes funding support for new endpoints in ALS clinical trials. Study outline: April 22, 2017.

Check out our [updated list](#) of grants and awards.

Job Opportunities:

[Assistant, Associate or Full Professor, Neuroscience](#). University of California. San Francisco, CA.

[Neuropathologist](#), King's College Hospital. London, England.

[Postdoctoral Fellow, De Paola Lab](#). Imperial College London. London, England.

[Postdoctoral Fellow, Graff Lab](#). Karolinska Institutet. Huddinge, Sweden.

[Postdoctoral Fellow, Storkebaum Lab](#). Max Planck Inst. for Mol. Biomedicine. Münster, Germany.

[Postdoctoral Fellow, Xia Lab](#). University of Central Florida. Orlando, FL.

[Director/Senior Director of Neurodegeneration and Repair Research](#). Biogen. Cambridge, MA

[Scientist, Neuroscience](#). Genentech. San Francisco, CA.

[Research Associate, Proteomics](#). Berg Health. Framingham, MA.

Hiring someone onto your team? Contact us to add your listing to [our updated job board](#): ALSjobs@prize4life.org.

[Full List of Job Opportunities >>](#)

Upcoming Meetings:

March 2017

March 21, 2017. Cambridge, England. [The Inflamed Brain](#).

March 22-23, 2017. London, England. [UK Neuromuscular Translational Research Conference](#).
Registration deadline: March 17, 2017.

March 23-26, 2017. Athens, Greece. [World Congress on Controversies in Neurology](#).

March 26-30, 2017. Sölden, Austria. [International Neuroscience Winter Conference](#).

April 2017

April 22-28, 2017. Boston, MA. [AAN 2017](#). Early registration: March 30, 2017.

May 2017

May 11-13, 2017. Bonn, Germany. [5th Venusberg Meeting on Neuroinflammation](#). **Registration deadline: March 15, 2017.**

May 18-20, 2017. Ljubljana, Slovenia. [ENCALS 2017](#). **Abstracts due: March 20, 2017.**

May 22-24, 2017. Barcelona, Spain. [Annual World Congress on NeuroTalk](#). "New Technologies, New Ideas and New Future." Abstracts due: March 31, 2017.

June 2017

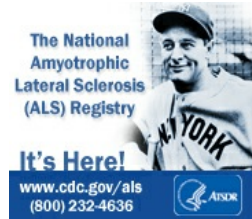
June 14-17, 2017. EMBL Heidelberg, Germany. EMBO-EMBL Symposium: [Mechanisms of Neurodegeneration](#). **Abstracts Due: March 22, 2017.**

June 19-23, 2017. [Keystone Symposium: Neuroinflammation: Concepts, Characteristics, Consequences](#). **Abstracts Due: March 21, 2017.**

June 26-27, 2017. [Meeting the Challenges of Modelling Neurodegenerative Disease in Mice](#).
Buckinghamshire, England.

Organizing an ALS meeting? Contact us to add your conference to [our updated calendar](#): ALSmeetings@prize4life.org.

[Full List of Upcoming Meetings>>](#)



[Download the Working
with ALS Mice Manual
Here](#)

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