CONSORTIUM AIMS TO JUMP START DRUG DEVELOPMENT FOR BRAIN DISEASES

Leaders In Research Hope To Uncover Promising Drugs in Pharma Libraries and Conduct Clinical Trials

CHICAGO, Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2014 -- Drugs for brain diseases such as Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, and motor neurone disease that have stalled in development could be revived thanks to the efforts of a global coalition of non-profit organizations and funders announced today. Through the Neurodegeneration Medicines Acceleration Program (Neuro-MAP), led by UK medical research charity MRC Technology, partner organizations and funding bodies will identify promising drug projects no longer in development and help scientists take them forward to the next stage.

The vision of this innovative new venture is to drive forward research on potentially beneficial brain disease drugs that are not currently being developed and are sitting in pharmaceutical company libraries – before returning them to the companies to test in large-scale clinical trials that are the final stages of evaluation.

Partners in Neuro-MAP are: Alzheimer’s Association, Alzheimer’s Research UK, Alzheimer’s Society (UK), ALS Association, Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research, Motor Neurone Disease Association, MRC Technology, Northern Health Science Alliance, and Parkinson’s UK.

The consortium represents more than 50 million people living with neurodegenerative conditions worldwide. The number of people with these conditions is set to rise substantially in coming decades.

“The global impact of Alzheimer’s and other brain diseases is personally devastating and crippling costly,” said Maria Carrillo, Ph.D., Alzheimer’s Association Vice President of Medical and Scientific Relations.

“Research into neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer’s is complex, expensive and has a high failure rate, resulting in many pharmaceutical companies turning their attention to more favorable research areas,” Carrillo said. “Because no treatments are currently available to stop the progression of these terrible brain diseases, there is an urgent need to expand research on available compounds. No stone should be left unturned.”
According to Dr. Doug Brown, Director of Research and Development at Alzheimer’s Society, “People are developing dementia on a scale of one case every three minutes in the UK and not only is there no cure, the treatments we have only work for some people and we haven’t had a new drug for a decade. Too many potential drugs are languishing in laboratories because the companies who own them have moved in other directions. By rescuing these projects and moving them forward we aim to bring these drugs closer to the people who desperately need them.”

“By next year 850,000 people in the UK will have dementia. We need a massive step change in research funding in order to develop new treatments, but it’s not just about throwing money at the problem. Innovative projects like this will help demolish the barriers to dementia research and that’s why we’re delighted to be working as part of it,” Brown said.

**How Neuro-MAP Plans to Work**

Neuro-MAP will ask pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies to propose projects to the consortium. The Neuro-MAP partner organizations will decide which projects to take on by evaluating patient needs, scientific excellence and commercial potential. The projects will be developed to a point agreed between the industry partner and Neuro-MAP, and then returned to the industry partner for the final steps of clinical research.

Neuro-MAP projects will also support the repurposing of existing drugs and compounds for other conditions, such as testing hypertension drugs for vascular dementia.

It is expected that the researchers to conduct the Neuro-MAP projects will come from eventual academic partner organizations, as well as from sourcing the most appropriate industrial and clinical research capability globally.

Projects taken on by Neuro-MAP remain the property of the industry partner, but the consortium will share in a proportion of the revenue generated if the product goes on the market. These funds will be reinvested in additional research. The risk of these projects is thereby shared by the industrial partner and the consortium.

MRC Technology will augment the investment from Neuro-MAP consortium partners on a project-by-project basis by seeking co-investment from the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, social investors, venture philanthropists, and other investors in the healthcare sector. As a result, the current target for total annual investment is in the region of $48 million (£30m).

“We’re pleased to be able to use our unique position at the centre of charities, funders, academia and industry to bring together the right combination of funding, skills and capabilities to really impact quality of life for patients living with these debilitating and destructive diseases,” said Mike Johnson, Director of Corporate Partnerships at MRC Technology. “This is an amazing opportunity to accelerate the next generation of neurodegenerative drugs towards the patient.”

World Dementia Envoy Dennis Gillings said, “This is a hugely encouraging step forward in dementia research. Instead of potential treatments sitting idle on shelves, they have the possibility
of being re-tested with new life breathed into them. Hopefully, this kind of initiative brings the search for a cure one step closer.”

The website for the program is www.medicinesaccelerationprogram.org

**About MRC Technology, Neuro-MAP Program Manager**

MRC Technology is an independent life science medical research charity, offering professional services to organizations within the academic, charity, biotechnology and pharmaceutical sectors globally. Services include IP management and research and development for diagnostics, small molecules and therapeutic antibodies. MRC Technology bridges the gap between basic medical research and commercialization, helping early discoveries progress to clinical application.

(www.mrctechnology.org)

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Alzheimer’s Association (US) [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
Alzheimer’s Research UK [www.alzheimersresearchuk.org](http://www.alzheimersresearchuk.org)
Alzheimer’s Society (UK) [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)
ALS Association [www.alsa.org](http://www.alsa.org)
Michael J. Fox Foundation [www.michaeljfox.org](http://www.michaeljfox.org)
Motor Neurone Disease Association [www.mndassociation.org](http://www.mndassociation.org)
MRC Technology [www.mrctechnology.org](http://www.mrctechnology.org)
Northern Health Science Alliance [www.thenhsa.co.uk](http://www.thenhsa.co.uk)
Parkinson’s UK [www.parkinsons.org.uk](http://www.parkinsons.org.uk)

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