

Project A.L.S.



Project A.L.S. and Packard Center Take Aim at ALS with \$15 Million Program

Leading Researchers Unite for *P² ALS*, a 3-Year Mission to Understand and Treat the Neurodegenerative Disease

January 29 2010- Project A.L.S. (New York, NY) and the Robert Packard Center for ALS Research at Johns Hopkins University (Baltimore, MD) announced that they will partner on *P² ALS*, a \$15 million initiative designed to advance ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease) research exponentially over the next three years.

Project A.L.S. and the Packard Center, non-profit leaders in forging productive collaborations among research scientists, will focus jointly on identifying the underlying causes of and the first effective treatments for ALS, a uniformly fatal neurodegenerative disease that is closely related to Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and Huntington's diseases. Co-scientific directors of *P² ALS* are Robert H. Brown, Jr., M.D., D.Phil. (University of Massachusetts), Thomas M. Jessell, Ph.D. (HHMI/Columbia University), and Jeffrey Rothstein, M.D., Ph.D. (Johns Hopkins University).

P² ALS is distinctive in that it unites key world leaders in the three disciplines that have recently transformed the landscape of ALS science: *Genetics*, *Stem Cell Reprogramming*, and *Glial-Neuron Signaling*. Through *P² ALS*, targeted research in these three areas will be performed in an interactive, collaborative, and transparent manner. As such, the implications of discoveries in one area will be rapidly transmitted and tested in complementary areas, by multiple laboratories. New observations and ideas can and will be validated or refuted with unprecedented speed.

P² ALS unites leading researchers from University of California San Diego, Columbia University, Harvard University, Johns Hopkins University, University of Massachusetts, University of Montana, Project A.L.S./Jenifer Estess Laboratory for Stem Cell Research, Salk Institute, and partner laboratories worldwide.

"Project A.L.S. is honored to join with Packard for what is arguably the most powerful partnership in the history of ALS research," said Valerie Estess, Director of Research for Project A.L.S. "It's like Coke and Pepsi working together. Project A.L.S. is confident that that *P² ALS* will fuel the entire ALS field not only with ideas, but strategies and tools for treating people with ALS. "

Through this merger of mind and method, *P² ALS* will focus on identifying the key genetic, biochemical and cellular pathways that underlie ALS and aims to define primary molecular targets for the development of new ALS therapies, within a three-year period.

"*P² ALS* is the most exciting undertaking in ALS research ever. The opportunity to bring a group of highly productive creative leaders from the Packard Center with those funded by Project A.L.S., including iPS biology, motor neuron and glial biology, and experts in drug discovery, with a milestone driven approach provides a fantastic opportunity to synergize ALS research in a way I have never seen," said Packard's Medical Director, Jeff Rothstein.

P² ALS is grateful to Daniel and Alisa Doctoroff for leadership funding.

Project A.L.S. and Packard will remain separate entities, with a primary focus on the three-year P²ALS mission.

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About Project A.L.S.

Jenifer Estess, her sisters and friends, started Project A.L.S. in 1998, when Jenifer was diagnosed with ALS. Since then, Project A.L.S. has been a catalyst and a leader in the effort to identify and develop potential treatments. The mission of Project A.L.S. is to provide a new paradigm for neurodegenerative disease research. It identifies the world's leading researchers and clinicians and mobilizes them to work together as teams in the areas of Genetics, Drug Discovery, Stem Cells, and Disease Pathways. Founded in 2006, the Project A.L.S./Jenifer Estess Laboratory for Stem Cell Research in New York is the world's first and only privately funded laboratory to focus exclusively on stem cells and ALS.

About the Robert Packard Center for ALS Research at Johns Hopkins University

The Robert Packard Center for ALS Research was initiated in 2000 to bring together leading ALS researchers and clinicians to collectively and collaboratively work out the fundamental mechanisms as to why ALS occurs, what biological and molecular pathways contribute to the disease, and to use that information to develop novel therapies. It was conceived by scientists and clinicians and is fully run by active ALS and non-ALS scientists. The Packard Center is a truly unique organization dedicated to the strategic integration of scientific research and therapeutics development. The core of the model, and of the Center's mission, is to connect the best researchers and clinicians to collaboratively discover the cause of ALS and to rapidly translate that information into real therapeutics. This novel research model has demonstrated its validity by accelerating the pace and breadth of discovery in ALS and establishes a new blue print for orphan disease research in general.

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