Myositis research awards bring hope to those with rare diseases

Projects exploring inclusion body myositis and juvenile myositis awarded

COLUMBIA, MD, UNITED STATES, January 22, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Since 2002, The Myositis Association's annual research funding program has awarded nearly $8.2 million in research support. We are pleased to announce our 2024 grant awards, funding disease-specific projects in myositis:

> The importance of independent funding for rare diseases like myositis cannot be overstated. Projects increase understanding and gather preliminary data to support applications for larger grants."
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> *Lindsay Alfano, PT, DPT, PCS*

Our first grant of $80,000 is awarded to Thomas Lloyd, MD, PhD, Chief of Neurology at Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, TX, for his project "Senolytic therapies in a novel patient-derived myoblast model of inclusion body myositis (IBM)."

This study proposes the innovative hypothesis that the chronic inflammatory condition in IBM causes new muscle cells to become aged and deteriorated. With new drugs in development for various age-related diseases (senolytic therapies), this project will test these drugs with an in vitro model of IBM to quickly identify drugs already approved by the FDA that may be effective for treating this rare disease. The hope is to identify treatments that can enter clinical trials in patients with IBM within the next 3-5 years. As the American population ages, conditions like IBM, Alzheimer's disease, and ALS are a significant cause of disability and diminished quality of life. This new approach to drug development offers hope for such conditions that have few treatment options.

Our second grant of $45,000 is awarded to Christian Lood, PhD, Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Washington School of Medicine, Seattle, WA, for his efforts to identify "Mitochondrial contribution to juvenile dermatomyositis (JDM)."

Mitochondria are special structures within human cells that provide energy to the cell. It has recently been discovered that mitochondria can leave cells and transfer elsewhere. How this may affect other cells is not fully understood. Mitochondria have been found in the bloodstream of those who have juvenile dermatomyositis (JDM), but it's unclear what effect this may have on disease progression. This study will investigate the role of mitochondria in JDM, with the long-term goal to improve patient care and quality of life.

“The importance of this kind of independent grant funding for rare diseases like myositis cannot be overstated,” says TMA’s Research Grants Committee Chair Lindsay Alfano, PT, DPT, PCS, research assistant professor of pediatrics at The Ohio State University School of Medicine, Columbus, OH. “These grants not only increase our understanding of these devastating conditions but also allow investigators to gather preliminary data to support applications for larger grants such as those from the NIH.”

About TMA’s Research Funding Program

Myositis is a collection of rare autoimmune diseases of the muscles that cause severe pain and weakness, debilitating skin rashes, scarring of the lungs, and other life-threatening symptoms. These chronic, disabling conditions are a challenge to diagnose, are difficult or impossible to treat, and have no cure.
Each year, TMA provides research funding to better understand myositis diseases, develop better treatments and, ultimately, find a cure for all forms of myositis. TMA offers funding for research into all types of inflammatory myositis.

Funds for TMA’s Research Funding Program come primarily from myositis patients, their families, and friends. Grants are awarded by TMA’s Board of Directors based on recommendations from TMA’s Medical Advisory Board of 25 of the world’s most distinguished myositis experts.

More information about The Myositis Association and our opportunities is available at https://www.myositis.org/.

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