

## **Hope in Progress: American Parkinson Disease Association Supports Researchers With \$1.975 Million in New Funding**

***From understanding levodopa induced dyskinesias to exploring environmental risk factors of PD, APDA-funded researchers pursue cutting-edge studies***

**NEW YORK, NY, September 7, 2023** – The [American Parkinson Disease Association](#) (APDA) has just awarded \$1.975 million to support innovative Parkinson’s disease (PD) research for the 2023-2024 funding year. [The funded research projects](#) will delve into key areas of PD biology including RNA regulation in levodopa-induced dyskinesia, cognitive impairment in PD, and physical activity among Latino/a PD patients, as well as the structure of mutant LRRK2, SARS-CoV-2 induced dopamine neuron damage, and so much more. APDA remains committed to funding promising projects to further our understanding of PD.

With someone diagnosed with PD every six minutes, this research is critical as we push for better treatments and ultimately, a cure. APDA is steadfast in its 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 helping established investigators pursue new and novel ideas. Leslie A. Chambers, President & CEO of APDA comments, “Research support is a critical part of APDA’s tagline ‘Strength in optimism. Hope in progress’. We know that our funding allows researchers to jumpstart their ideas and obtain significant pilot data and initial proof of concept. In many instances, this then allows them to get further funding from National Institutes of Health and other funding institutions.” Chambers continues, “We are very proud of our critical mission of providing seed funding for innovative projects that may never have gotten off the ground.”

Grants for the year ahead have been awarded in the form of two Post-Doctoral Fellowships, seven Research Grants, two Diversity in Parkinson’s Disease Research grants, eight APDA Centers for Advanced Research, and one George C. Cotzias Memorial Fellowship, APDA’s most prestigious award.

For the fourth year in a row, APDA is awarding a specialized grant to two researchers focused on diverse and under-represented communities. APDA created the first-of-its-kind [Diversity in Parkinson’s Disease Research Grant](#) in 2019 to encourage and support researchers who are 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. “Once again our Scientific Advisory Board reviewed many excellent applications and had to make difficult decisions about whom to fund” states Rebecca Gilbert, MD, PhD, and Chief Scientific Officer, APDA. “I am very proud of the many promising projects that we are funding this year.”

## The 2023-2024 APDA Research Grants

**The George C. Cotzias Fellowship** is APDA's most prestigious grant and is awarded to a young physician-scientist with exceptional promise who is establishing a career in research, teaching, and clinical services relevant to Parkinson's. The award spans three years and is designed to fund a long-range project focused on PD. This year's awardee is:

- [Krithi Irmady, MD, PhD](#) -- The Rockefeller University, New York, NY  
*RNA regulation in Parkinson's disease and levodopa-induced dyskinesia*

**APDA Diversity in Parkinson's Disease Research Grants** are one-year grants to study the health inequities and/or differences among under-studied PD communities, across the spectrum of ethnicity, ancestry, geography, socioeconomic conditions, and gender. This year's awardees are:

- [Karen Hegland, PhD](#) -- University of Florida, Gainesville, FL  
*Low utilization of deep brain stimulation (DBS) therapy among minoritized individuals with Parkinson's disease*
- [Laura Andrea Prieto, PhD](#)-- University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI  
*Physical activity among Latino/a people with Parkinson's disease and their care partners*

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

- [Abdulmunaim Eid, MD](#) -- Washington University in St. Louis, St. Louis, MO  
*The neurobiological basis of Parkinson's disease clinical subtypes*
- [Naemeh Pourshafie, PhD](#) -- The Trustees of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA  
*Enhancing neuronal resilience to neurodegeneration via the epigenetic-metabolic axis*

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

- [Andrew Arrant, PhD](#) -- University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL  
*Investigating the role of progranulin in synucleinopathy*
- [Briana De Miranda, PhD](#) -- University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, AL  
*Cdk5 inhibition as a protective mechanism against environmental toxicant induced Parkinson's disease*
- [Jeffrey Eells, PhD](#) -- East Carolina University, Greenville, NC  
*Mechanisms of SARS-CoV-2 infection induced dopamine neuron damage*

- [Enrico Opri, PhD](#) -- The Regents of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI  
*Stimulation induced evoked potentials for guided intra and post-operative functional mapping*
- [Nikhil Panicker, PhD](#) -- Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Cleveland, OH  
*Using IPSC models to interrogate Inflammasome-mediated pathogenesis in Parkinson's Disease*
- [Satya Surabhi, PhD](#) -- Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY  
*The role of Lamp1 in age-related neurodegenerative diseases*
- [William Zeiger, MD, PhD](#) -- University of California – Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA  
*Mechanisms of posterior cortical circuit dysfunction and cognitive impairment in a mouse model of PD*

In addition, continued funding was granted for eight [APDA Centers for Advanced Research](#) to support various programs including research trainees, clinical fellowship programs, early-stage discovery programs and later-stage clinical translation. These Centers facilitate research that is at the forefront of investigation into the causes, treatments and ultimately the 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

“We are confident that the projects that we are currently funding will have a high impact on further understanding Parkinson’s disease,” states Chambers. “This work is only possible because of the support of our generous APDA donors.”

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/](http://www.apdaparkinson.org/research/what-we-fund/).

Researchers and physicians who are interested in applying for APDA funding can visit [www.apdaparkinson.org/research](http://www.apdaparkinson.org/research) for details on the 2024-2025 funding opportunities. Letters of Intent for the 2024-2025 grant cycle can be submitted starting September 28, 2023, with a deadline of December 2, 2023.

Those who want to support APDA’s critical research with a donation can do so by visiting [www.apdaparkinson.org/donate](http://www.apdaparkinson.org/donate) or mailing a check payable to APDA to: APDA, PO Box 61420, Staten Island, NY 10306.

The American Parkinson Disease Association (APDA) is a nationwide grassroots network dedicated to fighting Parkinson’s disease (PD) and works tirelessly to help the approximately one 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 \$252 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 their national Research Program and Centers for Advanced Research, please visit [www.apdaparkinson.org](http://www.apdaparkinson.org).

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