



Contact: Eloise Caggiano
718-737-8151
ecaggiano@apdaparkinson.org

**Making Hope Possible: American Parkinson Disease Association
Supports Researchers With \$2.6 Million in New Funding**

From genetic causes of Parkinson's to the neurobiology of cognitive dysfunction, APDA-funded researchers begin new work.

NEW YORK, NY, SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 – The [American Parkinson Disease Association](#) (APDA) has just awarded \$2.6 million to support innovative Parkinson's disease (PD) research for the 2024-2025 funding year – an increase of more than 30 percent from the year before. The [funded research projects](#) will tackle a wide range of key areas of PD research including new genetic causes of PD, the neurobiology of cognitive dysfunction in PD, and the regulation of alpha-synuclein production in the nerve cell. Projects will also delve into the underpinnings of walking dysfunction in PD, the biology behind deep brain stimulation, and more. APDA proudly invests in the most promising clinicians and scientific projects and has been a funding partner in many major PD breakthroughs since its inception in 1961.

There are approximately one million people living with PD in the United States, with 90,000 new diagnoses every year – one every six minutes. Research is critical as we push for better treatments and, ultimately, a cure. APDA is steadfast in its research focus, aiming to fund early investigators – whether new to their careers or to PD research – giving them the initial funding needed to obtain the preliminary data necessary to secure a large grant.

Leslie A. Chambers, President & CEO of APDA comments, “At APDA, we believe in the power of progress and the hope it brings to the Parkinson's community. Our mission is deeply rooted in our tagline, ‘Strength in optimism. Hope in progress.’ By providing essential seed funding, we empower researchers to explore innovative ideas and gather critical pilot data. This early support often acts as a catalyst, enabling them to secure larger grants from prestigious institutions like the National Institutes of Health.” Chambers continues, “We are immensely proud to play a pivotal role in advancing these groundbreaking projects that might otherwise never take flight, and in doing so, we continue to bring hope to everyone impacted by Parkinson's disease.”

Grants for the 2024-2025 funding year have been awarded in the form of five Post-Doctoral Fellowships, eight Research Grants, three Diversity in Parkinson's Disease Research Grants, nine APDA Centers for Advanced Research, and one George C. Cotzias Memorial Fellowship, APDA's most prestigious award.

For the fifth year in a row, APDA is awarding a specialized grant to 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 better serve people with PD from all communities.

All APDA grants are awarded through a competitive application process and reviewed by APDA's esteemed [Scientific Advisory Board](#) (SAB), which is comprised of scientists with a wide range of backgrounds and expertise in all areas relevant to PD research. The SAB meets annually to diligently and methodically review all grant proposals and determine the most promising and innovative research to fund.

"As always, our Scientific Advisory Board reviewed many excellent applications and had to make tough choices about whom to fund," states Rebecca Gilbert, MD, PhD and Chief Mission Officer at APDA. "We have an incredible responsibility to the Parkinson's community to choose the research that shows the most promise for real progress, as well as a responsibility to our donors to make sure every dollar counts in the search for answers. It is a challenging process, approached with the utmost care and diligence, and I am proud of both the quality and quantity of promising projects and researchers that we are able to fund this year."

The 2024-2025 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:

- [William Zeiger, MD, PhD](#) – The Regents of the University of California, Los Angeles
Neuronal microcircuit mechanisms of posterior cortical dysfunction and cognitive impairment in a mouse model of Parkinson's disease

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:

- [Ignacio Mata, PhD](#) – Cleveland Clinic Foundation
Machine-learning model for predicting levodopa-induced dyskinesias in a large cohort of Latinos with Parkinson's disease
- [Melissa Nirenberg, MD, PhD](#) – Bronx Veterans Medical Research Foundation, Inc.
Parkinson's disease phenotype in Black and Hispanic veterans
- [Danielle Shpiner, MD](#) – Miller School of Medicine of the University of Miami
Improving access to advance care planning for Hispanic people with Parkinson's disease

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:

- [Andrew Monaghan, PhD](#) – Emory University

Electrophysiological characterization of neural circuit pathophysiology underlying freezing of gait

- [Yuxiao Ning, PhD](#) – The Regents of the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities
Multiregional neural population dynamics in Parkinson's disease and during directional deep brain stimulation
- [Brienne Rogers, PhD](#) – HudsonAlpha Institute for Biotechnology
Mechanisms of SNCA regulation
- [Carlos Soto-Faguás, PhD](#) – Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU)
The effects of the ApoE Christchurch variant on Lewy body pathology development and spreading
- [Donghe Yang, PhD](#) – Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK)
Characterizing and modeling the development of human A9 midbrain dopaminergic neurons with pluripotent stem cells

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

- [Patricia Aguilar Calvo, PhD](#) – University of Alabama at Birmingham
Heparan-sulfate mediated mechanisms of α -synuclein propagation in Parkinson's disease
- [Athanasios Alexandris, MD](#) – Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine
Investigating the role of α -synucleinopathy in axonal protein homeostasis and viability
- [Saar Anis, MD](#) – Cleveland Clinic Foundation
Deep brain stimulation neural recordings analysis of varied stimulation parameters during sleep in Parkinson's disease (The DREAMS-PD Study)
- [Helen Hwang, MD, PhD](#) – Washington University School of Medicine
Identification and characterization of compounds for fibril growth inhibition
- [Francesca Magrinelli, MD, PhD](#) – University College London Institute of Neurology
Dissecting PSMF1 as a new gene for early-onset Parkinson's disease/parkinsonism
- [Franchino Porciuncula, PT, DScPT, EdD](#) – Trustees of Boston University, CRC
Does rhythmic auditory stimulus reduce the cognitive demands of moderate intensity walking in Parkinson's disease?
- [Emily Rocha, PhD](#) – University of Pittsburgh
Lysosomal dysfunction in Parkinson's disease
- [Mariangela Scarduzio, PhD](#) – University of Alabama at Birmingham
Striatal acetylcholine dynamics in L-DOPA-induced dyskinesia

In addition, continued funding was granted for eight [APDA Centers for Advanced Research](#), and a new APDA Center for Advanced Research was funded (Yale School of Medicine), 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
- Yale School of Medicine, New Haven, CT

"We are confident that the research we are funding will make a significant impact in the fight against Parkinson's disease," says Chambers. "This vital work is made possible by 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.

Researchers and physicians who are interested in applying for APDA funding can visit www.apdaparkinson.org/research for information about 2025-2026 funding opportunities. Letters of Intent for the 2025-2026 grant cycle can be submitted beginning October 2024 with a deadline of December 16, 2024.

Those who want to support APDA's critical research efforts with a donation can do so by visiting www.apdaparkinson.org/donate or by mailing a check payable to the American Parkinson Disease Association to: APDA, PO Box 61420, Staten Island, NY 10036.

About the American Parkinson Disease Association:

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 with PD in the United States live life to the fullest in the face of this chronic, neurological disorder. Founded in 1961, APDA has raised and invested more than \$282 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 in the fight against PD and to learn more about the support APDA provides nationally through a network of Chapters and Information & Referral (I&R) Centers, as well as a national Research Program and Centers for Advanced Research, please visit www.apdaparkinson.org.

###