

MS Fellows Pave the Way for Scientific Discovery and Compassionate Care

As the largest private funder of multiple sclerosis research in the world, the National MS Society's commitment to uncovering the cause and cure of MS is unwavering. We seek out and invest in the best and brightest scientific minds to support the goal of having more talented scientists and physicians to solve the problem of MS and provide exceptional care. From its humble beginnings – funding six fellows in 1955 – the Society's fellowship program has trained more than 800 scientists, clinicians, and medical professionals in the field of MS research and care.

Currently, 11% (or \$16 million) of all research commitments are invested in fellowships and many of the best minds in MS research and care today began with Society support:



Dr. Rhonda Voskuhl (University of California, Los Angeles) earned a Weaver Award and has gone on to become Director of the UCLA MS Program and a leader in gender differences and MS. Two gender hormones have each reached clinical trials in people with MS based on basic research done in Dr. Voskuhl's lab, and signify headway toward stopping MS in its tracks.



Dr. Lilyana Amezcua (University of Southern California) trained as a clinical fellow under Dr. Leslie Weiner, where she learned to diagnose and treat MS as well as conduct multiple clinical trials. Currently Assistant Professor of Clinical Neurology at the USC MS Comprehensive Care Center, Dr. Amezcua works with patients on a daily basis, and has played an instrumental role in the development of a wellness center with an MS program for low-income people.



Dr. Stephen Hauser (University of California, San Francisco) also earned a Weaver Award that helped launch his early career and in 2008 was honored with the John Dystel Prize for his pioneering studies on genetic susceptibility to MS, and for his role in translating findings on the role of immune B cells in MS into clinical trials.

Just as living with MS is a lifelong journey, an MS Fellow's journey continues throughout the course of their career. Each year, the Society convenes the Tykeson Fellows Conference, inviting Society and MS International Federation research and clinical fellows to hear about each other's latest research, learn from senior scientists and fellows, experience opportunities to develop collaborative partnerships, and gain insights on career development issues to facilitate access to faculty positions and other research funding.

Supporting fellowships is one of our highest priorities and Golden Circle contributions directly support this goal. As momentum continues toward significant progress and discovery that will change the world for everyone living with MS, the need to ensure that clinicians and investigators continue to be attracted to the fields of MS care and research grows.

BREAKING NEWS IN MS RESEARCH

National MS Society Invests \$28 Million in New Research

As part of a projected investment of over \$52 million in 2015 alone to support research, the National MS Society has committed \$28 million this spring to support an expected 84 new research projects and training awards. New leads being explored this spring include diet, gut bacteria, myelin repair trials, and patient-centered wellness programs.

Just a few of the new cutting-edge research projects include a University of California, San Francisco-led consortium focusing on a comprehensive analysis of the gut microbiome to develop probiotic strategies for stopping progressive MS; a pilot trial at Johns Hopkins University exploring the tolerability of a diet that intermittently restricts calorie intake as a treatment for disease activity in people with MS; pre-clinical studies by a commercial firm (Bionure) to test the potential of a compound to protect the nervous system and stimulate repair of nerve-insulating myelin; and a new collaborative center at Oregon Health & Science University to research patient-centered wellness programs to improve the daily life of people with MS.

“These innovative new projects add to the Society’s comprehensive efforts to stop MS, restore function and end MS forever,” notes Bruce Bebo, PhD, National MS

Society’s Executive Vice President, Research. “While we fund more research than any other MS organization in the world, we also convene and empower the research community toward breakthroughs that can help people with MS live their best lives now.”

WELLNESS STRATEGY FOR PEOPLE WITH MS

People living with MS identify wellness as a high priority in their lives. They want to know what they can do today – particularly related to diet, exercise and emotional wellness – to feel and function at their best. In addition, they want the support of knowledgeable healthcare professionals who are armed with accurate information about wellness interventions, as they pursue their wellness goals. At a recent meeting convened by the National MS Society, people with MS, healthcare professionals, researchers and Society staff summarized what is currently known about diet, exercise and emotional issues in MS; identified key questions to be answered in each of these areas, along with the research gaps and challenges to be addressed in order to arrive at the answers; made specific programmatic recommendations to ensure that people living with MS are getting the personalized support and information they need to achieve wellness; and outlined next steps to move this important priority forward.

Finding Answers for Progressive MS Webcast

On March 4, panelists Dr. Alan Thompson, Dr. Robert J. Fox, Dr. Riley Bove, and Dr. Bruce Bebo hosted an informative webcast about progressive MS, moderated by Kate Milliken, a National MS Society Ambassador who has been living with MS since 2006.

The live webcast invited individuals from across the country to tune in and ask the panel their questions about the progress being made in the research and treatment of progressive MS. Highlights were shared from the annual meeting of the International Progressive MS Alliance, which aims to focus attention on developing treatments

for progressive MS, none of which currently exist. Top researchers in the field discussed an array of topics, such as identifying different mechanisms for what may be driving progressive MS, sharing lessons from research outside the field of progressive MS, and updating the progress being made with clinical trials of new and existing treatments that could hold solutions for progressive MS.

The excitement around the future of understanding and treating progressive MS was unanimous. Dr. Thompson shared, “I just can’t emphasize enough how things have changed and how progressive MS is now center stage... we’re on a totally different trajectory.”

The recorded webcast can be viewed on the Society website at www.nationalmssociety.org/Resources-Support/Library-Education-Programs/Webcasts.

Ask the Experts: Golden Circle Research Reception

On November 19, 2014, three top researchers and clinicians in multiple sclerosis gathered at the Riviera Country Club to discuss exciting progress in MS research and care. The first Golden Circle Salon panel consisted of Dr. Robert Fox, Medical Director, Cleveland Clinic Mellen Center for MS; Dr. Barbara Giesser, Professor, Medical Director, Marilyn Hilton Multiple Sclerosis Achievement Center; and Dr. Craig Walsh, Professor and Director, MS Research Center at the University of California Irvine. Moderator Dr. Tim Coetzee, Chief Advocacy, Services and Research Officer, National MS Society, asked questions submitted before the event and from the live audience, providing each panelist with an opportunity to use their expertise to discuss current projects and share exciting MS research on the horizon.



Steven Seizer, Fern Seizer, Julie Kaufer, Kim Phillips

Dr. Fox answered questions pertaining to his involvement on the Scientific Steering Committee of the International Progressive MS Alliance, which is a global initiative to end progressive MS. The Alliance brings together the world's leading experts in MS to achieve breakthroughs to change the world for people with progressive MS.

Dr. Walsh, who is at a Collaborative MS Research Center at the University of California, Irvine, discussed a grant he is currently working on exploring cell replacement strategies for repairing damage in MS. UC Irvine received the MS Research Center Award from the National MS Society in 2009, making it one of the few institutions honored by the Society for research and patient care excellence.

Dr. Giesser spoke of the Society's recent Wellness Strategy Meeting, which convened other researchers and wellness

experts to identify gaps and priorities for research and programs needed to help people live their best lives. The meeting made specific programming recommendations to ensure people with MS and their care partners get the support they need to achieve wellness. The evening was incredibly informative and was a great way to involve our donors in a discussion with prominent researchers.



Ann Giesler, Kari Boatner, Greg Giesler

This event brought together top donors and fundraisers from across all Chapter campaigns, including Golden Circle, Walk MS, Bike MS, and Muckfest MS! The evening was graciously co-hosted by Stan and Pam Maron and Fern and Bob Seizer to whom we extend our sincerest thanks.

Cultivating new and existing relationships within our community is key to the Chapter's continued ability to provide essential programs and services, fund MS research, and grow the Golden Circle campaign. If you or someone you know is interested in hosting and/or underwriting a salon event at your home, business/country club or other location please contact Elicia Lopez at 310.481.1111 or Elicia.Lopez@nmss.org.



Named for the Society's founder Sylvia Lawry, the Lawry Circle honors donors who have informed the Society of their intention to help create a better future for the MS community through their will, trust or estate plans.

Planned and deferred gifts provide a strong foundation of funding for the Society. Because all gifts represent an expression of lifetime commitment to the Society, there are no minimum gift levels and membership is for life. Please inform the Society if you have named the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, Southern California & Nevada Chapter in your estate plans by calling Kate McIntosh, Vice President of Development at 310.481.1124.

Golden Circle \$1.15 Million Year End Challenge

We are thrilled to announce that for the 8th year in a row, Golden Circle donors met the challenge posed by the Kenrose Kitchen Table Foundation and the Steve & Caroline Kaufer Family—this year raising more than \$670,000 in gifts toward our \$575,000 goal! In total, the 2014 Golden Circle campaign ended with more than \$1.37 million raised for MS research and programs.

The Chapter extends its deepest appreciation to the Kenrose Kitchen Table Foundation and the Steve & Caroline Kaufer Family for their passion, leadership and tremendous support to help create a world free of MS.

Calendar of Upcoming Local & National Events

June 6; 4-7pm PT

Closer to a Cure Research Reception
Marina Del Rey, CA

June 25 – 26

Research Programs Advisory Committee Meetings
Washington, D.C.

July 21; 4pm PT

July 23; 7pm PT

Research Teleconference: Gender Differences in MS
Featuring Drs. Barbara Giesser and Rhonda Voskuhl of UCLA

August (first week)

Bloomingdale's DKNY Fall Fashion Event
Sherman Oaks, CA

August 6 – 7

2015 California Multiple Sclerosis Research Forum
San Francisco, CA

October 27

Peer Review Committee A: Basic Research & Discovery Meeting
New York, NY

November 16

Peer Review Committee B: Transitional Research Meeting
New York, NY

November TBD

Golden Circle Research Reception
Los Angeles, CA

National MS Society Southern California & Nevada Chapter

The Southern California & Nevada Chapter has seven offices serving 20,000 people with MS and their loved ones in Southern and Central California and Nevada. For more information, call (800) 344-4867 and visit www.nationalMSSociety.org/cal.

Channel Islands Office

1921-A State Street
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Inland Empire Office

3110 East Guasti Road, Suite 320
Ontario, CA 91761

Kern County Office

1800 30th Street, Suite 105
Bakersfield, CA 93301

Las Vegas Office

2110 East Flamingo, Suite 203
Las Vegas, NV 89119

Reno Office

4600 Kietzke Lane, Suite K-225
Reno, NV 89502

San Joaquin Valley Office

7472 N. Fresno St., Suite 210
Fresno, CA 93720

West Los Angeles Office

5150 W. Goldleaf Circle, Suite 400
Los Angeles, CA 90056

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