

## News Release

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### **Not intended for U.K. based media**

## **Recipients of €1 Million Grant for Multiple Sclerosis Innovation Announced at ECTRIMS 2017**

- **Grant awarded across three research projects focused on prediction and defining characteristics of multiple sclerosis**
- **Investment of €5 million in multiple sclerosis research funding as awards mark fifth year**

Darmstadt, Germany, October 26, 2017 – Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, today announced recipients of the fifth annual Grant for Multiple Sclerosis Innovation (GMSI) during the 7<sup>th</sup> Joint ECTRIMS-ACRIMS Meeting in Paris, France.

This year, 77 proposals from 25 countries were submitted, representing innovative research projects taking place across the globe. Three research teams, from Canada, Portugal and the United States, were selected to share the €1 million grant to support their research:

- *Immunosenescence as a predictor of MS progression:* Professor Catherine Larochelle and Professor Nathalie Arbour, Department of Neurosciences, Université de Montréal, Canada;
- *Targeting multiple sclerosis immune- and psycho-pathophysiology by modulation of neuroinflammation; development of the S100B knockout model studies:* Professor Adelaide Fernandes, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Lisbon, Portugal;
- *Defining Spatial Pattern and Surface Characteristics of Multiple Sclerosis and Non-Specific White Matter Lesions via 3-Dimensional Analysis and Machine Learning:* Professor Darin Okuda, Department of Neurology & Neurotherapeutics, UT Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, Texas.



“Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is deeply committed to innovative science that improves the lives of patients living with severe diseases. Since its initiation, the funding of early stage research projects such as the Grant for Multiple Sclerosis Innovation, has enabled talented and inspiring researchers to advance our understanding of how we predict, diagnose, treat and monitor progression of this disabling disease,” said Steven Hildemann, Global Chief Medical Officer and Head of Global Patient Safety, at the biopharma business of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. “This year’s Grant for Multiple Sclerosis Innovation winners exemplify recent innovation with promising concepts in artificial intelligence, augmented diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, as well as sophisticated monitoring of disease progression, supporting caregivers and patients with multiple sclerosis in their hopes to continue to lead a normal life.”

The GMSI was launched in October 2012 with the aim of improving the understanding of multiple sclerosis (MS) for the ultimate benefit of those living with the disease. Previous recipients have studied molecular markers of MS, novel magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and positron emission tomography (PET) imaging and analysis techniques to detect and monitor the disease, and methods to reduce and repair nerve damage caused by inflammation in patients with MS.

The awards symposium was chaired by Professor David Bates, Emeritus Professor of Clinical Neurology, Royal Victoria Infirmary, UK, and a member of the GMSI Scientific Committee. During the symposium, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany also announced the call for proposals for the 2018 GMSI. Up to €1 million will be awarded to fund innovative research in MS, in topics that could include: MS pathogenesis; prediction of MS subtypes; predictive markers of treatment response; potential new treatments for MS; and, innovative patient support programs, mobile health devices or patient-reported outcomes.

More information about the GMSI can be found online at:  
[www.grantformultiplesclerosisinnovation.org](http://www.grantformultiplesclerosisinnovation.org).

In addition to the GMSI, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, awards annually the Grant for Fertility Innovation, the Grant for Oncology Innovation and the Grant for

Growth Innovation. To-date over 90 innovation winners have received, or been committed, grant funding for their projects.

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany is committed to rewarding innovation and new thinking that could further advance the field of medicine. To learn more about the variety of innovation grants visit: <https://www.emdgroup.com/en/research/open-innovation/grants-and-awards.html>

#### **About Multiple Sclerosis**

Multiple sclerosis (MS) is a chronic, inflammatory condition of the central nervous system and is the most common, non-traumatic, disabling neurological disease in young adults. It is estimated that approximately 2.3 million people have MS worldwide. While symptoms can vary, the most common symptoms of MS include blurred vision, numbness or tingling in the limbs and problems with strength and coordination. The relapsing forms of MS are the most common.

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#### **About Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany**

Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is a leading science and technology company in healthcare, life science and performance materials. Around 50,000 employees work to further develop technologies that improve and enhance life – from biopharmaceutical therapies to treat cancer or multiple sclerosis, cutting-edge systems for scientific research and production, to liquid crystals for smartphones and LCD televisions. In 2016, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, generated sales of € 15.0 billion in 66 countries. Founded in 1668, Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, is the world's oldest pharmaceutical and chemical company. The founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed corporate group. Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, holds the global rights to the "Merck" name and brand. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the company operates as EMD Serono, MilliporeSigma and EMD Performance Materials.