

AIMS-2-TRIALS

Monday 18 June 2018

PRESS RELEASE

WORLD'S LARGEST AUTISM GRANT WILL TRANSFORM RESEARCH LANDSCAPE

The largest research grant ever given for neurodevelopmental conditions has been awarded by the Innovative Medicines Initiative to an international consortium academically led by the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London.

The €115 million grant, titled Autism Innovative Medicine Studies-2-Trials (AIMS-2-Trials), will increase our understanding of autism and help develop new therapies to improve health outcomes and quality of life for autistic people.

More than 1 in 100 people are autistic. In addition to the core features of autism, many autistic people struggle with co-occurring conditions such as epilepsy, anxiety and depression, and life expectancy for autistic people can be reduced by up to 30 years. However, the causes of autism and its associated difficulties remain largely unknown and there are very few effective and autism-appropriate therapies.

AIMS-2-Trials brings together autistic people and their families, academic institutions, charities and pharmaceutical companies to study autism and provide an infrastructure for developing and testing new therapies. In line with the autism community's priorities, the consortium will also focus on why some autistic people develop additional health problems that severely impact both quality and length of life.

Professor Declan Murphy, the project academic lead and Director of the Sackler Institute for Translational Neurodevelopment at the IoPPN at King's says: 'Many

autistic people face extremely poor health outcomes, yet autism research receives far less investment than other conditions which also limit life expectancy and quality of life, such as cancer or dementia. This grant will allow us to bridge the gap between basic biology and the clinic by offering personalised approaches that address problems which really impact autistic people's lives.'

All autistic people are different which makes identifying and testing new therapies challenging. AIMS-2-Trials will take a precision medicine approach aimed at tailoring therapies to a person's biological profiles. Achieving this will require developing tests that can predict how a person's autism may progress throughout development and their likelihood of developing additional mental health problems.

AIMS-2-Trials will create the first European clinical trials network for autism, as well as allowing for an internationally integrated partnership with charities, government agencies and industry to rapidly determine if therapies are effective. Partnership with autistic people, their families and carers will be a crucial part of developing therapies that achieve the outcomes which matter most to autistic people.

Dr James Cusack, Director of Science at Autistica, a UK charity supporting AIMS-2-Trials, says: 'Autistic people deserve an equal right to a long, healthy happy life. To deliver on that vision, we're working together to understand why autistic people are different from each other. We're excited to be joining this consortium to ensure that the views of autistic people and their families are considered throughout the project.'

Professor Louis Reichardt, Director of the Simons Foundation Autism Research Initiative (SFARI) says: 'The development of new and effective therapies for autism is a daunting task that requires the talents, efforts, and resources of public, private, and non-profit sectors. The scientists at SFARI will be working with AIMS-2-Trials investigators on many of the project's initiatives, and we look forward to the project's success.'

Through the Innovative Medicines Initiative, European Union funding matches

in-kind contributions from autism charities and the pharmaceutical industry, with nearly €55.5 million provided by the Simons Foundation, Autism Speaks and Autistica, and €2.5 million from industry members of the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA).

This project has received funding from the Innovative Medicines Initiative 2 Joint Undertaking under grant agreement No. 777394. This Joint Undertaking receives support from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, EFPIA, Simons Foundation, Autism Speaks, and Autistica.

BACKGROUND

AIMS-2-TRIALS builds on an initial investment to establish a UK autism research consortium by the Medical Research Council to better understand brain biology, and subsequent funding from the National Institutes of Health Research to identify the health and social needs of autistic people and their families.

These efforts set the stage for the first EU AIMS grant, also funded by through the Innovative Medicines Initiative, which established both a European-wide research network and the world's largest clinical studies on autism. EU AIMS made significant advances such as understanding how brain development, anatomy and function are related to symptoms of autism. AIMS-2-TRIALS will build on these discoveries by studying people through the lifespan to understand what drives good outcomes for autistic people and their families.

NOTES TO EDITORS

CONTACT

To interview Professor Declan Murphy or for further media information please contact: Robin Bisson, Senior Press Officer, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London, robin.bisson@kcl.ac.uk / +44 20 7848

5377 / +44 7718 697176.

ABOUT KING'S COLLEGE LONDON AND THE INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY, PSYCHOLOGY & NEUROSCIENCE

King's College London is one of the top 25 universities in the world (2017/18 QS World University Rankings) and among the oldest in England. King's has more than 26,500 students (of whom nearly 10,400 are graduate students) from some 150 countries worldwide, and nearly 6,900 staff. The university is in the second phase of a £1 billion redevelopment programme which is transforming its estate. www.kcl.ac.uk

The Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) at King's College London is the premier centre for mental health and related neurosciences research in Europe. It produces more highly cited publications in psychiatry and mental health than any other university in the world (Scopus, 2016), with 12 of the most highly cited scientists in this field. World-leading research from the IoPPN has made, and continues to make, an impact on how we understand, prevent and treat mental illness and other conditions that affect the brain. www.kcl.ac.uk/ioppn

ABOUT THE INNOVATIVE MEDICINES INITIATIVE

The project is part of the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), Europe's largest public-private initiative aiming to speed up the development of better and safer medicines. IMI supports collaborative research projects and builds networks of industrial and academic experts in order to boost pharmaceutical innovation in Europe. www.imi.europa.eu

ABOUT THE SIMONS FOUNDATION AUTISM RESEARCH INITIATIVE (SFARI)

Launched in 2003, SFARI is a scientific initiative within the **Simons Foundation's** suite of programs. SFARI's mission is to improve the understanding, diagnosis and treatment of autism spectrum disorders by funding innovative research of the highest quality and relevance. In 2007, SFARI issued its first request for applications, its goal being to attract top researchers to the field of autism research. Today, with a budget of approximately \$75 million per year, SFARI supports over 250 investigators and since its launch has provided or committed more than \$380 million in external research support to more than 400 investigators in the U.S. and abroad. www.sfari.org

AUTISTICA

Autistica is the UK's autism research charity. They exist to build a future where all autistic people have a long, happy, healthy life. They have built a reputation as a charity that challenges traditional approaches to research. They carry out research on issues that matter most to autistic people and families and support international funders to do the same. They are a partner on AIMS-2-TRIALS to ensure that the project involves the autism community at every stage and focuses on improving quality of life. www.autistica.org.uk

48

PARTNERS

14

COUNTRIES







IMPRINT & DISCLAIMER



PRIVACY POLICY



This project has received funding from the Innovative Medicines Initiative 2 Joint Undertaking (IMI2 JU) under grant agreement No. 777394.

This Joint Undertaking receives support from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme and the European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA).