



Press release

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EU funding in the millions enables international consortium to research rare neurodegenerative disease

Coordinated by Prof. Dr. Thomas Klopstock (Friedrich-Baur-Institute at the Neurological Department of the University Hospital at Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich - LMU) and with support from the Bavarian Research Alliance, BayFOR (Dr. Florence Gauzy), the international consortium TIRCON (Treat Iron-Related Childhood-Onset Neurodegeneration) was awarded an EU Research Grant in the amount of 5.2 Million Euros over four years to investigate NBIA (Neurodegeneration with Brain Iron Accumulation), a rare neurological disease. NBIA is characterized by high iron levels in the brain with onset in childhood in the majority of cases. A rare, inherited, neurological movement disorder, NBIA is characterized by the progressive degeneration of the nervous system. Because NBIA is so rare, there is still little known about it, making collection of significant data a challenge. The grant, awarded by the Seventh Research Framework Programme of the European Union, allows new ground to be broken in the treatment of NBIA. Twelve project partners from seven countries are involved in TIRCON.

The core project of TIRCON is a multicenter, clinical therapy study with the iron-chelating agent Deferiprone that will be conducted at six clinical centers in Europe and Northern America. ApoPharma, the Canadian company that manufactures Deferiprone, is supporting TIRCON in this important study. Further objectives of the project include the setup of an international patient registry and a biobank, as well as preclinical work to develop a biomarker for the disease and to investigate new therapeutic options in animal models. The latter takes place in close cooperation with the innovative Biotech enterprise ACIES BIO in Ljubljana, Slovenia. TIRCON will build on the intense preliminary work of the participating centers and rely on the collaboration of many basic researchers, clinicians and patient advocacy groups Hoffnungsbaum e.V. in Germany and NBIA Disorders Association in the USA.

“Through this multi-track approach, we hope to improve the situation of the patients in the near future”, says Prof. Klopstock. “The upcoming clinical study with Deferiprone shows the immediate capability to achieve a slowdown or even an improvement of disease progression. The other TIRCON modules, like the setup of a clinical network, a patient registry and a biobank as well as the identification of biomarkers and

of further therapeutically relevant substances, shall lead to a distinctive improvement of the infrastructure for NBIA patients within the next years”, said Klopstock.

The project Kick-off Meeting took place in Munich from the 19th to 21st of January 2012. With the transfer of the EU funding to the partners, the LMU has now signalled the final go-ahead for TIRCON.

Bavarian Research Alliance GmbH

The Bavarian Research Alliance GmbH (BayFOR – www.bayfor.org) is an association whose purpose is to promote Bavaria as a centre for science and innovation within the European Research Area. It supports and advises scientists from Bavaria and stakeholders from the private sector in the competition for European research funds. The focus is directed at the current EU Framework Programme (FP7) and the forthcoming Framework Programme for Research and Innovation “Horizon 2020”. To achieve this, BayFOR provides subject-specific information and offers strategic advice and active support for initiating projects, setting up international research consortia and submitting applications during the contract negotiations with the European Commission and for project management. As a partner in the network for SMEs “Enterprise Europe Network” (EEN), BayFOR provides specific advice for SMEs which are interested in EU research projects. BayFOR also coordinates the joint activities of the Bavarian Research Cooperations and supports their networking efforts at the European level. The Scientific Coordination Office Bavaria-Québec/Alberta/International within BayFOR provides support for bilateral and multilateral research projects from these regions. BayFOR is a partner institution in the Bavarian “Haus der Forschung” (www.hausderforschung.bayern.de/en).

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