

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

**Eight New Research Projects Launched by National MS Society
with Illinois Lottery Funding Totals Nearly \$1 Million**

Projects focus on MS rehabilitation and nervous system repair

CHICAGO, November 29, 2012 -- Nearly \$1 million in new MS research projects were launched by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society thanks to funds from a scratch-off ticket from the Illinois Lottery. Eight one-year projects at universities across Illinois are focusing on reversing MS damage through novel rehabilitation techniques and approaches to stimulating nervous system repair.

This financial commitment is the latest in the Society's relentless research effort, investing \$44 million this year alone to move closer to a world free of MS. The National MS Society's longstanding investments in basic and translational research has resulted in new treatments and better methods of diagnosis and disease management for people with MS, and the Society continues to pursue all promising paths that lead to solutions for everyone affected by MS.

"We are very excited that this unique pilot research initiative, fueled by Lottery funds, will propel new research on multiple sclerosis in Illinois," said John Blazek, President of the Greater Illinois Chapter of the National MS Society. "Their success has the potential to improve quality of life for people with MS not only in our state, but throughout the world by changing rehabilitation strategies and by contributing to knowledge needed to develop therapeutic strategies that will repair damage to the nervous system and restore function."

Multiple sclerosis, an unpredictable, often disabling disease of the central nervous system, interrupts the flow of information within the brain, and between the brain and body. There are FDA-approved therapies that can impact the underlying disease course in people with the more common forms of MS. However, none of these can stop or reverse the damage to restore function. The National MS Society-funded research has helped lead to the development of many of these therapies, and it continues to be a driving force of MS research.

-more-

MS Research Projects, Add One

The new projects spring from a special initiative that focuses on small-scale pilot projects that provide seed money to test new ideas and speed research progress. To ensure the scientific merit of each research proposal selected, the National MS Society relies on expert advisory committees who volunteer their time to carefully evaluate the merit and relevance of the proposals.

The new projects include:

- Jacob Sosnoff, PhD (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), testing strategies to reduce falling in people with MS.
- Deyu Fang, PhD (Northwestern University), studying a new target to reduce disease development and allow natural repair systems to work in MS.
- Douglas Feinstein, PhD (University of Illinois), investigating a possible new therapy to slow nerve damage and enhance nerve growth and myelin repair, to help restore function in people MS.
- Robert Motl, PhD (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), expanding a clinical trial testing the ability of exercise to improve function in people with advanced MS and developing ways to evaluate fitness in people with advanced disability from MS.
- Ian Rice, PhD (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign), focusing on promoting physical activity in people with MS who use powered wheelchairs by adding the use of manual wheelchairs.
- Brian Popko, PhD (University of Chicago), aiming to develop new drugs to improve walking in people with MS and for use in imaging studies.
- Sara Szuchet, PhD (University of Chicago), studying how myelin, which is attacked by the immune system in MS, is normally made, for clues to new ways to repair myelin and restore function in people with MS.

The National MS Society supports a comprehensive program of other research funding and support aimed at stopping MS progression, restoring function, and ending the disease forever. This initiative addresses specific aspects of the National MS Society's research goals outlined in its [Strategic Response to MS](#). The Society expects to release the next request for proposals to Illinois researchers in early 2013 to maximize use of these Lottery funds.

[The Greater Illinois Chapter \(GIC\) of the National MS Society](#) mobilizes people and resources to drive research for a cure and to address the challenges of everyone affected by MS. Envisioning a world free of MS, the GIC moves toward that end by driving change through advocacy, facilitating education, collaborating with others and by providing helpful programs and services. For more information, visit MSIllinois.org.

###