



Fast Forward, LLC funds Axxam SpA for the development of compounds to help prevent disability in Multiple Sclerosis

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Fast Forward, LLC, a not-for-profit organization established by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, and Merck Serono, a division of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany today announced funding support for Axxam SpA. The award will help support Axxam SpA research to discover small molecules that prevent the chloride intracellular channel 1 (CLIC1) activation, and have the potential to modulate glial cell activity. This project will provide the pharmacological tools for the validation of an innovative and attractive target belonging to the ion channel class, CLIC1, which could then form the basis for the development of new treatments for MS, as well as for other relevant neurodegenerative diseases.

"We are delighted to gain this substantial funding to support our research efforts, as well as to renew our relationship with Fast Forward and their collaborative partner, Merck Serono after the first project funded in 2011 on the NCX1 target" said Stefan Lohmer co-founder and CEO of Axxam.

The award from Fast Forward and Merck Serono provides Axxam SpA with \$402,000 over 12 months, and is distributed from the Accelerating Commercial Development Fund, which is allocated to for-profit entities and is designed to accelerate the development of research discoveries into new or improved therapies for people with multiple sclerosis.

"The potential of MS research currently in progress around the globe holds great promise for improving the quality of life for people living with MS," said Dr. Timothy Coetzee, Chief Research Officer at the National MS Society and Fast Forward. "We are pleased to have the opportunity to advance that promise through the continued collaboration between Fast Forward and Merck Serono in support of innovative companies such as Axxam. Our commitment to furthering research that will end MS remains steadfast, and we look forward to learning more from the results of these innovative research projects."

About CLIC1

The chloride intracellular channel CLIC1 is a new interesting target expressed by activated microglia. After stimulation this protein translocates to the plasmamembrane and acts as a membrane chloride channel which mediates cell hyperpolarization.



Microglia hyperpolarization is necessary to sustain high superoxide generation and influx of chloride ions have a fundamental role in the maintenance of this state. Potential new drugs blocking CLIC1 should prevent chloride influx to drive production of toxic levels of ROS and NOS in pathological conditions that promote microglia over activation. These compounds will first be useful for validation of this intervention route. Our approach could eventually lead to therapeutic strategies that interfere with ROS and NOS overproduction, therefore alleviating neuroinflammation and neuronal damage in different pathologies including MS and other neurodegenerative diseases.

About Axxam SpA

Axxam is a privately owned contract research and discovery company located at the Open Zone in Bresso, Milan, Italy. The company has developed a proven track record as a third party research and discovery services provider for the life science industry. In addition, Axxam conducts several discovery programs for selected targets which are carried out in partnership with other companies or non-profit organizations. For more information please visit www.axxam.com or contact Sabrina Corazza at sabrina.corazza.sc@axxam.com.

About Fast Forward, LLC

Fast Forward, LLC, established by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society as part of a comprehensive approach to MS research and treatment, focuses on speeding promising research discoveries towards commercial drug development. Fast Forward accelerates the development of treatments for MS by connecting university-based MS research with private-sector drug development and by funding small biotechnology/pharmaceutical companies to develop innovative new MS therapies and repurpose FDA-approved drugs as new treatments for MS. For more information, please visit www.fastforward.org.

About MS and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society

MS is a chronic, unpredictable neurological disease that affects the central nervous system. It is thought to be an autoimmune disorder, meaning the immune system incorrectly attacks healthy tissue. Symptoms may be mild, such as numbness in the limbs, or severe, such as paralysis or loss of vision. These problems may be permanent or may come and go. The National MS Society addresses the challenges of each person affected by MS by funding cutting-edge research, driving change through advocacy, facilitating professional education, collaborating with MS organizations around the world, and providing programs and services designed to help people with MS and their families move their lives forward. The Society is dedicated to achieving a world free of MS. Join the movement at www.nationalMSSociety.org.