

Fast ForwardSM

Accelerating Commercial Development Fund

This project is funded through a collaboration between Fast Forward, LLC, established by the National MS Society to speed potential therapies into drug development and clinical trials, and EMD Serono, Inc., an affiliate of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. Fast Forward and EMD Serono committed \$3 million in 2009 to support innovative early-stage projects directed towards the development of therapies to prevent, treat, or reverse nervous system damage in MS. This was the first "Request for Proposals" (RFP) issued under the auspices of a multi-year collaboration between Fast Forward and EMD Serono to accelerate innovation and commercial development of MS therapies. Merck KGaA, the parent corporation of EMD Serono, Inc., will provide up to \$19 million in total funding for the collaboration.

<i>Primary Investigator</i>	<i>Project Title</i>	<i>Amount to be Committed</i>
Feng-Qiao Li, Ph.D. Cognosci, Inc. Research Triangle Park, NC	A Novel Therapeutic Agent for MS That Promotes Remyelination	\$330,000 Term – 12 months

About the Company

Cognosci Inc. was founded in May 2000 to develop anti-inflammatory compounds for treatment of diseases such as multiple sclerosis. Based on the fact that MS and other disorders are believed to have some linkage to the apolipoprotein E (apoE) protein, scientists from Duke University (Durham, NC) created novel apoE-based compounds that have potent anti-inflammatory and neuroprotective activities. Cognosci has purchased all rights to these compounds from Duke and is performing the preclinical research necessary before entering into human clinical trials.



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Project Background & Goals

Multiple sclerosis involves immune-system attacks on the brain and spinal cord, damaging the myelin coating that enhances nerve signaling and protects the underlying nerve fibers. The nerve fibers themselves are also damaged in MS. Myelin repair represents a critically unmet medical need for restoring nerve function. Recent research shows that in MS, myelin debris generated by the immune attack acts as an inhibitor of myelin repair. The protein apoE may play a significant role in clearing myelin debris and promoting myelin repair.

Cognosci created a series of compounds that mimic important functions of the apoE protein. In research funded primarily through the NIH Small Business Innovation Research program, they identified COG112 as a lead MS drug candidate. When administered to mice with an MS-like disease, this compound dramatically reduced the relapse rate, and also promoted synthesis of a major myelin protein and increased survival of myelin-making cells. Now they are investigating the ability of this compound to stimulate myelin repair in more animal models to gather critical information needed before human testing.. The project team led by Cognosci scientist Feng Qiao Li, PhD, is also developing a sustained-release version of the compound to reduce the frequency of treatment doses.

These experiments may lead to the development of a novel therapeutic strategy that does what no current treatment has been shown to do – stimulate myelin repair in people with MS.