



National Multiple Sclerosis Society
733 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10017-3288
Tel +1 212.986.3240
Fax +1 212.986.7981
E-mail nat@nmss.org
Nationalmssociety.org

RESEARCH/CLINICAL UPDATE

February 28, 2013

Researchers Gather for First Scientific Meeting of the International Progressive MS Collaborative – challenges and opportunities identified

More than 170 MS researchers recently met to discuss key challenges and strategies for accelerating the development of effective treatments for progressive forms of MS. This landmark meeting was convened by the International Progressive MS Collaborative, a joint effort of the MS International Federation and MS Societies of Canada, Italy, Netherlands, United Kingdom, and the United States.

Over the two-day meeting, participants debated the challenges that need to be overcome to identify therapies that can halt or even reverse MS progression. There was also discussion of many ongoing research efforts in progressive MS, suggesting that many of these challenges are already being tackled and that more attention will speed these efforts.

MS International Federation Board member and European MS Platform President John Golding (Fredrikstad, Norway) issued a “Call for Action” to meeting participants, recounting the uncertainties faced by him and so many others living with progressed MS. “Let these days be a new beginning for us all,” he said of the scientific meeting.

Meeting co-chair Dr. Alan Thompson (University College London) noted that an estimated \$85 million is being invested right now by MS societies around the world, in addition to what pharmaceutical companies are investing in several major clinical trials involving people with progressive MS. Co-chair Dr. Giancarlo Comi (Scientific Institute San Raffaele, Milan) also highlighted several initiatives already underway, such as [MAGNIMS](#) (MRI collaboration), the [International Advisory Committee on Clinical Trials in MS](#), and the [MS Outcome Assessments Consortium](#) (<http://www.nationalmssociety.org/news/news-detail/index.aspx?nid=7171>), which will help create tools to drive breakthroughs in progressive MS.

Five Priority Areas Discussed

The Collaborative had previously released a [report](http://msj.sagepub.com/content/18/11/1534) (<http://msj.sagepub.com/content/18/11/1534>) that identified five key research priorities. Teams of scientific experts were convened to explore these priority areas, and at the Milan meeting they reported their findings and sought feedback from participants. Some highlights and takeaways include:

Identifying Targets and Repurposing Opportunities for Progressive MS

- To date, large-scale genetic studies have identified more than 50 genes that influence susceptibility to MS, but so far, they have not uncovered genetic differences between relapsing and progressive MS, nor have any genes been identified that drive disease severity. Additional studies may determine the degree to which genes and the environment influence disease course and the body's repair mechanisms.
- Since a different part of the immune system is more prominent in progressive compared to relapsing MS, such as activity of brain cells called microglia, discovering ways to safely target this activity may be a productive approach to new therapies.
- Developing treatments for progressive MS may be accelerated by testing therapies approved for other diseases involving nerve degeneration (repurposing). However, there need to be incentives and a clear pathway to enable off-patent drugs to be repurposed for progressive MS.

Experimental Models for Preclinical Evaluation of Therapies

- Animal models of relapsing MS have been valuable for early testing of potential therapies. A deficiency of models of progressive disease has hindered development of therapies for progressive MS. Therefore there is urgent need for models that reproduce the clinical symptoms and underlying tissue damage seen in progressive MS.
- Some existing models permit the study of specific aspects of progression, such as myelin damage and repair.
- Progressive MS shows unique pathology such as spinal cord involvement, and oxidative injury, which accumulates with advancing age. More information about the pathology of progression and complications of aging can drive the development of new models for drug testing.

Proof-of-Concept/Clinical Trial Strategies

- Testing new therapies in relapsing MS is facilitated by getting MRI signs of positive response in very short (six month) phase II trials. There is currently no equivalent 6-month readout to monitor success in progressive MS. ... CONTINUED:

ON SOCIETY'S WEBSITE: <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/news/news-detail/index.aspx?nid=7398>

ON SHAREPOINT AS A WORD DOC:

[http://intranet.nmss.org/Topics/cr/Pages/Scientific Meeting of International Progressive MS Collaborative.docx](http://intranet.nmss.org/Topics/cr/Pages/Scientific_Meeting_of_International_Progressive_MS_Collaborative.docx)



National Multiple Sclerosis Society
733 Third Avenue
New York, New York 10017-3288
Tel +1 212.986.3240
Fax +1 212.986.7981
E-mail nat@nmss.org
Nationalmssociety.org

RESEARCH/CLINICAL UPDATE

February 28, 2013

National MS Society Joins Collaborative Effort to Identify and Speed Development of Nerve-Protecting Drugs

The Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation, Beyond Batten Disease Foundation and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society today announced a funding collaboration to support the creation of the Collaborative CNS Screening Initiative (CCSI), a central repository of chemical compounds that have shown significant central nervous system activity. The idea is to share data and speed the development of new therapies that may protect the brain from damage. Led by the Harvard NeuroDiscovery Center’s Laboratory for Drug Discovery in Neurodegeneration, the CCSI will share emerging compounds with the potential to treat diseases of the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord - CNS) among academic drug discovery centers to maximize their potential and accelerate drug discovery efforts within the neuroscience community.

“The CCSI is a significant step toward our common goal of developing unique chemical compounds for neurodegenerative diseases,” said Timothy Coetzee, PhD, chief research officer of the National MS Society. “This initiative is a testament to what we can achieve when we eliminate our research silos and come together as a CNS community.”

The CCSI is envisioned as a simple, cost-effective way to stimulate novel collaborations and accelerate the drug discovery process for the benefit of people living with diseases that impact the central nervous system, including multiple sclerosis. Through the CCSI, screening and early-stage drug discovery centers will submit anonymous CNS-active compounds to a highly selective, shared “library.” The CCSI library will be made available to participating centers to include in their ongoing screening, which will increase the exposure of the shared compounds to a wide range of assays, diseases and conditions to identify beneficial activities. Centers that discover novel activity will be connected with the contributing center to discuss further drug development of the compound.

“With multiple drug discovery centers around the world developing compounds for Alzheimer’s disease and other brain disorders, the CCSI offers an invaluable opportunity to harness a growing body of CNS-active compounds and use it to drive new discoveries,” said Howard Fillit, MD, executive director and chief scientific officer of the Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation (www.AlzDiscovery.org)

“The concept is so straightforward, yet funding is scarce for such early-stage initiatives,” said Marcie Glicksman, PhD, co-director of the Laboratory for Drug Discovery in Neurodegeneration at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. (www.neurodiscovery.harvard.edu/research/lddn_2.html)

“The CCSI will help researchers pinpoint early-stage CNS compounds that warrant further development, creating a more efficient path toward innovation,” said Danielle Kerkovich, PhD, principal scientist of Beyond Batten Disease Foundation (www.beyondbatten.org)

Funding for CCSI includes \$43,344 from the Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation, and \$40,000 each from Beyond Batten Disease Foundation and the National MS Society. Nine academic centers have already committed to participate in the CCSI. Although it will begin as an academic collaboration, the CCSI may eventually expand to include industry and other organizations.