Prize4Life and The Jackson Laboratory partner in fight against ALS

Non-profits join forces to provide researchers with new preclinical resources

Cambridge, MA, and Bar Harbor, ME, December 8, 2009--Prize4Life, an organization dedicated to accelerating the discovery of treatments and a cure for ALS/Lou Gehrig's Disease, has teamed up with The Jackson Laboratory (JAX®), the world's leading provider of mouse models, to provide preclinical resources for ALS research. Together, Prize4Life and JAX® have prepared a comprehensive training manual to enable researchers to more effectively use the SOD1 mouse model in the fight against ALS.

ALS is a rapidly progressing neurodegenerative disease that typically steals the life of patients within 2-5 years of diagnosis. It is caused by the degeneration of motor neurons, the nerve cells in the central nervous system that control voluntary muscle movement. ALS most commonly strikes people between the ages of 40 and 70, and affects men slightly more than women. ALS is the most common motor neuron disease worldwide and as many as 30,000 Americans battle with it at any given time. There is no known cure for ALS and only one FDA-approved treatment, Rilutek, which extends life by 2-3 months.

Prize4Life was founded by a group of Harvard Business School students when one of them, Avi Kremer, was diagnosed with ALS at the age of 29. Prize4Life works to accelerate the discovery of a treatment and a cure for ALS by using powerful incentives to attract new people and ideas, and to leverage existing efforts and expertise in the ALS field.

In 2006 Prize4Life opened the ALS Biomarker Challenge, offering a $1 million prize to a researcher that could find a biomarker that reliably measured disease progress in ALS patients.

In 2008, Prize4Life established the Avi Kremer ALS Treatment Prize to increase the number of novel ALS treatments in the drug development pipeline. The Treatment Prize encourages testing of a wide variety of potential therapies in the SOD1 mouse and rat models, a critical scientific and regulatory hurdle for the development of new drugs. In its first year, the Prize has attracted research teams from industry and academia both nationally and internationally. Competing teams are pursuing several approaches, including therapies to replace damaged cells, protein-based therapeutics, and small molecule drugs to interfere with ALS-implicated pathways.

Prize4Life and Jackson Laboratories Partner on the SOD1 Mouse Model

Three percent of ALS cases are associated with mutations in the antioxidant enzyme *superoxide dismutase-1* (SOD1) gene, the first gene associated with ALS. SOD1 mouse models closely resemble the human form of ALS, showing progressive motor deficits and similar cellular changes. Because these animals are currently the primary model for preclinical drug testing for ALS, it is imperative that there is detailed information available regarding their use.

Working with SOD1 mouse models is a complex undertaking. Many of the initial studies conducted with mice have provided a wealth of information and insight on how to best use them in preclinical trials. Past experience has shown that small errors can greatly confound experimental results, and the mice therefore need to be handled carefully. Thus, Prize4Life has

partnered with the Jackson Laboratory to produce comprehensive guidelines to provide information for researchers conducting preclinical studies with SOD1 models.

Dr. Melanie Leitner (Chief Scientific Officer at Prize4Life), Dr. Sheila Menzies (Scientific Program Officer at Prize4Life) and Dr. Cathleen Lutz (Associate Director for Genetic Resource Science at JAX®) have created such a set of informational materials entitled "Working with ALS Mice." Prize4Life has also collaborated with JAX® to establish dedicated supply colonies of SOD1 mice maintained by JAX® Breeding Services. Prize4Life will provide these quality-controlled SOD1 mice to teams competing for the ALS Treatment Prize.

These educational materials are the most recent addition to the set of resources that Prize4Life has developed in order to support scientists in their search for ALS treatments and a cure. Another such resources is the ALS Forum (www.researchals.org), an online collaboration with the Alzheimer Research Forum that provides a one-stop shop for cutting edge ALS research news and unique web-based resources.

"Prize4Life spearheaded this effort," say Lutz of the SOD1 educational materials. "It's really targeted to those investigators who are new to the field of ALS and who are working with the SOD1 mice and designing their preclinical trials. The scientific community has learned a great deal about how to work with these mice over the years. It's important to make that information more widely known so that valuable time and resources aren't wasted by repeating past mistakes."

Interested researchers can learn about the prizes or register to compete at www.prize4life.org.

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