

Contact: Mara Brazer
mara@brazercommunications.com
415-305-6677

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Gladstone to Speed Drug Development with Center for Comprehensive Alzheimer's Disease Research

SAN FRANCISCO, CA—July 14, 2011—The Gladstone Institutes today announced plans to create a Center for Comprehensive Alzheimer's Disease Research, offering new hope for the millions of families stricken by this debilitating neurodegenerative disease.

A \$6 million lead gift from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation will help launch the center of excellence that will let Gladstone scientists more quickly develop therapies for those who suffer from Alzheimer's, or who are at increased risk of getting the disease. Currently, the market lacks any medications to prevent, halt or reverse this devastating illness that, according to estimates from the Alzheimer's Association, afflicts 5.4 million people in the United States at an annual cost of \$183 billion.

The gift comes at an important time for Gladstone, a leading nonprofit biomedical-research organization, which is trying to raise \$40 million in philanthropic support for Alzheimer's research by 2020. The gift also comes at an urgent moment for the United States, which is experiencing unprecedented growth in the number and proportion of older adults, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As life span continues to lengthen and baby boomers age, the number of Americans afflicted by aging-related diseases such as Alzheimer's are expected to increase in parallel.

Already, Alzheimer's afflicts one in eight Americans aged 65 and older, and is the nation's fifth leading cause of death in that age category. Today, another American develops the disease every 69 seconds. If current trends continue, a new case of Alzheimer's will develop every 33 seconds by mid-century.

"While we can see the tidal wave of this disease coming, drug development has not kept pace," said [Lennart Mucke](#), MD, who oversees all neurological research at Gladstone, which is affiliated with the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF).

"The rapidly increasing number of Alzheimer's patients who need treatment and care threatens to overwhelm our healthcare system," continued Dr. Mucke who is also a UCSF professor of neurology. "And yet the pipeline of promising therapies is nearly empty—which is why this gift and the new center are so important."

Dr. Mucke, who last year won the prestigious Potamkin Prize for developing strategies to make the brain more resistant to Alzheimer's disease, will direct the Center for Comprehensive Alzheimer's Disease Research. The Center will tap Gladstone's expertise in neurodegenerative diseases. In recent years, for instance, Gladstone

scientists have demonstrated how amyloid proteins destroy memories in Alzheimer's disease—and how this process may be prevented and reversed—while also establishing the world's leading drug-development program targeting Alzheimer's main genetic risk factor. Last month, Gladstone scientists announced [a promising new drug candidate](#) that prevents memory deficits and the loss of synaptic connections between brain cells—key features of Alzheimer's—in mice modeling the disease.

The new center will build on these successes while focusing on two key priorities: the identification of drug targets, or human proteins whose modification by drugs could have therapeutic benefits; and the identification of drug candidates that can be transferred to pharmaceutical companies or other entities for further development and delivery to patients.

The Center will accomplish these objectives by gathering key elements for which many academic institutions do not have the funds: diverse disease-relevant experimental models and outcome measures; expertise in medicinal chemistry; technically challenging drug-screening technologies; the business savvy necessary to deliver drug candidates to industry; and large scale collaborations to supplement the Center's in-house skills.

Some of the center's funding, for example, will be used to expand and accelerate an ongoing three-way collaboration between Gladstone, the [Memory and Aging Center](#) at UCSF, and the [UCSF Epilepsy Center](#). This investigation, which focuses on the connection between dementia and epilepsy, may help spur clinical trials for an Alzheimer's therapy involving drugs already approved by the U.S. Federal Drug Administration.

Also, the new center will leverage infrastructure, resources and research of both Gladstone's [Taube-Koret Center for Huntington's Disease Research](#) and its [Hellman Family Foundation Alzheimer's Research Program](#). This sharing will mean a more productive use of budgets as well as faster drug discovery across neurodegenerative disease areas.

About the Gladstone Institutes

Gladstone is an independent and nonprofit biomedical-research organization dedicated to accelerating the pace of scientific discovery and biomedical innovation, to prevent illness and cure patients suffering from cardiovascular disease, neurological diseases, or viral infections. Gladstone is affiliated with UCSF.

About the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation

Based in San Francisco, the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation supports nonprofit organizations and initiatives seeking to address critical challenges to the United States' economic health and well-being. With a primary geographic focus on the San Francisco Bay area, the Foundation gives generously to support education in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), in order to foster a competitive workforce and a STEM-literate populace.

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