

A Letter from Zaher Nahle, PhD, MPA

Dear Friends,

We are thrilled to support the work of these talented scientists from around the world through the 2016 Ramsay Award Program. This has been a competitive process, meaning that we had more applications for funding than we were able to fulfill, and so a rigorous process was used to determine those who would be funded. All five teams are committed to ME/CFS research. Importantly, they are exploring diverse promising areas including autoimmunity, natural killer (NK) cell function, mitochondrial myopathies, metabolic profiling, viral infection, bioenergetics health index characterization, low grade inflammation, immune dysfunction, diagnostic testing, and advanced brain imaging—to name a few.

These winning projects are interdisciplinary and draw on the complementary strength of investigators from different fields for strength, synergy, and cross-pollination. For instance, we brought together a UK-based team at the University College London, which has been at the forefront of B-cell biology and Rituximab-based therapy, and an Australian team that made pioneering contributions to the emerging area of metabolic profiling in ME/CFS. Now they will be working collaboratively to advance the science through their collective thinking.

Another example is the combination of expertise in immune dysfunction with that in mitochondrial biology and bioenergetic health index characterization, working toward diagnostic testing and a better understanding of the molecular basis of the disease. Other projects combine the power of advanced technologies with deep basic science investigation; for example, combining brain imaging with neuroinflammation, autoimmune profiling with genetic screening, and infection-induced triggers with mitochondrial dysfunction in ME/CFS.

The Ramsay Award Program facilitates the work of any investigator or teams tackling complex issues in ME/CFS research through systematic and methodical investigations. It is gratifying to see that 60% of lead principal investigator awardees are women investigators. We will update our community on these projects as they kick off in January 2017.

We believe these studies will help advance the knowledge for diagnosis and characterization of ME/CFS in at least five key areas in which there are considerable knowledge gaps:

1. Altered brain biology and neuroinflammation using advanced brain thermal imaging (Team 1, USA)
2. B-cell function, maturation, and biochemical alteration in the context of ME/CFS and Rituximab-based therapy (Team 2, UK and Australia)
3. Bioenergetics health index and mitochondrial myopathies in natural killer (NK) cell and immune dysfunction (Team 3, USA)
4. Autoimmunity signatures and genetic screening for targeted therapy (Team 4, Germany)
5. Pathogenic and infection-induced triggers through mitochondrial dysfunction and modulation in ME/CFS (Team 5, Germany)



We are grateful for the work of these SMCI awardees and are fully committed to their success. These new partnerships are a key element of our overall research and scientific programs that also include the recently announced [Cathleen J. Gleeson PhD Fund](#), our [biobank and patient registry programs](#), and many [targeted initiatives in areas such as biomarker discovery, gut microbiome, bioenergetics, immunosenescence, and drug screening investigation](#), among other activities.

Congratulations to the winning teams.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Zaher Nahle'.

Zaher Nahle
Vice President for Research and Scientific Programs