Foundation Venture Capital Group LLC
A New Jersey Health Affiliate

Contact: Dale R. Heffler
(908) 731-6605
dheffler@njhf.org

For Immediate Release
October 3, 2013

The Michael J. Fox Foundation Funds Research to Develop Parkinson's Blood Test

Research being performed by Durin Technologies, Inc., exploring the development of a novel blood test for Parkinson's disease was recently awarded a second grant from The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research.

Durin, a company that received seed funding from Foundation Venture Capital Group, LLC, developed the test that could mean quicker diagnosis and faster drug development for Parkinson's patients.

"Using current diagnostic methods, it can take months or years to make an accurate Parkinson's diagnosis, and by that time, at least a third of the neurons in the affected area of the brain will have already died," explained Durin Founder Dr. Robert G. Nagele, a professor of medicine at the Rowan University School of Osteopathic Medicine. "A reliable blood test for Parkinson's would have a huge impact on patient care and on research into potential disease-modifying medications."

In a pilot study published last year, the test was remarkably accurate (93.1 percent sensitivity and 100 percent specificity) in detecting specific autoantibody biomarkers that indicate the presence of Parkinson's disease.

"The reliance on clinical observation of Parkinson's disease is a hindrance in accurate and early disease detection," said Dr. Katie Kopil, associate director of Research Programs at The Michael J. Fox

Foundation. “The Foundation has invested in efforts to identify biomarkers to measure Parkinson’s onset and progression and to develop and test new therapeutics. Durin Technologies’ identification of these autoantibody biomarkers offers great possibilities in this arena.”

Because initial symptoms may be subtle or overlooked, Parkinson’s disease can be difficult to diagnose in its early stages. Despite that, Parkinson’s is the second most common neurodegenerative disease among older adults with approximately 60,000 new cases annually in the United States.

A blood test would help researchers and clinicians more accurately diagnose patients earlier in the disease process and intervene with therapies sooner. Identifying Parkinson’s patients before the onset of motor symptoms also will allow researchers to study the pathology of the disease in this stage and identify targets for preventive therapy. Biomarkers, like autoantibodies in blood, let investigators test new therapies more efficiently by measuring biological impact rather than waiting for change in clinical presentation.

“The support of The Michael J. Fox Foundation is critical in enabling Durin Technologies to move this research forward,” agreed Dr. George F. Heinrich, CEO, and James M. Golubieski, president of Foundation Venture Capital Group. “We are hopeful that Dr. Nagele’s research will help to fill an unmet need in the diagnostic and pharmaceutical industries.”

Foundation Venture Capital Group invested up to $500,000 to fund Durin’s initial testing, which focused on diagnostic tests for Alzheimer and Parkinson’s diseases. The Michael J. Fox Foundation also funded Durin’s initial research with a grant of $367,082 and provided a supplemental grant of $351,202 that allows Durin to attempt to duplicate initial findings to achieve similar results in a larger sample size.