FOR MEDIA RELEASE, INDIA
23 September 2021
IMMEDIATE

Ignite Life Science Foundation awards five grants in the areas of antimicrobial resistance and neurodegeneration

Ignite Life Science Foundation announced these five grants under a new Fast Grants mode. **The Fast Grants mode of funding is designed to simplify and speed up the application process, so that the turnaround period from receipt of proposals to selection of awardees is around ONE month. The accelerated process maintains a stringent 5-stage review while providing timely feedback to investigators working in fast-moving areas of science. The large number of excellent proposals received highlights the need to expand the pool of funds available for science.**

Bengaluru, India: 23 September 2021

The Awardees for the first Fast Grants Open Call are

Dr B Anand (IIT Guwahati) and Dr Anirban Banerjee (IIT Bombay), in the area of **Antimicrobial Resistance** *and*

Dr G Mugesh (IISc, Bangalore), Dr Anupama Sathyamurthy (IISc, Bangalore) and Dr Sachin S. Tiwari (AIIMS, Delhi), in the area of **Neurodegeneration**.

Commenting on the award Dr Jyotsna Dhawan, Member – Scientific Advisory Board, Ignite, said – "We were delighted to receive 271 proposals – many more than we expected. This is indicative of the pent-up energy in the Indian life science community; energy that deserves to be unleashed and made productive through smart funding mechanisms and deep engagement between funders and the science community. We triaged the proposals and came up with the final five in one month, a record short time for such processes from my experience of reviewing proposals for multiple national and international agencies. This would not have been possible without the commitment of fellow members in the Scientific Advisory Board at Ignite, as well as our External Reviewers who were generous with expert opinion and insights. With this input, the already excellent proposals could, in some instances, be refined even further through discussions with the investigators. I congratulate the five awardees and wish them the very best in the execution phase of their projects".

One of the external reviewers, Dr Tanjore Balganesh, had this to say about his experience reviewing

the proposals: 'The proposals included many with very novel ideas and out of the box thinking; we found them refreshing and it was a challenge to choose only a handful. Sincerely hoping that some of these will become newer 'science' for deeper research and understanding'.

Dr Swami Subramaniam, CEO – Ignite, explains – "The Fast Grant Open Call has been an eye opener in many ways. The high quality of proposals from every corner of the country was gratifying. There was good representation from private Universities, and from non-metro areas. We are heartened by this response, and we will redouble our efforts to raise more funds from Donors who appreciate the critical need to create a broad and deep community of first-rate scientists across disciplines and research interests in India. We would like to reiterate our thanks to our Anchor Donor Dr Kiran Mazumdar Shaw for getting us started. With the help of the scientific community and initiatives like the Fast Grant we hope to make a significant difference in funding excellent science in India.

Funded Projects in brief

1. Dr B Anand (IIT Guwahati) will examine the molecular mechanisms by which bacteria enter a dormant phase in their replication cycle to escape the action of antibiotics.
2. Dr Anirban Banerjee (IIT Bombay) will explore the possibility of using a molecular machine to rip proteins off bacterial cell surfaces. If this mechanism is understood, a novel class of antibiotics can be envisaged.
3. Dr Anupama Sathyamurthy (IISc, Bangalore) will examine the basis of nerve cell death in the spinal cord preceding the onset of chronic nerve pain or neuropathy, a cause of enormous suffering. This may eventually lead to new tools to interfere in processes triggering neuropathy and nerve cell death, in conditions as varied as diabetes and Alzheimers.
4. Dr G Mugesh (IISc, Bangalore) will examine a new class of organo-metallic compounds that mimic the effect of the enzyme glutathione peroxidase to convert harmful lipid peroxides into harmless lipid alcohols. This could lead to new drugs for aging, cancer, and neurodegenerative conditions.
5. Dr Sachin S. Tiwari (AIIMS, Delhi) will study in cell culture the role played by cells called astrocytes (non-neuronal cells) in neurodegeneration pathways by promoting inflammation and the trans-synaptic (between neurons) spread of dysfunctional tau protein across brain regions in conditions like Alzheimers. This understanding could provide a new handle for interfering in the disease mechanisms that underlie a wide array of neurodegenerative conditions.

ABOUT IGNITE LIFE SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Ignite Life Science foundation, a section 8 not-for-profit foundation, was launched on Jan 15,2020, by Nobel Laurate Dr. Venki Ramakrishnan. Ignite's purpose is to promote a vibrant ecosystem for scientific research in India by working with the stakeholder community, including philanthropists, scientists, policy makers in the Government and the beneficiariesof the outcomes of scientific research. Ignite will use a highly selective curatorial approach to screen projects and scientists for funding. Scientists will be supported through the lifecycle of the project through mentorship and access to networking opportunities through the wider network of scientists accessible through Ignite. Ignite will select program areas that target aspecific India relevant problem. A multidisciplinary approach towards solving problems andcollaborations between scientists at different institutions will be actively encouraged.

The Foundation is promoted by eminent scientists, academicians and management professionals including Professor Pankaj Chandra (Vice Chancellor, Ahmedabad University), Professor Ramaswamy Subramanian (Director, Bindley Bioscience Center, Purdue University), Professor Jyotsna Dhawan, (Emeritus Scientist, CCMB-Hyderabad), Professor Gagandeep Kang (Wellcome Trust Laboratory – CMC, Vellore), Professor Shahid Jameel (Visiting Professor, Ashoka University), Dr Jogin Desai (CEO, Eyestem), Dr Anand Anandkumar (CEO, Bugworks) and K Jayshankar (MD, Empowered Learning Systems).

More information is available on our website: ignitelsf.in

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