

Ignite Life Science Foundation awards its first grant for developing mRNA vaccine technology

Ignite Life Science Foundation announced its first grant award for “pandemic preparedness” research to a team of researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (Bangalore) and the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (Faridabad).

Bengaluru, India: 5 July 2021

Following the receipt of a donation from Dr Kiran Mazumdar Shaw last month, Ignite Life Science Foundation today awarded a grant to a team of researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (Bengaluru) comprising Professor Raghavan Varadarajan, Dr. Mrinmoy De and Dr. Siddharth Jhunjhunwala, and Dr. Amit Awasthi at the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute (Faridabad). The grant will be for three years and will fund research to develop the platform technologies for mRNA vaccine development.

Commenting on the award, Professor Shahid Jameel (Member – Scientific Advisory Board, Ignite LSF) said – “mRNA vaccine development technology is vital for India to mount a rapid and effective response to future pandemics. Successful execution on this project will seed the creation of much needed capabilities in mRNA vaccine development in India. The investigators will not only work on developing a vaccine against new variants of SARS-Cov2, but also attempt to develop methods for the generation of thermostable RNA vaccines, which would be critical for resource poor tropical regions of the world. Professor Varadarajan is an experienced researcher and Ignite LSF is pleased to support this work.”

Commenting on the award, Professor Varadarajan said – “we are delighted and honored to be awarded this grant and would like to thank the Foundation and its anchor donor Dr Kiran Mazumdar Shaw, Executive Chairperson, Biocon, both for recognizing the importance of this area of research and for pioneering a new funding modality in India to seed research in critical new areas in the life sciences.”

Congratulating Professor Raghavan Varadarajan and his team, Professor K. VijayRaghavan, Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, said: “Professor Varadarajan’s well known excellence as one of our best scientists matches his zeal and ability to translate his research and talent to vaccines and therapy. Congratulations to him on receiving this research award from Ignite Life Science Foundation. As with his other efforts, I am sure that this one on developing mRNA vaccines will also meet with success. Congratulations too, to the Ignite LifeScience Foundation for initiating such awards that recognize excellence”

Dr Swami Subramaniam, CEO, Ignite LSF, congratulated the team and said – “hopefully, this will only be the first of many more grants we award to carefully chosen investigators and curated projects to make a significant impact on challenging health problems. Our work at Ignite LSF is just beginning, and we count on the support of our Donors to create the greatest impact in the shortest time possible. I am convinced of the potential that strategic funding of this kind can have in helping Indian scientists create tangible impact through their work”.

ABOUT IGNITE LIFE SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Ignite Life Science foundation, a section 8 not-for-profit foundation, was launched on Jan 15, 2020, by Nobel Laureate 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 beneficiaries of 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 a specific India relevant problem. A multidisciplinary approach towards solving problems and collaborations 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 (Director – Trivedi School of Biosciences, Ashoka University), Dr Jogin Desai (CEO, Eystem), Dr Anand Anandkumar (CEO, Bugworks) and K Jayshankar (MD, Empowered Learning Systems).

Website: ignitelSF.in

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