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PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Viviana Gradinaru, PhD

CONTRACTING ORGANIZATION: California Institute of Technology

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14. ABSTRACT The current project will analyze the gut microbiome and metabolites from PD patients and controls, and employ clinically relevant mouse models to determine how metabolites produced by the microbiome from dietary substrates affect motor symptoms. We propose to test whether directly regulating microbial metabolite profiles using "designer" dietary fibers and probiotics offers new avenues for ameliorating PD-like symptoms.						
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INTRODUCTION: The current project will analyze the gut microbiome and metabolites from PD patients and controls, and employ clinically relevant mouse models to determine how metabolites produced by the microbiome from dietary substrates affect motor symptoms. We propose to test whether directly regulating microbial metabolite profiles using “designer” dietary fibers and probiotics offers new avenues for ameliorating PD-like symptoms. During this reporting period 12 new human subjects (75% of targeted enrollment) were successfully recruited at the RUMC site to result in a total of 45 human subjects recruited (75% of targeted enrollment) in the first 3 years which partially meets our proposed goal. We have also made remarkable progress on the animal studies, defining specific diets that impact motor deficits in a mouse model of PD, and initiating mechanism of action studies. We have advanced the objectives of the project either on time, or in some cases, ahead of schedule. The project has, to date, not experienced any major setbacks.

1. **KEYWORDS:** *Parkinson’s disease, human subjects, intestinal microbiome, stool specimens, gut-brain axis, intestinal bacteria, dietary fiber, short chain fatty acids*

2. **ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

▪ **What were the major goals of the project?**

Major Task 1: Recruitment and Microbiome Sequencing

Subtask 1- subject recruitment and sample collection.	12 month target of 17 human subjects with stool and tissue collection successfully recruited.	75% completed
Subtask 2- microbiome sequencing / metagenomics.	24 month timeline.	80% completed
Subtask 3- SCFA analysis for stool and serum.	12 month timeline.	70% completed

Major Task 2: Animal colonization and phenotyping

Subtask 1 – colonization of mice with human microbiota	36 month timeline.	75% completed
Subtask 2 – microbiome profiling.	36 month timeline.	75% completed
Subtask 2 – motor testing, neuroinflammation status.	36 month timeline.	75% completed
Subtask 3 – AAV cloning and injection.	6 month timeline.	50% completed
Subtask 4 – CLARITY analysis and electrophysiology.	36 month timeline.	60% completed

Major Task 3: Fiber testing and treatment of animals

Subtask 1 – treat PD mice with fibers and motor tests.	12 month timeline.	100% completed
Subtask 2 – treat PD mice with “optimized” fibers & test	36 month timeline.	100% completed

▪ **What was accomplished under these goals?**

Activities accomplished in this quarter include: 1) partially reached our 36 month goal for recruitment, with the target of 49 subjects; 45 subjects were already recruited ; 2) colonization of germ-free WT and ASO mice with human microbiota; 3) SCFA treatment of SPF mice followed by motor testing; 4) feeding of SCFAs to SPF mice and analysis of neuroinflammation; 5) production and treatment of animals with prebiotic fibers, 6) motor testing mice fed prebiotic fibers, and 7) RNAseq of microglia isolated from brains of mice fed prebiotic diets. We are excited to report that acetate feeding to SPF animals showed an effect on motor symptoms. Namely, feeding designer prebiotic diets enriched in 20% butyrate or acetate each improved motor symptoms in mice, whereas the 20% propionate diet did not have this effect, showing specificity for different SCFAs in our mouse model of PD. Further, we show that butyrate reduces activation of microglia in vitro, and thus may affect neuroinflammation in vivo. Finally, we have profiled the transcriptome of microglia from brain regions of mice fed SCFAs, and find very interesting results that diet treatment alters specific immune pathways for microglia activation. There have been no setbacks or failures to achieve a goal, and the project is progressing on the proposed timeline or in some cases such as the microglia studies, ahead of schedule. Finally, we have published 3 major papers in this reporting cycle, both supported by DoD funding.

- **What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?**

Research. Trainees meet weekly with the PI, both separately and together, to discuss their latest results, technical problems, collaborations, reagent needs and so forth.

Group Meeting & Scientific discussions. The Gradinaru laboratory holds formal 2 meetings every week, one for research updates from investigators and to discuss literature and the other to troubleshoot experiments. Each week a group member presents their work. Often, we have PIs, students and fellows from other laboratories join in our weekly meetings. Each trainee presents their work approximately every 8 weeks to the entire group. These lab meetings cover a range of topics, from, neuroscience, behavior to virology to animal models of disease. We frequently discuss relevant papers in the field and how they impact the research in our laboratory. Furthermore, each trainee participates in Caltech's vigorous seminar program in which outside scientists come to Caltech to present their research. They also have the opportunity to participate in the weekly "BioLunch", which features two half-hour presentations every week by a student and/or postdoc, thereby providing excellent exposure to ongoing projects in the Biology Division. Further, a student and/or postdoc will present their work once a year in a campus-wide seminar series called "Micro Mornings", where members of the microbiology community at Caltech discuss their work in front of an audience of peers that include not only biologists, but chemists and engineers as well. The diverse feedback from this worthwhile helps students and fellows craft dynamic research programs. In addition, the students and fellows in the laboratory organize their own weekly journal club, practice talks and brainstorming sessions, often without the PI.

Mentoring. The PI mentors each trainee on science, their careers, ethics, scientific strategy, interpersonal relationships, oral and written communication, graphics, and so forth. I realize that each young scientist has different talent sets, and thus try to help each individual improve all their skills. For example, we discuss appropriate and effective ways to network, how to turn potential competitors into collaborators, how to compete (if necessary) in a collegial way, etc. We also engage in open discussions about alternative career choices in

addition to preparation for obtaining and succeeding in an academic career. I view my role as a mentor to primarily be a resource for the scholarly, academic and personal advancement of the careers of my trainees.

Writing. In general, the PI does not write the research papers from her laboratory, but discusses content, organization and figures as the papers are planned and being written, edits to enhance the personal style of each author, and rewrites key parts if necessary. My goal is to train superb writers. Other laboratory members continually critique each other's manuscripts, grant proposals, research statements, posters, etc.

Scientific meetings and conferences. Trainees attend and present their data at 2 or 3 scientific meetings each year, locally, nationally or internationally. All trainees have presented their findings from this project at 3 scientific meetings in the past year. This provides not only the opportunity to receive feedback and critique on the project, but to network with researchers

How were the results disseminated to communities of interest?

The PI has presented work from this project at > 4 national meetings and department seminars.

The PI is scheduled to present this work at the 2018 Society for Neuroscience meeting

Dr. Collin Challis has presented posters on this research at the 2018 Caltech BBE retreat and at the 2018 NIH NIA investigators meeting.

We have also prepared a manuscript on the topic of this project that we will submit shortly.

▪ **What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?**

1) In the Year 4 of the Project, Dr. Keshavarzian's team at RUMC will continue vigorous patient and subject recruitment and sample collection (target for Year 4 for RUMC is 11 subjects). So far we have succeeded in hitting 92% of our 3 year enrollment target goal for human subjects recruitment (45/49). 2) Microbiome sequencing and SCFA analysis will be done in batches. 3) Dr. Mazmanian's group will analyze motor symptoms, neuroinflammation and pathophysiology in the "humanized" mouse models following prebiotic treatment. 4) We will evaluate short chain fatty acid (SCFA) levels in the prebiotic treated mice. 5) Dr. Gradinaru's group will image brain tissues from these mice. 6) Drs. Mazmanian and Hamaker will finish the "optimized" prebiotic diets.

3. **IMPACT:** Describe distinctive contributions, major accomplishments, innovations, successes, or any change in practice or behavior that has come about as a result of the project relative to:

▪ **What was the impact on the development of the principal discipline(s) of the project?**

Rush University Medical Center site and Dr. Keshavarzian's team achieved the targeted new human subject recruitment and enrollment goal (12/16; total 45/49 for 3 years) which is

required for the success of the project. The animal studies at Caltech further corroborated the preliminary data for a role by SCFAs in motor symptoms in mice. The fecal samples from all subjects collected at Rush are currently being sequenced at UCSD and will be published shortly after bioinformatic analysis.

- **What was the impact on other disciplines?**

Nothing to report

- **What was the impact on technology transfer?**

Nothing to report

- **What was the impact on society beyond science and technology?**

Nothing to report

4. CHANGES/PROBLEMS:

- **Changes in approach and reasons for change**

Nothing to report

- **Actual or anticipated problems or delays and actions or plans to resolve them**

Nothing to report

Changes that had a significant impact on expenditures

Nothing to report

- **Significant changes in use or care of human subjects, vertebrate animals, biohazards, and/or select agents**

Nothing to report

- **Significant changes in use or care of human subjects**

Nothing to report

- **Significant changes in use or care of vertebrate animals.**

Nothing to report

- **Significant changes in use of biohazards and/or select agents**

Nothing to report

5. **PRODUCTS:** *"Nothing to Report."*

- **Publications, conference papers, and presentations**

Report only the major publication(s) resulting from the work under this award.

- **Journal publications.**

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32066981/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32043464/>

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32071263/>

Reem Abdel-Haq and the PI have authored a review manuscript on the topic of this project that was recently accepted for publication after peer-review in the Journal of Experimental Medicine (PDF provided in previous progress report)

Drs. Mazmanian and Gradinaru published 2 major original research articles in 2020 (PDFs provided in previous progress report)

Dr. Hamaker published a major paper (attached)

- **Books or other non-periodical, one-time publications.**

Nothing to report

- **Other publications, conference papers, and presentations.**

Nothing to report

Website(s) or other Internet site(s)

sarkis.caltech.edu

Technologies or techniques

Nothing to report

- **Inventions, patent applications, and/or licenses**

Nothing to report

- **Other Products**

Nothing to report

6. PARTICIPANTS & OTHER COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

- **What individuals have worked on the project?**

NAME:	Viviana Gradinaru, PhD
PROJECT ROLE:	PI, and Caltech Site PI
RESEARCHER IDENTIFIER:	
NEAREST PERSON MONTH WORKED:	1.20 Calendar Months
CONTRIBUTION TO PROJECT:	Prof. Gradinaru is supervising the tissue imaging by CLARITY, electrophysiology, and the AAV aspects of the project.
FUNDING SUPPORT (If Applicable):	

NAME:	Elliott Robinson, PhD
PROJECT ROLE:	Postdoctoral Fellow, Investigator
RESEARCHER IDENTIFIER:	
NEAREST PERSON MONTH WORKED:	10.00 Calendar Months
CONTRIBUTION TO PROJECT:	Dr. Robinson is contributing AAV tools and slice electrophysiology to the project.
FUNDING SUPPORT (If Applicable):	He is now assigned to this grant 100%.

NAME:	Gerard Coughlin
PROJECT ROLE:	Graduate Assistant, Investigator
RESEARCHER IDENTIFIER:	
NEAREST PERSON MONTH WORKED:	1.89 Calendar Months
CONTRIBUTION TO PROJECT:	Gerard Coughlin is contributing to imaging CLARITY tissue by custom light-sheet

	microscopy (software and hardware) and to data analysis methods.
FUNDING SUPPORT (If Applicable):	

NAME:	Elisha Mackey
PROJECT ROLE:	Research Technician/Lab Manager
RESEARCHER IDENTIFIER:	
NEAREST PERSON MONTH WORKED:	1.60 Calendar Months
CONTRIBUTION TO PROJECT:	Elisha Mackey supports the project through molecular biology and virus production and also oversees the IACUC protocol (including communication with ACURO) and required project setups.
FUNDING SUPPORT (If Applicable):	

- **Has there been a change in the active other support of the PD/PI (s) or senior/key personnel since the last reporting period?**

Nothing to report

- **What other organizations were involved as partners?**

Nothing to report

7. SPECIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

- **COLLABORATIVE AWARDS:** *N/A*
- **QUAD CHARTS:** *If applicable, the Quad Chart (available on <https://www.usamraa.army.mil>) should be updated and submitted with attachments.*

8. APPENDICES: *N/A*