Collaboration Between Pranaiya and Arthur Magoffin Foundation and the University of Oxford Aiming to Reveal Key Insights into Postpartum Depression

Tuesday 29 August, 2023

Pranaiya and Arthur Magoffin Foundation ("PAM Foundation") is proud to announce its second collaboration with the University of Oxford into postpartum depression ("PPD") and other perinatal mental health illnesses.

This new research is investigating the role that changes in the way genes are read and enacted upon by the body during and post pregnancy could contribute to PPD and postpartum psychosis ("PPP"). The research is being undertaken by the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics ("DPAG") with the support of St Anne's College. It is hoped that the outcome can lead to a better understanding of the biology of PPD and PPP and potentially lead to a targeted therapeutic.

Associate Professor Francis Szele, of Szele Group (https://www.dpag.ox.ac.uk/research/szele-group) at DPAG and DPhil student, Jemima Becker are leading the research. Dr Szele said that "Despite PPD and PPP's prevalence, we have a limited understanding of the neurobiology" and went on to explain more detail about the research. "Stem cells in the brain generate new neurons, through a process called neurogenesis, which can be regulated by changes in the levels of maternal-relevant hormones. In addition, the dysfunction of these new neurons has been linked to a range of psychiatric disorders." Graduate student Jemima Becker explained that "'Epigenetics' refers to the manner in which the body regulates gene expression, the way the body 'reads' DNA instructions and responds. We are investigating the role that epigenetics plays in pregnancy-related neurogenesis, and how epigenetic disruption may contribute to PPD and PPP."

This research has been made possible thanks to the kind donations made to PAM Foundation over the course of 2022 and 2023. Hamish Magoffin of PAM Foundation said, "thank you to all those that have contributed towards the funding of this research and also the University of Oxford in placing importance on maternal mental health research. I hope that over the course of this initial three-year study we will better understand the causes of PPD and related illnesses, and develop more effective treatments to help the many that suffer."

About PAM Foundation

The Pranaiya & Arthur Magoffin Foundation ("PAM Foundation") was established by Hamish Magoffin, husband of Pranaiya and father of Arthur, in their memories to assist families that are affected by perinatal mental health conditions. PAM Foundation seeks to achieve its goal through its three pillars I) Awareness and Education, II) Care, and III) Research and is particularly active in Thailand and the United Kingdom.

About the University of Oxford

The University of Oxford is a world-leading, globally recognised institution offering an unparalleled learning and research environment through the very best teaching and supervision. The University's colleges are at the heart of Oxford's reputation as one of the best universities in the world, and make it a very special place to study and live.

About St Anne's College

St Anne's is one of Oxford's largest colleges, with some 446 undergraduates and 300 graduates. The College's Fellows' interests range across the Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Physical and Medical Sciences. The College sits at the heart of the University of Oxford and it aspires to understand the world and change it for the better. One of the first colleges in Oxford to admit women, St Anne's is a forward-thinking, outward-facing community which aims to be the home of choice for all students, regardless of background, and to help create a world which is fit for the long-term. An inclusive and diverse working, learning and social environment, it has long sought to champion research into overlooked areas and challenge the status quo.

About the Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics

The Department of Physiology, Anatomy and Genetics ("DPAG" or the "Department") is home to a large

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number of internationally-renowned teams of scientists addressing major questions in biomedicine, the answers to which will have a profound effect on modern biology. DPAG believes that learning is just as important as research, and at the department's core lies a belief that a synthesis of the two is key to advancing our understanding. As such, DPAG works to provide outstanding opportunities for graduate students and post-doctoral workers to gain a research training of the very highest quality, which will enable them to become the leaders of tomorrow and to communicate and employ their research in the wider world.

DPAG's large preclinical department is made up of four Centres and significant footprint in two flagship cross-departmental Institutes: Burdon Sanderson Cardiac Science and Integrative Physiology Centre, Centre for Integrative Neuroscience, Centre for Cellular and Molecular Neurobiology, Centre for Neural Circuits and Behaviour, the Kavli Institute for NanoScience Discovery (housing the Oxford Parkinson's Disease Centre) and the Institute of Developmental and Regenerative Medicine (IDRM), home to several DPAG groups.

The Department's research is split into six broad areas of study, including: Cardiac Science; Cell Physiology; Development and Cell Biology; Functional Genomics; Metabolism and Endocrinology; Neuroscience. DPAG's work is necessarily multidisciplinary and cross-cutting, which means its researchers often work across more than one theme, as well as collaborating with colleagues in the physical sciences, life sciences and clinical departments across Oxford.

Alongside all of this, DPAG's staff undertakes most of the preclinical teaching for the University's top-ranked medical degrees, and our graduate courses attract a wealth of international talent. Ultimately, the Department is built on a desire to understand basic science and a belief that its students are the future of research — together exploring the frontiers of biology.

Company Contact:

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PAM Foundation

E. info@pamfoundation.org
W. https://www.pamfoundation.org/

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