



Campbell Foundation Grants 100K to HIV Research

Damon Scott 03/29/2018 9:00 am

HIV can cause many issues, including premature aging and a state of inflammation — to the point of spurring other illnesses. This is the case even when someone has their HIV under control with medication.

With that in mind, the Philadelphia-based Wistar Institute and Fort Lauderdale's Campbell Foundation have collaborated on what's being called a "novel" look at the role of carbohydrate molecules in HIV comorbidities.

Comorbidity is defined as "the simultaneous presence of two chronic diseases or conditions in a patient."

Dr. Abdel-Mohsen and his team at Wistar are analyzing recent advances in glycobiology — the study of carbohydrate molecules and the "critical role they play" in the body's immune responses and in chronic inflammatory conditions.

"Their preliminary work indicates that glycosylation in the body is altered in HIV positive individuals, even after years of suppressive ART (antiretroviral therapy)," said Campbell's Executive Director Ken Rapkin, who recently awarded Mohsen and Wistar a \$100,000 grant for further study.

"They believe that understanding this may be a key to breaking into the vicious cycle between HIV and the over-activated immune system that leads to multiple comorbidities," Rapkin said.

Rapkin said Mohsen's work will be important not just for HIV, but for other diseases involving inflammation (like cardiovascular diseases) and immune dysfunctions (such as autoimmune disorders) and some cancers.

Mohsen is an assistant professor in Wistar's Vaccine & Immunotherapy Center.

"HIV positive individuals experience non-AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) inflammation-related illnesses, such as neurological disorders and cardiovascular diseases," Rapkin said. "These comorbidities reduce the quality of life and life expectancy," he said.

Rapkin told SFGN that many of the grants it receives have to do with the chronic and oftentimes fatal comorbidities in those living with HIV/AIDS. He said while there have been overall advances in HIV prevention — South Florida is still an epicenter of new HIV infections.

“The great advances in treatment and care are a double-edged sword; we now have many people in the general public whose perception of HIV/AIDS is that it’s like diabetes — you take one pill and it’s a done deal. This is not the case, as borne out by the scientific research grants The Campbell Foundation receives and vets for possible funding,” Rapkin said.

Rapkin said many people are walking around infected, and do not know their status, thereby infecting others.

He said The Campbell Foundation is proud to provide an avenue of funding for up-and-coming researchers to test their ideas and hopefully garner data that will advance the field and to a cure for HIV/AIDS.

“With the current federal funding climate, our board is committed to continue in our mission to find and fund the best science that may help us to make HIV/AIDS history,” he said.

The Campbell Foundation has given away \$10.8 million since it was established in 1995. For more information, go to CampbellFoundation.org. More on Wistar is at Wistar.org.

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