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**\$50,000 Innovation Grant awarded by New Jersey Health Foundation and
The Nicholson Foundation helps secure patent advancing research to
slow Parkinson's disease brain degeneration**

With the support of a \$50,000 Innovation Grant from New Jersey Health Foundation and The Nicholson Foundation, M. Maral Mouradian, M.D. a professor at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, has secured a patent that will advance research to slow brain degeneration in patients with Parkinson's disease.

Dr. Mouradian received the grant during the fall of 2015 which allowed her to complete the research needed for the patent application. The U.S. patent, RNA Targeting in alpha-Synucleinopathies (U.S. patent # 9255266), was issued in February, 2016.

"The purpose of our Innovation Grant Program is to help scientists get to a more advanced stage of research," explained George F. Heinrich, M.D., vice chair and CEO of New Jersey Health Foundation. "Dr. Mouradian is a perfect example of how this funding can help a researcher reach the next level in his or her work."

Dr. Mouradian, the William Dow Lovett Professor of Neurology and the Director of the Center for Neurodegenerative and Neuroimmunologic Diseases at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, is attempting to reduce an abnormal key protein in the brains of patients with Parkinson's disease. If successful, Dr. Mouradian's work could slow degeneration

in the area of the brain responsible for the motor symptoms of the disease and has the potential to delay progression leading to the emergence of additional symptoms in those suffering from advanced disease.

“This grant provided the support to advance our investigation of this approach sufficiently to qualify for the patent,” explained Dr. Mouradian. “I am grateful to New Jersey Health Foundation and The Nicholson Foundation for helping fund this vital research so that we can continue to pursue our hypothesis and impact the lives of people with Parkinson’s disease.”

Dr. Mouradian explained that scientists already know that the amount of alpha-synuclein that forms toxic aggregates in brain cells is an important factor in patients with Parkinson’s disease. She notes that her research provides a rational strategy to mitigate the problem of alpha-synuclein aggregation and neuronal damage by reducing levels of this protein in neurons.

“Across the country, the rate of funding for healthcare innovation is growing rapidly—yet early stage funding for university-led scientific research projects have been underrepresented in this upsurge,” said Joan Randell, chief operating officer of The Nicholson Foundation. “The Innovation Grants program addresses this imbalance by providing scientists like Dr. Mouradian with crucial early stage funding to advance their important research.”

For more information about how you or your organization can help Dr. Mouradian carry out further preclinical efficacy and safety studies to support future advancement to clinical testing, contact Mike Wiley, New Jersey Health Foundation, at (908) 731-6612 or mwiley@njhf.org.

About New Jersey Health Foundation

[New Jersey Health Foundation](#) is a not-for-profit corporation that supports biomedical research and health-related education programs in New Jersey through its Research Grants Program, its Innovation Grants Program and its affiliate, [Foundation Venture Capital Group](#) which makes private equity investments in life science start-up companies in New Jersey headed toward commercialization. Faculty and staff at Princeton University, Rowan University, Rutgers University and Stevens Institute of Technology are eligible to apply for funding.

About The Nicholson Foundation

[The Nicholson Foundation](#) works to improve the quality and affordability of health care for vulnerable populations in New Jersey by transforming how it is paid for and delivered. The Foundation's approach emphasizes partnerships and performance-based grant making; its goal is sustainable systems reform.