

**CIRM Board Funds its First Clinical Study for COVID-19**

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**Oakland, CA** – Today the governing Board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) continued its commitment to help with the coronavirus pandemic by awarding \$749,999 to Dr. John Zaia at City of Hope. He will be conducting a clinical study to administer blood plasma from recovered COVID-19 patients to treat those with the virus. This marks CIRM's first clinical study for COVID-19 after approving emergency funding a month earlier.

Plasma is a component of blood that carries proteins called antibodies that are usually involved in defending our bodies against viral infections. Blood plasma from patients that have recovered from COVID-19, referred to as convalescent plasma, contain antibodies against the virus that can be used as a potential treatment for COVID-19. Currently, there are challenges with this approach that include: properly identifying convalescent plasma donors i.e. recovered patients, determining eligibility of those with convalescent plasma that want to donate, collection of the plasma, treating patients, and determining if the plasma was effective.

Dr. Zaia and his team at City of Hope will create the COVID-19 Coordination Program, which addresses solutions for all of the challenges listed above. The program will partner with the medical teams at CIRM's Alpha Stem Cell Clinic Network, as well as infectious disease, pulmonary and critical care teams from medical centers and community hospitals across the state. Potential donors will be identified and thoroughly screened for eligibility per the established National and State blood banking safety requirements. Finally, the convalescent plasma will be collected from eligible donors and administered by licensed physicians to COVID-19 patients, who will be evaluated for response to the treatment and potential recovery.

"We are in the midst of very challenging times where there is not yet an approved treatment for COVID-19. In response to this, CIRM launched and executed an emergency COVID-19 funding program, which was made possible by our Board, patient advocates, California scientists, external scientific expert reviewers, and our dedicated team," said Maria T. Millan, MD, President and CEO of CIRM. "With CIRM funding, the City of Hope COVID-19 Coordination program will tap into CIRM's network of researchers, physicians, and our Alpha Clinics to deliver this treatment to patients in need. It will also serve the critical role of gathering important scientific data about the plasma, safety, and clinical data from treated patients."

The Board also approved a discovery stage research project that utilizes stem cell models for a novel approach to vaccine development against the virus causing COVID-19 and another project that uses a unique lung stem cell organoid to identify an effective drug against the virus.

The two awards are summarized in the table below:

Application	Title	Institution	Award Amount
DISC2COVID19-11817	Stem cell-based rapid identification of SARS-CoV-2 T cell epitopes and T cell receptors for therapeutic use	UCLA	\$150,000

DISC2COVID19-11764	Identifying a lead compound for COVID19 using high throughput screening with lung stem cell organoids	UCLA	\$149,998
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**About CIRM**

At CIRM, we never forget that we were created by the people of California to accelerate stem cell treatments to patients with unmet medical needs, and act with a sense of urgency to succeed in that mission.

To meet this challenge, our team of highly trained and experienced professionals actively partners with both academia and industry in a hands-on, entrepreneurial environment to fast track the development of today's most promising stem cell technologies.

With \$3 billion in funding and approximately 300 active stem cell programs in our portfolio, CIRM is the world's largest institution dedicated to helping people by bringing the future of cellular medicine closer to reality.

For more information go to [www.cirm.ca.gov](http://www.cirm.ca.gov)

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