

CIRM Board Approves Two New Discovery Research Projects for COVID-19

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Oakland, CA – Today the governing Board of the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) approved two new discovery research project as part of the \$5 million in emergency funding for COVID-19 related projects. This brings the number of COVID-19 projects CIRM is supporting to 17, including three clinical trials.

\$249,974 was awarded to Dr. Karen Christman at UC San Diego to develop a treatment for Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome (ARDS), a life-threatening lung injury that occurs when fluid leaks into the lungs and is prevalent in COVID-19 patients. Dr. Christman and her team will develop extracellular matrix (ECM) hydrogels, a kind of structure that provides support to surrounding cells. The goal is to develop a treatment that can be delivered directly to site of injury, where the ECM would recruit stem cells, treat lung inflammation, and promote lung healing.

\$250,000 was awarded to Dr. Lili Yang at UCLA to develop a treatment for COVID-19. Dr. Yang and her team will use blood stem cells to create invariant natural killer T (iNKT) cells, a powerful kind of immune cell with the potential to clear virus infection and mitigate harmful inflammation. The goal is to develop these iNKT cells as an off the shelf therapy to treat patients with COVID-19.

These awards are part of CIRM's Quest Awards Program (DISC2), which promotes promising new technologies that could be translated to enable broad use and improve patient care.

"The harmful lung inflammation caused by COVID-19 can be dangerous and life threatening," says Maria T. Millan, M.D., the President and CEO of CIRM. "Early stage discovery projects like the ones approved today are vital in developing treatments for patients severely affected by the novel coronavirus."

Earlier in the week the Board also approved changes to both DISC2 and clinical trial stage projects (CLIN2). These were in recognition of the Agency's remaining budget and operational timeline and the need to launch the awards as quickly as possible.

For DISC2 awards the changes include:

- Award limit of \$250,000
- Maximum award duration of 12 months
- Initiate projects within 30 days of approval
- All proposals must provide a statement describing how their overall study plan and design has considered the influence of race, ethnicity, sex and gender diversity.
- All proposals should discuss the limitations, advantages, and/or challenges in developing a product or tools that addresses the unmet medical needs of California's diverse population, including underserved communities.

Under the CLIN2 awards, to help projects carry out a clinical trial, the changes include:

- Adjust award limit to the following:

Applicant type	Phase 1, Phase 1/2, Feasibility Award Cap	Phase 2 Award Cap	Phase 3 Award Cap
Non-profit	\$9M	\$11.25M	\$7.5M
For-profit	\$6M	\$11.25M	\$7.5M

- Adjust the award duration to not exceed 3 years with award completion no later than November 2023
- Initiate projects within 30 days of approval

- All proposals must include a written plan in the application for outreach and study participation by underserved and disproportionately affected populations. Priority will be given to projects with the highest quality plans in this regard.

The changes outlined above for CLIN2 awards do not apply to sickle cell disease projects expected to be funded under the CIRM/NHLBI Cure Sickle Cell Disease joint Initiative.

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

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