

June 22nd, 2022

Independent Citizens Oversight Committee (ICOC)
Application Review Subcommittee (ARS)
California Institute for Regenerative Medicine (CIRM)

RE: DISC2-13502

“Excitatory spinal interneurons from human pluripotent stem cells (hPSCs) to treat spinal cord injury”

Lyandysha V. Zholudeva, PhD (P.I.)

To the Independent Citizens Oversight Committee (ICOC),

I would like to thank the reviewers of my proposal, and their recognition of the strengths of the team I have. The proposed experiments, if funded, would benefit the people of the state of California, and potentially all of the individuals currently living with a spinal cord injury or neurodegenerative disease, in the United States and overseas. As noted by the reviewers, “the goal of this proposal is to repair motor circuits that are damaged in cervical spinal cord injury. This is an important unmet medical need.”

I would greatly appreciate your consideration of our Quest (DISC2) application, which received a mean score of **83** from the Grants Working Group.

The reviewers highlighted that “The research is still early stage but there’s potential for high impact,” with “Excellent preliminary data,” and “solid rationale for the proposed studies... [provided by] previous publications.” While the reviewers recognized the fact that “The Principal Investigator (PI) has over a decade of experience in developing cellular therapeutics to treat spinal cord injury, including cervical injuries, respiratory deficits, and rodent NSC V2a transplants,” and has “a promising career trajectory,” the only hesitation reflected by the Guests Review Summary was that 1. “[the PI] was not a co-author on the publications that led to the project,” and 2. “he or she does not have adequate experience to lead a project of this magnitude.”

I would like to take this opportunity to clarify that I was in fact author on key papers leading to this work, and have the experience in running the spinal cord injury program at the Gladstone Institutes over the past 2+ years (with \$400,000 of research support). This has prepared me well for managing the proposed research program.

My prior training in spinal cord injury and cell transplantation were the reasons for my recruitment to the Gladstone Institutes. I have helped build the spinal cord injury research program at the Gladstone Institutes with the support and guidance of Drs. McDevitt and Srivastava (both of whom have provided Letters of Support in my proposal submission).

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With the recent departure of Dr. McDevitt from Gladstone, I have taken leadership over the spinal cord injury research program and fully intend to continue to build it, continue recruiting trainees with interests in stem cell technology, and direct this ongoing work towards an important translational future.

I am happy to discuss my proposal further at the next Application Review Meeting on June 23, 2022.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lyandysha Zholudeva". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Lyandysha Zholudeva, PhD
Gladstone Institutes