



# PRESS RELEASE

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## **4th International Friedreich's Ataxia Scientific Conference to Convene May 5th-7th 2011**

Springfield, VA- May 1, 2011-----The world's largest assembly to date of international Friedreich's Ataxia (FA) scientists will meet in Strasbourg, France from May 5th -7th 2011 to share the latest insights and advances in basic, translational and clinical research in this rare neuromuscular disease. More than 200 participants will include scientists from the world's leading research labs, government agencies and pharmaceutical industries, along with representatives from multiple patient advocacy groups.

The Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA) is organizing this meeting along with the Conference host, the Institute of Genetics and Molecular and Cellular Biology (IGBMC), with assistance from partner patient advocacy groups from around Europe, North America and Australasia. This conference is to be held in conjunction with the meeting of the European Friedreich's Ataxia Consortium for Translational Studies (EFACTS) and the annual meeting of Euro-Ataxia.

The IGBMC is a highly regarded institution in the FA community. Seven of the authors of the March 1996 publication announcing identification of the FA gene were here at the IGBMC, including Michel Koenig who later, along with his IGBMC colleague, Hélène Puccio, developed the FA community's first animal model, which is still in wide use. The fine IGBMC team remains dedicated to advancing FA research, continues to help lead the FA community's scientific efforts along a broad front and will be presenting their latest findings at the Conference.

The conference aim is to conduct a comprehensive review of FA research from basic science through clinical trials. International experts will:

- present their latest research findings;
- share knowledge and insights and debate their hypotheses;
- identify opportunities for future research;
- explore emerging therapeutic approaches;
- share the results of recent clinical trials, and
- nurture existing collaborations and partnerships among specialists and form new ones.

Three keynote lectures will feature experts from diverse backgrounds and specialty areas that bring new technology and knowledge to high-priority research.

- Patrick Aubourg, Director INSERM Unit "Genetics and biotherapies of degenerative and proliferative diseases of the nervous system" Saint-Vincent de Paul Hospital, Paris, France, Title: Gene therapy for intractable CNS diseases.
- Martin Pera, Professor of Cell and Neurobiology and Director, Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regenerative Medicine and Stem cell Research, University of Southern California and Chair of Stem Cell Science, University of Melbourne Title: Human Pluripotent Stem Cells: The State of the Art
- Giovanni Manfredi, Professor of Neuroscience, Weill Medical College of Cornell University, New York, NY Title: Mitochondrial dynamics in neurodegenerative disorders.

FARA Executive Director Jen Farmer summarized the importance of this 4th International Conference in saying, "The FA community has made tremendous progress since the 1st International Friedreich's Ataxia Scientific Conference was held a dozen years ago. This progress has resulted from the momentum created by the sharing of key scientific discoveries and the fully collaborative environment which have grown and expanded through the subsequent meetings. FARA is completely confident that we will get to the finish line of FA treatments together soon and that new findings and ideas shared and collaborations spawned and nurtured at this Conference will play a key role in our collective victory."

#### **About FA**

FA is a rare, degenerative, life-shortening neuro-muscular disorder that affects children and adults and involves the loss of strength and coordination usually leading to wheelchair use; diminished vision, hearing and speech; scoliosis (curvature of the spine); increased risk of diabetes, and a life-threatening heart condition. There are currently no effective treatments.

#### **About FARA**

The Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA) is a 501(c)(3), non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to accelerating research leading to treatments and a cure for Friedreich's ataxia. [www.CureFA.org](http://www.CureFA.org)

#### **About IGBMC**

IGBMC is one of the leading European centers of biomedical research, It is devoted to the study of higher eukaryotic genomes and to the control of genetic expression as well as the analysis of the function of genes and proteins. This knowledge is applied to studies of human pathologies.

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