



## Patient Input Informs NPF Grant Funding Opportunities

**N**PF has launched a new grant cycle with the goal of developing the next generation of leaders in Parkinson's disease (PD) by supporting their research in areas voted as most important by the Parkinson's community. Grant funding is available in three high-impact focus areas: cell-to-cell transmission studies, cognitive change in PD and database studies. These three focus areas were identified as the most important research targets by people living with PD via an online poll conducted in November 2013.

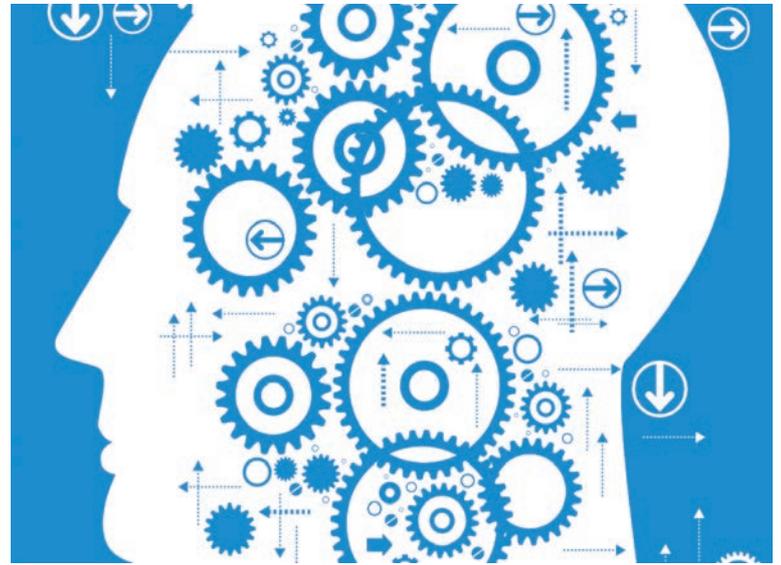
Many of today's leaders got their first grants from NPF. But with tightening budgets in Washington, mid-level researchers are increasingly finding it difficult to get the support they need to build careers as Parkinson's researchers.

*We believe that the ideas that will change the course of Parkinson's disease may already be in development, but we are afraid that the next generation of senior faculty who will shepherd these ideas into the clinic are not getting the support they need, said Peter N. Schmidt, PhD, NPF's CIO and Vice President, Research and Professional Programs.*

The three high-impact focus areas include:

✔ **Focus area one: How Parkinson's spreads from cell-to-cell.** In Parkinson's, cells die because they are poisoned by a toxic form of the protein alpha synuclein. This protein starts in one part of the brain and spreads from cell-to-cell almost like an infection. If we could stop this spreading, we could stop the progression of PD in patients who already have it and prevent PD in people at risk. Understanding this process could lead to new targets for drugs that have never before been considered. This was the highest rated patient priority and the NIH announced recently that they believe cell-to-cell transmission is the number one priority in basic research.

✔ **Focus area two: Cognitive change in PD.** For many patients, the most troubling aspect of Parkinson's is worrying that their thinking will change. When this happens, their reaction time slows, they may have trouble picking the right word to say, and their ability to prioritize and sequence information can be affected. For this second



highest-rated patient priority, NPF will support further research into the biology of cognitive change and also interventions that build on these new findings to improve the lives of people with Parkinson's.

✔ **Focus area three: Database studies.** Drilling through multiple sets of research data to find common threads or hidden gems of information is a cutting-edge technique—what is now called big data. NPF will leverage big data techniques in Parkinson's by funding studies looking at combinations of study databases: early and late disease, data from multiple sources or those that combine insights from the general population. Many ideas that are changing health today came from looking back at data using these big data approaches.

This grant cycle will fund programs based on scientific merit, as determined by the NPF's Clinical and Scientific Advisory Board (CSAB) in a peer-review process. Grant winners will be announced in the next issue of the *Parkinson Report*.

In addition to this grant funding, NPF continues to fund the *Parkinson's Outcomes Project*, the largest clinical study of its kind that is currently tracking more than 7,500 people with Parkinson's who receive care at an NPF Center of Excellence.

**For more information about NPF's research initiatives, visit [www.parkinson.org/research](http://www.parkinson.org/research).**