

PRESS RELEASE: Launch of JPND Research Strategy

February 7th, 2012



First European-wide research strategy to tackle Alzheimer's and other Neurodegenerative Diseases

07 February 2012

Research leaders and stakeholders from across Europe will gather today in Brussels for the launch of a European-wide strategy to coordinate and prioritize research aimed at tackling the enormous challenge of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Disease.

The EU Joint Programme in Neurodegenerative Disease Research (JPND) is the first of the European Joint Programming initiatives which are designed to address the 'grand challenges' facing EU society in the coming years¹. These challenges are considered beyond the scope and resources of any one country to tackle.

Welcoming the JPND strategy², European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, Máire Geoghegan-Quinn said: "I am delighted to welcome this common strategy, agreed under this unprecedented collaborative initiative in research, to channel participating countries' scientific competencies, medical strengths and social approaches to tackle this important challenge. The JPND strategy can not only make research efforts more effective in the area of neurodegenerative diseases but can also have very wide benefits for society, health and the research community in Europe."

Neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's are debilitating and largely untreatable conditions that are strongly linked with age. Amongst these disorders, the dementias are responsible for the greatest burden of disease, with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders affecting over 7 million people in Europe, and this figure is expected to double every 20 years as the population ages. It currently costs approximately €130 billion per annum to care for people with dementia across Europe, highlighting age-related neurodegenerative disease as one of the leading medical and societal challenges faced by EU society.

The strategy sets out the common vision of the 25 European countries involved, and provides a strategic approach to support world-class research that can exploit emerging scientific opportunities, confront barriers to progress, and provide new approaches to prevention, intervention and care.

"This common Research Strategy will guide research activity and investments in the field of neurodegenerative diseases over the coming decade in Europe", says Professor Philippe Amouyel, Chair of the JPND Management Board. "The ultimate goal is to undertake research that can be translated into new interventions that improve the health and wellbeing of patients with neurodegenerative diseases and their families and carers, and that delivers economic and societal benefit throughout the European Union", he said.

The goals of the European-wide strategy are;

- To develop new treatments and preventive strategies
- To improve health and social care approaches
- To raise awareness and de-stigmatise Alzheimer's and other Neurodegenerative disorders
- To alleviate the economic and social burden of these diseases

JPND is working to implement these goals through;

- building capacity in excellent basic, clinical and healthcare/social research
- coordinating and aligning European and national research activities
- translating research evidence into clinical, social and public health practice
- partnering with industry, patient, carer and health service stakeholders, and decision makers

The strategy is based on the recommendations of the JPND Scientific Advisory Board which constitutes fifteen of the very best scientists and physicians from the research areas related to neurodegenerative diseases. Extensive consultations with over 140 scientists and multiple stakeholder communities were also conducted and recommendations were validated through a broad public consultation. Research priorities identified in the strategy include investigating the origins of neurodegenerative disease; studying disease mechanisms and models; exploring disease definitions and diagnosis; developing therapies, preventive strategies and interventions; improving healthcare and social care.

“The recommendations outlined address the full spectrum of research and approaches that are required to achieve impact, and recognise the important role that other stakeholder groups including research funding agencies, patient and carer organisations and industry representatives have in delivering this agenda” says Professor Thomas Gasser, Chair of the JPND Scientific Advisory Board.

Identified JPND priorities will be addressed within the next ten years through a range of long-term, medium-to-large-scale, programmatic initiatives. In order to implement and deliver its strategy, JPND is recognising the importance of engagement and partnership with industry, patient and carer organisations, research funding agencies and the European Commission. Working Groups are already classifying priorities according to scale, impact, and agreed timelines, and it is expected that the first of the implementation initiatives will emerge during 2012.

ENDS

Media Contact

Derick Mitchell, PhD

dmitchell@hrb.ie

+353861-703997

Notes to Editors

1. Joint Programming is a new collaborative approach in which countries define a common vision and a strategic research agenda, in order to address major societal challenges which are beyond the scale of any national research programme. The Joint Programme on Neurodegenerative Disease Research (JPND) was established as the pilot for this new type of coordinated approach to research. (Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and social committee and the Committee of the Regions toward Joint Programming in Research : Working together to tackle common challenges more effectively - COM(2008) 468 final, Brussels <http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/docs/en/ec-joint-programming-6.pdf>)

2. The JPND strategy entitled *“Tackling the Challenge of Alzheimer’s and other Neurodegenerative Diseases in Europe”* addresses the full spectrum of research activity that is required to tackle the growing burden of these diseases for the next decade and beyond. It identifies research priorities to address the broad challenges for research into the cause, cure and care of neurodegenerative diseases.

