

Pershing Square Foundation Awards \$3mn to SARS-CoV-2 Research

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[The Pershing Square Foundation](#) has awarded \$3 million to nineteen recipients at ten academic research institutions conducting research related to the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

As scientists across various disciplines around the world have risen to the challenge of combating SARS-CoV-2, the Foundation worked with its network of cancer research scientists and physician-scientists involved in the [Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Research Alliance](#) (“PSSCRA”) to create a funding opportunity for SARS-CoV-2 research. The Foundation’s PSSCRA initiative annually awards a cancer research prize that provides funding and emboldens early-career investigators to pursue research projects at a stage when traditional funding is lacking.

“The Foundation remains committed to supporting cancer research and we are proud of the PSSCRA community that we have built over the last seven years,” said Foundation Trustee Bill Ackman. “Amid this global health crisis, we felt that we had an opportunity to quickly leverage the expertise of this exceptional scientific community to identify areas in which we could rapidly deploy funds to scientists researching SARS-CoV-2 in a way similar to our approach to funding cancer research.”

By tapping the PSSCRA community for this project, the Foundation sought to foster synergy among experts across cancer research, immunotherapy/immunology, genetics, and epigenetics to shed new light on SARS-CoV-2 research, expand basic scientific knowledge, and strengthen the arsenal for current and future health crises. Proposals were evaluated for innovation, scientific excellence, and application to the SAR-CoV-2 virus. This request for proposals built on the Foundation’s commitment to

rigorous scientific research, support of risky, early-stage projects that could lead to innovation, and funding for fundamental, biological discoveries that might not otherwise receive support.

“There has never been a more important time to support scientific research and we are so thankful for our scientific community,” said Olivia Tournay Flatto, PhD, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Research Alliance and President of The Pershing Square Foundation. “This community has been working tirelessly to break down the silos between institutions and build on the synergy across findings in cancer research and SARS-CoV-2. The Foundation is extremely appreciative of these scientists who are combining excellence and commitment towards understanding of human biology and disease. It is an honor to work with them.”

The grantees and research projects are (listed alphabetically by research institution):

- Mikala Egeblad, PhD, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory – *“Targeting Neutrophil Extracellular Traps in COVID-19”*
- David Tuveson, MD, PhD, and Tobias Janowitz, MD, PhD, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory – *“Famotidine as outpatient treatment for mildly to moderately symptomatic patients with COVID-19”*
- Adolfo Ferrando, MD, PhD, Columbia University – *“Novel antiviral PROTACs for the treatment of COVID-19, emerging viral pathogens and cancer”*
- Carla Kim, PhD, Harvard University and Boston Children’s Hospital – *“Organoid Modeling for COVID-19”*
- Nina Bhardwaj, MD, PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai – *“Deconvolution of SARS-Cov-2-specific immune responses in COVID-19 patients for broadly effective vaccines”*
- Eirini Papapetrou, MD, PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai – *“Genetic Determinants of COVID-19 Disease Severity”*
- Benjamin Greenbaum, PhD, Matthew Hellmann, MD, and Jedd Wolchok, MD, PhD, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center – *“Etiology and Immune Repertoire Evolution in SARS-CoV-2 in Patients Treated with Checkpoint Blockade Immunotherapies”*
- Christine Mayr, MD, PhD, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center – *“A role for RNA as checkpoint for protein complex assembly”*

- Santosha Vardhana, MD, PhD and Omar Abdel-Wahab, MD, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center – *“Leveraging cancer-driven immune dysregulation to understand and enhance anti-COVID-19 immunity”*
- Dafna Bar-Sagi, PhD, New York University – *“Determination of the Cellular Sources of IL-6 Release and Signaling in COVID-19”*
- Jef Boeke, PhD, New York University – *“High-throughput, Automated RT-PCR Testing for Coronavirus and Beyond”*
- Liam Holt, PhD, New York University and Arvin Dar, PhD, Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai – *“A Synthetic Viral-Like-Particle Vaccine against SARS-CoV-2”*
- Agnel Sfeir, PhD, New York University – *“Investigating the interplay between SARS-Cov-2 and mitochondrial function”*
- Ali Brivanlou, PhD, The Rockefeller University, *“Capitalizing on stem cell-derived synthetic human lungs on microchips to block SARS-CoV-2”*
- Daniel Mucida, PhD and Sohail Tavazoie, MD, PhD, The Rockefeller University – *“Mucosal immunogenetics and an oral therapy for COVID-19”*
- Howard Chang, MD, PhD, Stanford University, *“Understanding Sex-biased Immunity to COVID-19”*
- John Blenis, PhD and Lewis Cantley, PhD, Weill Cornell Medicine – *“Targeting cellular protein kinases as treatment for COVID-19”*
- Christopher Mason, PhD, Weill Cornell Medicine – *“TINY COVID: Rapid, Mobile, and Point-of-care Diagnostics for SARS-CoV-2 from Saliva”*
- Silvia Rouskin, PhD, Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research – *“Discovery of SARS2 RNA structure-based therapeutic targets”*

As part of the selection process, The Pershing Square Foundation relied on the guidance of highly accomplished leaders in academia, industry, and public health.

Since 2013, the Pershing Square Sohn Cancer Research Alliance has awarded over \$22 million to 39 talented scientists.

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