Northwestern Mutual Announces $900,000 in New Childhood Cancer Research Grants

Company funds six new researchers through Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation's Young Investigator program

MILWAUKEE, Oct. 20, 2016 /PRNewswire/ -- Northwestern Mutual, through its Foundation, announced today the funding of six new grants supporting childhood cancer research. The causes of most childhood cancers are unknown, and for the most part these cancers cannot be prevented[1]. The grants, distributed through Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation's (ALSF) Young Investigator Program, are designed to support scientists early in their research careers.

"It's critical that researchers receive assistance at the start of their careers to pursue cures for childhood cancers. Without it, many scientists cannot move their work forward," said Eric Christophersen, president of the Northwestern Mutual Foundation. "Individuals like the six we're recognizing today continue to inspire us to find ways to make an impact."

Northwestern Mutual through its partnership with ALSF has funded a total of 18 researchers nationwide since 2013. Each Young Investigator grant recipient will be awarded $150,000 over three years.The six new Young Investigator grant recipients include:

David Debruyne, Ph.D., Dana-Farber Cancer Institute: Dr. Debruyne's research will devise new treatments that prevent or eradicate relapse in patients with high-risk neuroblastoma, a tumor responsible for 15 percent of pediatric cancer deaths. These patients have a relapse rate of more than 50 percent, and understanding the cause is critical for enabling the development of more effective therapies.
Giedre Krenciute, Ph.D., Baylor College of Medicine: Dr. Krenciute is developing specialized T-cells as an effective immunotherapy for high grade glioma, a type of brain tumor that is highly-resistant to conventional therapies. Using the patient's own immune system to fight cancers is one promising approach to improve outcomes for pediatric cancer patients who do not benefit from current therapies.
Sunhye Lee, Ph.D., Children's Hospital Los Angeles: Dr. Lee's work seeks to understand the way in which retinoblastoma – the leading ocular cancer and a frequent cause of pediatric vision loss – is initiated and developed in genetically-predisposed children.
Emily Theisen, Ph.D., Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital: Dr. Theisen's research focuses on treatments for patients with metastatic and refractory cases of Ewings sarcoma, an aggressive pediatric bone tumor. Survival rates for patients with localized disease hover above 70 percent, but patients with metastatic or refractory cases have a survival rate lower than 30 percent.
Lena Winestone, M.D., Children's Hospital of Philadelphia: Dr. Winestone's research will explore the factors that contribute to differences in survival outcomes between African-American and Caucasian children with cancer. Leukemia is the most common type of childhood cancer, but African-American children with leukemia see lower survival rates than children of other races fighting the same disease.
Nathan Schloemer, M.D., Children's Hospital of Wisconsin: Dr. Schloemer will research how scientists can develop safer, more effective therapies by understanding how the immune system recognizes and attacks cancer. This promising approach is known as immunotherapy.

Each grant followed a competitive review process based upon scientific merit, potential to advance cures and treatments, and the investigator's dedication to childhood cancer research.
The 2016 Young Investigator grant recipients will convene inChicago, Ill. from October 25- 27 for the ALSF Young Investigator Summit, presented by Northwestern Mutual. The fourth annual event will bring together 65 researchers from across the country to collaborate, build new relationships, and interact with leading researchers in the pediatric oncology field.

To date, through the partnership ALSF, Northwestern Mutual has funded over 130,000 hours of research to advance the work of childhood cancer researchers. To learn more about the advances in research that the company is supporting visit: https://www.northwesternmutual.com/about-us/how-we-help-people/our-community-impact/childhood-cancer-programs

About Northwestern Mutual
Northwestern Mutual has been helping families and businesses achieve financial security for nearly 160 years. Our financial representatives build relationships with clients through a distinctive planning approach that integrates risk management with wealth accumulation, preservation and distribution. With $238.5 billion in assets, $27.9 billion in revenues and more than $1.6 trillion worth of life insurance protection in force, Northwestern Mutual delivers financial security to more than 4.3 million people who rely on us for insurance and investment solutions, including life, disability income and long-term care insurance; annuities; trust services; mutual funds; and investment advisory products and services. Northwestern Mutual is recognized by FORTUNE magazine as one of the "World's Most Admired" life insurance companies in 2016.

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About Northwestern Mutual Foundation
The mission of the Northwestern Mutual Foundation is to improve the lives of children and families in need. The Foundation has given more than $300 million since its inception in 1992 and is designed to create lasting impact in the communities where the company's employees and financial representatives live and work. We accomplish this by combining financial support, volunteerism, thought leadership and convening community partners to deliver the best outcomes. Our efforts are focused nationally on curing childhood cancer, and locally on education, neighborhoods and making our hometown of Milwaukee a great destination.

About Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation
Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation (ALSF) emerged from the front yard lemonade stand of cancer patient Alexandra "Alex" Scott (1996-2004). In 2000, 4-year-old Alex announced that she wanted to hold a lemonade stand to raise money to help find a cure for all children with cancer. Since Alex held that first stand, the Foundation bearing her name has evolved into a national fundraising movement, complete with thousands of supporters across the country carrying on her legacy of hope. To date, Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, a registered 501(c)3 charity, has raised more than $125 million toward fulfilling Alex's dream of finding a cure, funding over 650 pediatric cancer research projects nationally. For more information on Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, visit AlexsLemonade.org.

[1] https://www.cancer.gov/research/progress/snapshots/pediatric

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