

# HUFFPOST IMPACT

## THE BLOG

# Partnerships Play a Key Role in the Battle Against Brain Diseases

06/06/2016 03:44 pm ET

[Howard Fillit, MD](#) Geriatrician and neuroscientist; Founding Executive Director and Chief Science Officer, Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation

When the Lauder family founded the [Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation](#) (ADDF) in 1998, they knew that proprietary boundaries would only limit efforts to develop effective Alzheimer's drugs. So they resolved to make the ADDF's knowledge available to everyone working to overcome this devastating disease—and all the other causes of dementia. Today, the ADDF partners with the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, family foundations, public charities, individual philanthropists and governments worldwide in this quest for cures.

[The Treat FTD Fund](#), a joint research initiative of the ADDF and [The Association for Frontotemporal Degeneration](#) (AFTD), demonstrates a key benefit of partnerships in the fight against Alzheimer's and related dementias. In testing drugs for frontotemporal degeneration (FTD), we may also find treatments for Alzheimer's and other diseases that share underlying mechanisms. Tau tangles, which play a key role in the progression of Alzheimer's disease, are also seen in some patients with FTD. TDP-43, a neurotoxic protein, is present in the brains of some patients with FTD, Alzheimer's and ALS. Neuroinflammation is also thought to play a harmful role in a range of brain diseases. A drug targeting any of these mechanisms might therefore be effective against multiple diseases.

The AFTD is one of our closest allies in the fight against neurodegenerative disease, and our oldest partner. After more than a decade of collaboration, we have jointly funded 24 preclinical drug and early detection programs. At the [Scripps Research Institute](#), [Matthew Disney, PhD](#), and colleagues are working to design a drug-like compound that prevents a toxic chain of events caused by a genetic mutation known as C9ORF72, which has been found to be responsible for most familial cases of FTD and ALS. The new partnership builds on this initial drug discovery collaboration and the progress of grantees like Dr. Disney. The Lauder Foundation, Ronald S. Lauder and the Samuel I. Newhouse Foundation generously contributed \$10 million to create [The Treat FTD Fund](#), which will support the most promising clinical trials of new and repurposed drugs for FTD over the next decade.

Partnerships enable us to leverage co-funding to support larger research grants. The ADDF and the UK's [Alzheimer's Society](#) have joined together to expand funding for

worthy research in the UK. Together, our two organizations have contributed \$1.5 million to support scientists testing “repurposed” drugs, which are already approved for another use but may be effective against Alzheimer’s. Repurposing approved drugs reduces the time and costs typically associated with developing a drug from scratch.

The ADDF has also sought partners with expertise that can help grantees advance their work. [The Harrington Discovery Institute at University Hospitals](#) (Cleveland) was established in 2013 to accelerate the development of medical breakthroughs by physician-scientists. The ADDF is partnering with the Institute on its Harrington Scholar Awards program for early-stage drug research. The [ADDF-Harrington Scholar Awardees](#) receive funding from the ADDF and strategic project management resources from the Institute’s Innovation Support Center. This support includes consulting and management services from experienced drug development professionals as well as regulatory, intellectual property, and business development assistance. The ADDF-Harrington Scholars also have access to [BioMotiv](#), a for-profit commercialization company associated with the Harrington Discovery Institute.

Our partnership with [Dolby Family Ventures](#) also involves shared expertise, but tailored to drug programs that are further along in the development process. We jointly evaluate the potential therapeutic and commercial prospects of programs at biopharmaceutical companies and co-fund the most promising, providing financial support and business acumen to help the programs advance.

Partnerships are critical to the success of our mission to find effective drugs to treat Alzheimer’s and other causes of dementia. By combining our resources and sharing expertise, we will conquer these diseases faster.

Follow Howard Fillit, MD on Twitter: [www.twitter.com/a\\_hfillit](http://www.twitter.com/a_hfillit)

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/howard-fillit-md/partnerships-play-a-key-r\\_b\\_10285064.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/howard-fillit-md/partnerships-play-a-key-r_b_10285064.html)