Health & Medicine

Tow Gift Creates New Post in Motor Neuron Disorders

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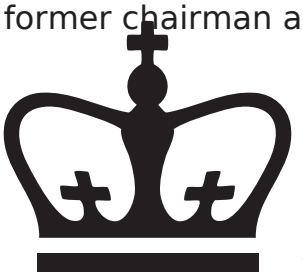
Lou Gehrig's disease, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), is a neurodegenerative condition that causes paralysis and results in early death. To further Columbia's efforts to fight ALS and other motor neuron diseases, the Leonard and Claire Tow Charitable Trust has approved a $15 million challenge grant to Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) to establish the Claire and Leonard Tow Center for Motor Neuron Biology and Disease.

The Center will provide a comprehensive basic and clinical research program that addresses both neurodegenerative disorders and restoration of motor function after spinal-cord injury. Research will focus on ALS, for which there is currently no cure, and spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), the leading genetic killer of infants and toddlers.

An immediate commitment of $3 million will endow the Claire Tow Professorship in Motor Neuron Disorders.

Thomas Jessell, professor of biochemistry & molecular biophysics and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Investigator, is the first incumbent. Jessell, along with University Professors and Nobel laureates Richard Axel and Eric Kandel, will lead the Jerome L. Greene Science Center.

"Claire and I are proud to lend our support to Tom Jessell and his fine research team, and to help facilitate the medical center's outstanding efforts to focus on these devastating diseases, find out more about their causes, and eventually defeat them," says Tow, who was appointed to CUMC's Board of Visitors in 2004. He is the former chairman and chief executive officer of Citizens Communications.



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