

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Brain Tumor Funders' Collaborative Announces \$6 Million in Grants
Funding Will Support 3 Collaborative Teams
Funds to Help Bridge the Translational Gap in Brain Cancer Research**

March 14, 2006 -- The Brain Tumor Funders' Collaborative (BTFC) -- eight private funders of brain tumor research-- today announced results of their first joint funding initiative: three grants of \$2 million each awarded to multi-institutional teams of researchers and clinicians to promote translation of scientific discoveries into effective new treatments for brain cancer patients.

The three funded projects were selected during a multi-stage review process from more than 60 responses to the BTFC call for proposals. The three projects are each taking on a central question in brain tumor research including the potential role of tumor stem cells in brain cancer development and treatment and the use of genetic profiling of tumors to subdivide clinical populations in order to better determine responsiveness to targeted therapies. The three funded projects are:

Project Title: Tumor Stem Cell-Based Drug Discovery for Adult and Pediatric Glioma

Sponsoring Institution: Kennedy- Krieger Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, Maryland

Project Manager: Dr. John Laterra

Project Title: Molecularly Guided Clinical Trials for Glioma

Sponsoring Institution: David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA

Program Manager: Dr. Paul Mischel

Project title: Identifying and Overcoming Resistance Mechanisms in Glioblastomas: A Joint EORTC-RTOG Effort

Sponsoring Institution: American College of Radiology/Radiation Therapy Oncology Group

Project Manager: Dr. Minesh Mehta

(Complete descriptions of these projects are available at www.braintumorfunders.org)

"It is our desire to help build the teams of people and resources needed to attack this genetically complex and lethal cancer," explained Naomi Berkowitz of the American Brain Tumor Association, "I believe this approach to brain tumor research will become a model for research in other cancers," elaborated Rob Tufel, Executive Director of the National Brain Tumor Foundation.

Each of the three funded projects creates a collaborative network of scientists and physicians across medical specialties and institutions. "Brain cancer does not recognize institutional or geographic boundaries," said Susan Marshall of the Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada. "Researchers and funders must come together and share resources if we are to make real progress."

Organized over the past two years, The Brain Tumor Funders Collaborative is an effort among private foundations and non-profit organizations to pool their resources and become more strategic by focusing their research dollars toward specific therapeutic goals. The eight organizations of the BTFC combine this research funding with patient education and advocacy.

“If we were going to ask the scientists and clinicians to collaborate, we as funders also needed to collaborate,” said Rita Berkson, Goldhirsh Foundation. Kay Verble of the Sontag Foundation agrees, “We are learning both the pitfalls and the tremendous advantages of working together, to sharpen our own ability to invest strategically in the brain tumor research effort.”

Susan L. Weiner of the Children’s Brain Tumor Foundation added: “Researchers in this field are hard-working and dedicated, and we wanted to support that part of their work which does not easily attract financing – the integration of clinical research with basic science, which must include the application of new therapies for pediatric patients.”

Neal Levitan of the Brain Tumor Society explained, “BTS’ involvement was a response to the numbers. Central Brain Tumor Registry of the United States reports approximately 20,000 people are diagnosed with a primary malignant brain tumor each year; nonmalignant brain tumors are diagnosed in an additional 23,000 people. Tragically, this year an estimated 13,000 people will die of brain cancer. The disease also affects the young: almost 2,500 children under the age of fifteen are diagnosed annually. The disease carries with it the second highest cancer mortality for children.”

Due to the fact that brain tumors affect brain function, both the disease and its treatment have a high incidence of disability. The identification of successful treatments remains elusive despite dedicated efforts of researchers and clinicians. The McDonnell Foundation’s Susan Fitzpatrick stated, “We believe that eight funders working together would send a powerful message. We must have new ways of looking at this devastating disease.”

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Note: The following organizations participate in the BTFC and in this joint funding initiative:

- ❖ American Brain Tumor Association (ABTA)
- ❖ Brain Tumour Foundation of Canada
- ❖ Brain Tumor Society (BTS)
- ❖ Children’s Brain Tumor Foundation (CBTF)
- ❖ Goldhirsh Foundation
- ❖ James S. McDonnell Foundation
- ❖ National Brain Tumor Foundation (NBTF)
- ❖ Sontag Foundation

Further information about the BTFC and its funding initiative can be found at www.braintumorfunders.org

Brain tumor facts are available at <http://www.nci.nih.gov/cancertopics/types/brain/>