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New ALS gene discovered: KIF5A

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ALS Ice Bucket Challenge donations funded research toward this important discovery

Singapore – Researchers have identified a new ALS gene: KIF5A. This important gene discovery, funded by The ALS Association through ALS Ice Bucket Challenge donations, will help researchers understand ALS disease pathways and represents a potential new ALS therapeutic target.

This was a large collaborative effort involving over 250 researchers, led by John Landers, Ph.D., Professor of Neurology at University of Massachusetts Medical School in Worcester, Mass., and Bryan Traynor, M.D., Ph.D., senior investigator in the Laboratory of Neurogenetics at the National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in Bethesda, M.D. The discovery was published in the March 21edition of the journal *Neuron*.

ALS is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that affects nerve cells in the brain and the spinal cord. Eventually, people with ALS lose the ability to initiate and control muscle movement, which often leads to total paralysis and death within five years of diagnosis. For unknown reasons, veterans are twice as likely to develop ALS as the general population. There is no cure.

"This global, open-source collaboration has been the underlying goal for building these large initiatives," said Lucie Bruijn, Ph.D. MBA, chief scientist for The ALS Association. "It is only through these kinds of partnerships that we can accelerate the pace of research towards new treatments for ALS."

Funding for Project MinE also came through The ALS Association Georgia Chapter, The ALS Association Greater New York Chapter, and New Amsterdam City Swim.