

The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research



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Mission

The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research (MJFF) is dedicated to finding a cure for Parkinson's disease (PD) through an aggressively funded research agenda, and to ensuring the development of improved therapies for those living with Parkinson's today.

With an in-house team of formally trained PhDs, a neurologist and business-trained project managers, MJFF consistently seeks new ways to custom-fit promising ideas with resources – financial, scientific, collaborative or otherwise.

Strategy/Approach

MJFF is accelerating drug development for PD by identifying and addressing roadblocks along the therapeutic development pipeline and by collaborating with academic and industry researchers. Its research programs aim to systematically shepherd basic discoveries and translational advances toward meaningful clinical outcomes. The projects MJFF funds and leads itself generally fall into one of two categories:

- Research exploring specific targets and therapeutic approaches that will lead to the development of Parkinson's treatments.
- Research to develop tools and resources that will, in turn, speed the development and testing of Parkinson's treatments.

The Foundation invests in early-stage, high-risk projects to enable researchers to collect the data and evidence necessary to attract additional funding and support. One way MJFF connects these stakeholders is through its [Partnering Program](#) which showcases promising research results in the MJFF portfolio for funders who may wish to invest in their continued development. Many MJFF awardees have leveraged early Foundation support to raise exponentially more in follow-on funding, moving these projects closer to pharmacy shelves.

Additionally, MJFF encourages an open-access model: developing research tools and collecting data and making them accessible to the Parkinson's community. This includes [Fox Trial Finder](#), an online tool that connects more than 31,000 willing research volunteers with the clinical trials that need them, including those not sponsored by MJFF.

Research Portfolio

As a private funder, MJFF proactively manages more than 450 active grants in its portfolio, which span the continuum from basic to clinical research. The Foundation also sponsors studies and leads consortia to address unmet needs in the field. MJFF has invested in the study of over 500 drug targets, including 65 clinical trials, in partnership with both academic and industry teams. Since 2000, MJFF has funded more than \$450 million in Parkinson's research.

Disease-Modifying Therapies

The Foundation funded the first clinical trial of a therapy against a major protein of interest in PD (alpha-synuclein), and supports other disease-modifying treatments in development. MJFF also initiated consortia with various research groups to examine the toxic pathology of alpha-synuclein and another protein of interest: LRRK2. By establishing roadmaps around drug targets — understanding biology, creating research tools, recruiting clinical research participants — MJFF is moving the needle closer to a cure for Parkinson's disease.

Symptomatic Treatments

Most available therapies for PD only treat the motor symptoms of the disease, lose efficacy over time and can cause debilitating side effects. MJFF prioritizes the unmet needs of patients, driving research against untreated symptoms such as cognitive decline and autonomic disturbances. The Foundation funds projects to improve the standard of care with an aim of longer relief from motor symptoms and fewer, less severe side effects.

Tools and Resources

- **Biomarkers** – A biological marker of PD could allow earlier and more conclusive diagnosis, monitoring of disease progression, and faster testing of disease-modifying therapies. Building on a long history of funding biomarker history, MJFF launched the [Parkinson's Progression Markers Initiative](#) in 2010. This landmark study will enroll 1500 subjects to identify and validate a PD biomarker.
- **Research Tools** – MJFF develops and characterizes research tools, such as pre-clinical models, antibodies and viral vectors, and makes them available to the PD research community, freeing scientists to work on discovery and drug development. In 2013 the Foundation launched a [Tools Consortium](#) with industry leaders to optimize existing tools and prioritize and lead creation of new tools.
- **Clinical Data and Biological Sample Resources** – MJFF has supported pre-clinical and clinical efforts that have generated valuable tissue and biosample resources for the

research community. The Foundation accepts requests for use of these data and samples and provides funds for research using these resources.

Partnership Practices

MJFF works closely with both industry and academic research teams to partner extensively around all stages of PD therapeutics development. To date, MJFF has awarded \$102 million in funding to more than 230 unique industry-led projects.

MJFF partners with biotech and pharmaceutical companies

wishing to maximize the benefit of its extensive network and expertise in speeding shared research goals. The Foundation's unbiased expertise, coupled with an unparalleled view of the field, allows it to broker key introductions and foster critical collaborations that can help propel the best ideas forward on their path toward regulatory approval and marketability.

Opportunities for partnership include:

- **Funding** – All of the Foundation's funding programs are open to industry.
- **Research Tools** – MJFF develops and distributes research tools to facilitate research at low or no cost to the research community, including industry.
- **Novel Partnerships** – The foundation partners with companies that wish to benefit from its extensive network and expertise in accelerating shared research goals. An example is a partnership with Austrian biotech **AFFiRiS**. MJFF funded the company's Phase I trial of the first-ever vaccine approach for treating PD. AFFiRiS has received follow-on funding to continue development from both venture capitalists and the European Union.
- **Partnering Program** – This program proactively showcases promising research results in its portfolio for funders who may wish to invest in their continued development.
- **Parkinson's Disease Therapeutics Conference** – MJFF invites industry leaders to its annual conference, the only one in the world focused exclusively on PD drug development, to hear the latest from MJFF portfolio projects and commentary on the field.
- **Parkinson's Progression Markers Initiative** – This landmark biomarkers study is sponsored by MJFF and funded in partnership with 15 biotech and pharmaceutical companies, including Abbvie, Genentech, Merck, Roche, Pfizer and GlaxoSmithKline.

Financials

MJFF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. The latest financial information available is from 2013.¹

Year ended 12/31/13:

- Revenue: \$92,710,405
- Assets: \$121,420,923
- Grants Payable: \$70,790,386
- New Grants: \$67,429,325
- Gifts received: \$91,974,529

¹ Information obtained from MJFF Financial Statements:

<https://www.michaeljfox.org/page.html?foundation-financials>

- Expenditures: \$84,958,053

Key Accomplishments

As of May 2014, MJFF has:

- Funded more than \$450 million in Parkinson's research, including more than \$102 million to more than 230 unique projects led by industry partners.
- Directed \$75 million to biomarker development, including a \$60 million commitment to the Parkinson's Progression Markers Initiative.
- 89 cents of every \$1 spent straight to research program efforts.
- Vetted more than 500 therapeutic targets.
- Engaged with more than 31,000 clinical trial volunteers through Fox Trial Finder.
- Awarded nearly 30 grants toward repurposing drugs for other diseases to treat Parkinson's.
- More than 450 active grants in its portfolio.

Leadership

The Foundation is governed by a **Board of Directors**, advised by **Founders Council** and a **Leadership Council**, and counseled by a **Scientific Advisory Board** and **Patient Council**.

MJFF is managed by a New York-based leadership staff.

- **CEO** – Todd Sherer, PhD, tsherer@michaeljfox.org
- **Co-Founder & Executive Vice Chairman** – Deborah Brooks, dbrooks@michaeljfox.org