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ntsad research review

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Identifying Molecular Pathways of Canavan Disease to Find a Cure

Maria Traka, PhD, Research Associate at the University of Chicago, received a Research Initiative Grant from NTSAD to develop an *in vitro* (in the lab) approach to identify molecular pathways of Canavan Disease. Using the Canavan (CD) mouse model called *nur7* mouse to create cultures of oligodendrocytes (the nerve cells affected in CD) to study CD further. Here is a summary of their results:

1. High levels of NAA (which accumulates in CD) has no toxic effects on these oligodendrocytes. This suggests that the damage to these cells may be due to another mechanism, possibly related to the effect of the NAA on other genes.
2. They found a number of genes that have been altered in *nur7* mouse oligodendrocytes. These differences may explain why the symptoms of CD occur.
3. The group plans to investigate the importance of the altered genes to better understand what causes the symptoms of CD and to search for potential treatments.

Click [here](#) to download her final report.

Meet Dr. Traka!

Maria Traka, PhD received her PhD from the University of Crete in Greece.



Dr. Traka presented at the 2012 Annual Family Conference. When Maria is not in the lab she enjoys traveling, cooking, reading and biking.

Next Steps?

The group plans to investigate the importance of the altered genes to better understand what causes the symptoms of CD and to search for potential treatments.

The Research Initiative has awarded over \$2 million to 46 projects.

The impact of these grants has grown as several grantees have collectively received over \$10 million in funding from NIH.

I believe in innovation and that the way you get innovation is you fund research and you learn the basic facts.

~ Bill Gates

national tay-sachs & allied diseases association

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