

December 18, 2017

Sue Hagen
Patient and Research Services Director
National Ataxia Foundation

Dear Sue Hagen,

In 2015, I was awarded the Young Investigator in SCAs (YI-SCA) Award by the National Ataxia Foundation. The project focused on the SK channel as a potential drug target for the treatment of ataxia.

When I received the notice of the award, I was literally on my way from Virginia to California to start my new lab there. The YI-SCA grant helped me establish my new lab, led me to new findings that resulted in new publications. I was able to gain crucial structural insights into the binding pocket of the small molecule compounds in the SK channels. The structural information is especially important for drug design targeting the SK channels for ataxia treatment, which I utilized to prepare and submit grant applications to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Even though the initial submission was not successful, the resubmission of the revised grant proposal to NIH was fortunate to be awarded.

The award is an IGNITE (R21/R33) grant from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. The goal of this grant mechanism is to nurture the initial early-stage translational research.

I am very grateful to the National Ataxia Foundation for the YI-SCA award. Without the YI-SCA award, I do not think that I would have been able to establish my new lab and perform research project that led to this IGNITE award by the National Institutes of Health.

I would like to thank the donors of the National Ataxia Foundation who provide the research grant funds. I will continue my research in the hope of finding a cure for ataxia.

Sincerely yours,

Miao Zhang, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Chapman University School of Pharmacy
9401 Jeronimo Rd, Suite 297N
Irvine, CA 92618
<http://www.chapman.edu/our-faculty/miao-zhang>