

NIAMS

National Institutes of Health



**National Institute of
Arthritis and
Musculoskeletal and
Skin Diseases**

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Announcement

NIH, Muscular Dystrophy Association, Partner on New Muscular Dystrophy Research Centers

The National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS), the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) have collaborated with the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) to fund up to three new cooperative research centers for the muscular dystrophies (MD), a group of genetic muscle-wasting diseases.

The three institutes will fund the centers at up to \$1 million per center per year for 5 years. MDA supplemental funding will add up to \$500,000 per center per year for 3 years.

“We are very excited to be pursuing this novel partnership with the Muscular Dystrophy Association,” said Stephen I. Katz, M.D., Ph.D., director of the NIAMS. “MD research is progressing rapidly, and with public-private support behind these new centers, we should really be able to move the field to the next level.”

The new centers, which result from a 2002 Request for Applications (http://www.niams.nih.gov/rtac/funding/grants/rfa/ar_03_001.pdf), have not yet been chosen. They will bring expertise, infrastructure and resources to bear on major MD questions. Two additional centers are expected to be funded in future years.

“Formal collaborations between the National Institutes of Health and the Muscular Dystrophy Association are overdue,” said acting NINDS director Audrey S. Penn, M.D.,

a noted expert on neuromuscular disease. "This effort to work together towards cures for the muscular dystrophies is particularly timely and satisfying."

The centers spring from the Muscular Dystrophy Community Assistance, Research and Education (MD-CARE) Act passed by Congress in 2001. They will encompass basic, clinical and behavioral research projects. Centers will work individually and collaboratively, and will be overseen by a steering committee.

"The objective of the new muscular dystrophy centers is to unite researchers in a broad range of disciplines, in pursuit of knowledge to improve the lives of the tens of thousands of people with muscular dystrophy," said Duane Alexander, M.D., director of the NICHD.

MD is characterized by progressive weakness and degeneration of the skeletal or voluntary muscles which control movement. Its major forms include myotonic, Duchenne, Becker, Emery-Dreifuss, congenital, limb-girdle and facioscapulohumeral. Duchenne is the most common form affecting children, and myotonic is the most common form affecting adults. MD can affect people of all ages. Although some forms first become apparent in infancy or childhood, others may not appear until middle age or later.

NIAMS, NINDS and NICHD are part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Institutes of Health (NIH).

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