Grant Title: AUTISM SPEAKS - POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS IN TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH

Funding Opportunity Number: N/A

Agency/Department: Autism Speaks.

Area of Research: Support postdoctoral scientists in pursuing training in autism spectrum disorders (ASD).

Release and Expiration: N/A


Amount: The postdoctoral fellowship stipend level will be determined by the number of years of postdoctoral experience at the time of the award to a maximum of $51,600 per year and a $10,000 annual allowance.

Length of Support: Two years.

Eligible Applicants: The candidate must hold an M.D., Ph.D. or equivalent terminal degree, and cannot have more than 5 years of postdoctoral experience at the commencement of the award. The selected postdoctoral fellow must spend at least 80% of his/her professional time engaged exclusively on the fellowship research activities for the duration of the award. The fellow may not simultaneously serve in an internship or residency, hold a tenure-track faculty appointment, or hold another named fellowship award during the support period. Postdoctoral training in the laboratory where the applicant received his/her graduate degree will not be reviewed.

Summary: The goal of this program is to support well-qualified postdoctoral scientists in pursuing training in autism spectrum disorders (ASD) translational research. Applicants from public or private institutions working in preclinical or clinical research arenas are encouraged to apply. Successful applicants will detail a project that bridges basic laboratory research and behavioral or biomedical clinical research, with a training plan that includes mentoring in both basic and clinical research environments. Applicants are encouraged to consider "bench-to-bedside" approaches that delineate a path from preclinical models of ASD to well-defined patient populations, as well as "back-translational" projects that enrich the skills of behaviorists and clinicians through basic research on ASD biology and mechanisms of therapeutic intervention. The results should have the potential to promote preclinical or clinical trials that improve outcomes for individuals with autism. The following four areas of research are of the highest interest for the program: 1. Biomarker Discovery: Identification and / or validation of biomarkers that demonstrate, for example, the potential to a: patient selection/ stratification in clinical trials. b. early diagnosis of patients. c. prediction or optimization of treatment response therapies in clinical trials. d. and could include, but would not be limited to biochemical, genetic, imaging, physiological endpoints, and can include preclinical discovery research in animal model systems. 2. Outcome Measure Development: Development and/or validation of outcome measures that can be used to measure treatment response in clinical trials and support development of innovative therapies ranging from behavioral interventions to medicines or medical devices. 3. Preclinical Target Validation: a. development of novel models systems (e.g. transgenic animal models, cell-based systems) that can be used as reagents to support rational selection of drug targets and evaluate experimental pharmacological agents. b. development of novel assays that deliver preclinical endpoints to support rationalization of drug targets and evaluate experimental pharmacological agents. c. projects aimed at using novel model systems and assays to characterize and validate candidate drug targets. 4. Experimental Therapeutics: Investigating the therapeutic potential of novel pharmacological, behavioral and technology-based applications that aim to address core symptoms or associated co-morbid conditions (e.g. psychiatric, neurological, somatic). Experimental approaches can include both exploratory clinical trials in humans and studies conducted in preclinical animal models relevant to autism.