

January 22, 2009

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We represent a broad spectrum of physicians, scientists and researchers and are writing to express our strong support for your commitment to expand scientific research. As you consider this increased investment in science, we want to highlight a very important and potentially far-reaching area of inquiry. Specifically, greater understanding of the mitochondria could provide insights into treatments for a wide range of diseases and conditions that affect millions of Americans.

Mitochondria are often called the “powerhouses of the cell.” They are specialized compartments within almost every cell and are responsible for producing the energy needed by our body to sustain life. Mitochondria combine oxygen from the air we breathe with calories from food to produce the energy required for all bodily functions. If the mitochondria fail to produce sufficient energy, the cell will not function properly and organ systems will fail.

Research has revealed that mitochondrial dysfunction is at the core of many common illnesses and chronic conditions such as Alzheimer’s disease, Parkinson’s disease, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, osteoporosis, cancer and even the aging process. Autoimmune diseases such as multiple sclerosis, lupus and rheumatoid arthritis also may have a mitochondrial basis. There also is new evidence that mitochondrial dysfunction plays a role in the cause of some children’s autism.

There also are “primary” mitochondrial diseases that usually result from genetic defects that reduce the ability of the mitochondria to produce energy. Mitochondrial disease was recognized relatively recently with the first cases diagnosed in adults in the 1960s and in children in the 1980s. Every 30 minutes a child is born who will develop a mitochondrial disease by age ten. Research published six months ago showed that more than 1 in 200 people have mitochondrial DNA mutations that could lead to mitochondrial disease.

Acknowledging the potentially far-reaching implications that would result from a deeper understanding of the mitochondria, The National Institutes of Health recently committed to establish a mitochondria research initiative that would involve all NIH institutes. This initiative will play a significant role in advancing science and medicine. In the 2008 appropriations legislation, the United States Congress expressed its support for intensified mitochondrial research within NIH.

While some steps are being taken, much more could be done to increase our understanding of this critical area of human health. Because mitochondria are so

important to the health of cells, a full understanding of their function and dysfunction will have a significant impact on the health of our citizens and will lead to prevention and cures for medical problems that currently affect millions of Americans. We respectfully urge your Administration to include research into mitochondrial medicine among your top medical and research priorities.

Respectfully,

**Salvatore DiMauro, MD**

Lucy G. Moses Professor of Neurology  
Columbia University  
New York, NY

**Bruce H. Cohen, MD**

Chief of Pediatric Neurology  
The Cleveland Clinic  
Cleveland, OH

**Robert K. Naviaux, MD, PhD**

UCSD Mitochondrial and Metabolic Disease Center  
University of California – San Diego  
San Diego, CA

**Peter W. Stacpoole, PhD, MD**

Director, General Clinical Research Center  
Director, Clinical and Translational Science Institute  
Associate Dean, Clinical Research and Training  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, FL

**Sidney M. Gospe, Jr., MD, PhD**

Herman and Faye Sarkowsky Endowed Chair  
Head, Division of Pediatric Neurology  
Professor of Neurology and Pediatrics  
University of Washington  
Seattle, WA

**Vamsi Mootha, MD**

Associate Professor, Department of Systems Biology  
Harvard Medical School & MGH/Broad Institute  
Cambridge, MA

**Douglas C. Wallace, PhD**

Director, Center for Molecular & Mitochondrial Medicine and  
Genetics  
Biological Chemistry School of Medicine  
University of California - Irvine  
Irvine, CA

**Charles Hoppel, MD**

Co-Director  
Center for Inherited Disorders of Energy Metabolism  
Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine  
Cleveland, OH

**Jerry Vockley, MD, PhD**

Professor of Pediatrics  
School of Medicine  
University of Pittsburgh  
Professor of Human Genetics  
Graduate School of Public Health  
Chief of Medical Genetics  
Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC  
Pittsburgh, PA

**John M. Shoffner, MD**

Neurology, Biochemical Genetics, Molecular Genetics  
Medical Neurogenetics, LLC  
Adjunct Associate Professor, Georgia State University  
Atlanta, GA

**David Chan, MD, PhD**

Associate Professor of Biology  
California Institute of Technology  
Pasadena, CA

**Michael A. Frohman, MD, PhD**

Professor & Chairman  
Department of Pharmacological Sciences  
Director  
Medical Scientist Training Program (MD/PhD, MSTP)  
Center for Developmental Genetics  
Stony Brook University  
Stony Brook, NY

**Keshav Singh, PhD**

Professor of Oncology  
Department of Cancer Genetics  
Roswell Park Cancer Institute  
Buffalo, NY

**Douglas S. Kerr, MD, PhD**

Director  
Center for Inherited Disorders of Energy Metabolism  
Professor, Department of Pediatrics  
Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine  
Cleveland, OH

**Michio Hirano, PhD**

Associate Professor of Neurology  
Neurological Institute  
Columbia University  
New York, NY

**Russell P. Saneto, DO, PhD**

Associate Professor of Neurology and Pediatrics  
University of Washington  
Seattle, WA

**Susan P. LeDoux, PhD**

Assistant Dean for Curriculum  
Professor and Vice-Chair  
Department of Cell Biology and Neuroscience  
University of South Alabama  
Mobile, AL

**Amy C. Goldstein, MD**

Child Neurologist, Division of Child Neurology  
Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC  
Clinical Assistant Professor of Pediatrics & Neurology  
University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine  
Pittsburgh, PA

**Kendall B. Wallace, PhD**

Diplomate, American Board of Toxicology  
Fellow, Academy of Toxicological Sciences  
Editor, Toxicology  
Professor, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology  
University of Minnesota Medical School  
Duluth, MN

**Howard Zucker, MD, JD**

Former Assistant Director General  
World Health Organization  
Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Health  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Institute of Politics Fellow, Spring 2009  
Harvard University Kennedy School of Government  
Cambridge, MA

**Rajiv R. Varma, MD**

Clinical Director  
Division of Child Neurology  
Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh of UPMC  
Pittsburgh, PA

**Giovanni Manfredi, MD, PhD**

Professor of Neurology and Neuroscience  
Weill Medical College  
Cornell University  
New York, NY

**Richard H. Haas, MD**

UCSD Mitochondrial and Metabolic Disease Center  
University of California – San Diego  
San Diego, CA

**Lawrence I. Grossman, PhD**

Professor of Molecular Medicine and Genetics  
Henry L. Brasza Director  
Center for Molecular Medicine and Genetics  
Wayne State University School of Medicine  
Detroit, MI

**Carlos T. Moraes, PhD**

Department of Neurology and Cell Biology & Anatomy  
Miller School of Medicine  
University of Miami  
Miami, FL

**Eric Schon, PhD**

Professor of Genetics and Development  
College of Physicians and Surgeons  
Columbia University  
New York, NY

**Devin Oglesbee, PhD**

Assistant Professor  
Laboratory Medicine and Pathology  
and Medical Genetics  
Co-Director, Biochemical Genetics Laboratory  
Mayo Clinic  
Rochester, MN

**Grazia Isaya, MD, PhD**

Consultant and Professor  
Director, Mayo Medical Scientist Training Program  
Mayo Clinic College of Medicine  
Rochester, MN

**Arun Srivastava, PhD**

George H. Kitzman Professor of Genetics  
Chief, Division of Cellular and Molecular Therapy  
Departments of Pediatrics, Molecular Genetics &  
Microbiology, Powell Gene Therapy Center  
Assistant Director, General Clinical Research Center  
Cancer and Genetics Research Complex  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, FL

**Gregory M. Enns, MB, ChB**

Director, Biochemical Genetics Program  
Division of Medical Genetics  
Stanford University  
Stanford, CA

**William Craigen, MD, PhD**

Molecular and Human Genetics  
Baylor College of Medicine  
Houston, TX

**Juan M. Pascual, MD, PhD**

Assistant Professor  
Departments of Neurology, Physiology  
Pediatrics Division of Pediatric Neurology  
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center  
Dallas, TX

**Antoni Barrientos, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Department of Neurology and Cell Biology & Anatomy  
Miller School of Medicine  
University of Miami  
Miami, FL

**Marni J. Falk, MD**

Assistant Professor of Human Genetics  
University of Pennsylvania  
Director, Mitochondrial-Genetics Diagnostic Clinic  
The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia  
Philadelphia, PA

**Mikhail Alexeyev, PhD**

Assistant Professor  
University of South Alabama  
Mobile, AL

**Francisca Diaz, PhD**

Research Assistant Professor  
Department of Neurology  
Miller School of Medicine  
University of Miami  
Miami, FL

**Konstantin Khrapko, PhD**

Associate Professor of Medicine  
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center  
Harvard Medical School  
Boston, MA

**Stephen P. Hersh, MD, DLFAPA**

Director, The Medical Illness Counseling Center  
Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Behavioral Sciences and  
Pediatrics  
The George Washington University  
Washington, DC

**Mary Kay Koenig, MD**

Director - Neurometabolic & Mitochondrial Clinic  
University of Texas Houston  
Houston, TX

**Carla Koehler, PhD**

Associate Professor  
Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry  
University of California – Los Angeles  
Los Angeles, CA

**Jeff MacKeigan, PhD**

Scientific Investigator  
Head, Laboratory of Systems Biology  
Van Andel Research Institute  
Grand Rapids, MI

**Phil G. Morgan, MD**

Research Director  
Seattle Children's Hospital  
Department of Anesthesiology  
University of Washington and Children's Research Institute  
Seattle, WA

**Jodi Nunnari, PhD**

Professor and Chair  
Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology  
University of California - Davis  
Davis, CA

**Thomas W. O'Brien, PhD**

Professor, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular  
Biology  
University of Florida  
Gainesville, FL

**Paulo A. Ferreira, PhD**

Professor  
Jules and Doris Stein Research to Prevent Blindness  
Departments of Ophthalmology, Molecular Genetics and  
Microbiology  
Duke University Medical Center  
Durham, NC

**Oleh Khalimonchuk, PhD**

Departments of Biochemistry and Internal Medicine  
Health Sciences Center  
University of Utah  
Salt Lake City, UT

**Beverly A. Rzigalinski, PhD**

Professor of Pharmacology  
Virginia College of Osteopathic Medicine  
Blacksburg, VA

**Brett H. Graham, MD, PhD**

Assistant Professor  
Department of Molecular and Human Genetics  
Baylor College of Medicine  
Houston, TX

**Margaret Sedensky, MD**

Director of Research Training  
Department of Anesthesiology  
University of Washington  
Seattle, WA

**Linda L. Spremulli, PhD**

Professor of Chemistry  
University of North Carolina  
Chapel Hill, NC

**Robert S. Weiss, PhD**

Associate Professor of Molecular Genetics  
Department of Biomedical Sciences  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, NY

**Sandra R. Bacman, PhD**

Department of Neurology and Cell Biology & Anatomy  
Miller School of Medicine  
University of Miami

**Patrick F. Chinnery, MBBS, PhD, FRCPath, FRCP**

Professor of Neurogenetics  
The Medical School  
Framlington Place  
Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

**Annette Feigenbaum, MD, ChB, FRCP**

Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics  
University of Toronto  
Medical Director, PKU Program  
The Hospital for Sick Children  
Toronto, Ontario Canada

**Eric A. Shoubridge, PhD, FRSC**

Professor, Departments of Neurology and Neurosurgery  
and Human Genetics  
Montreal Neurological Institute  
McGill University  
Montreal, Quebec Canada

**Gerald S. Shadel, PhD**

Departments of Pathology & Genetics  
Yale University School of Medicine  
New Haven, CT

**Sion Williams, PhD**

Department of Neurology  
University of Miami  
Miami, FL

**Lee-Jun Wong, PhD**

Professor of Molecular and Human Genetics  
Baylor College of Medicine  
Houston, TX

**Dennis R. Winge, PhD**

Department of Internal Medicine  
University of Utah Health Sciences Center  
Salt Lake City, UT

**Tina Wenz, PhD**

Department of Neurology  
Miller School of Medicine  
University of Miami  
Miami, FL

**Mindong Ren, PhD**

Assistant Professor of Cell Biology  
New York University School of Medicine  
New York, NY

**Georgirene D. Vladutiu, PhD**

Director, The Robert Guthrie Biochemical & Molecular  
Genetics Laboratory  
Professor of Pediatrics, Neurology, & Pathology  
The School of Medicine & Biomedical Sciences  
The Buffalo General Hospital  
Buffalo, NY

**Mark Tarnopolsky, MD, PhD, FRCP**

Associate Professor  
Departments of Pediatrics and Medicine  
McMaster University Medical Center  
Hamilton, Ontario Canada

**Massimo Zeviani, MD, PhD**

Division of Molecular Neurogenetics  
National Neurological Institute "C.Besta"  
Milan, Italy

**Brian Robinson, PhD**

Program Head – Metabolism  
Research Institute Hospital for Sick Children  
Toronto, Ontario Canada

**Anu Suomalainen, MD, PhD**

Sigrid Juselius Professor of Clinical Molecular Medicine  
Finnish Centre of Excellence for Research on  
Mitochondrial Disease and Aging (FinMIT)  
University of Helsinki  
Helsinki, Finland

**Tanja Taivassalo, PhD**

Department of Kinesiology & Physical Education  
McGill University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada