JDRF Israel Initiative

JDRF and Israel: A Thriving Partnership for Diabetes Research

At the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF), our mission to find better treatment and a cure for diabetes through the support of research has never been more critical. In the past year, studies have revealed that in the United States and Europe, the number of people with type 1 diabetes is growing faster than ever before—some estimates say that new diagnoses have increased by 4 percent per year.

Our research portfolio, the most comprehensive in the world for type 1 diabetes, reflects our sense of urgency, supporting innovative research programs with a goal of introducing innovative interventions to market. Our programs focus on research for all stages of diabetes—prevention, better treatments to keep people with diabetes healthier, and multiple paths to a cure. This focus on curing, treating, and preventing type 1 diabetes is concentrated on four therapeutic areas: Beta Cell Therapies, Immune Therapies, Glucose Control, and Complications Therapies. Research in these key areas is being performed across the United States and throughout the world.

One of the countries where many important developments in research are taking place is Israel. Israel views medical research and biotechnology as a national priority, providing strong financial and technological support through the Office of the Chief Scientist of Israel’s Ministry of Industry and Trade. Israel is a world leader in stem cell research, and the backing provided by the Israeli government has made the country a hub of innovation in the field of medical research and biotechnology. Israel stands at the vanguard of type 1 diabetes investigation. Moreover, Israel’s universities and the country’s specialized military units champion medicine, physics, mathematics, and computer science training to create a highly educated workforce.

The United States has traditionally served as a destination for Israeli scientists pursuing postdoctoral training, before returning home to Israel to establish their own labs. While Israel is generous in the proportion of its governmental funds going to support health sciences research, it is a small country, and the overall availability of scientific funding is therefore limited. Many of Israel’s best scientists successfully compete for international funding to develop and run world-class programs, and devote their careers to advancing medical research and biotechnology with a strong sense of obligation to help improve and save the lives of individuals afflicted with illness and chronic disease.

JDRF is fortunate to have forged many strong partnerships with physicians and researchers in Israel. Within a culture of doing good, scientists in Israel were among the first to develop the promising technology of embryonic stem cell lines and investigate the potential of these new cells for therapeutic uses. Israel has maintained a supportive environment for stem cell research, an essential factor for young scientists deciding what to pursue and where to develop their careers. The study of the development and function of the insulin-producing beta cell is another interdisciplinary strength of Israeli scientists. JDRF is eager to further collaborate efforts to capitalize with stem cell and developmental biology experts in Israel, to focus on our vision of beta cell and immune therapies as a cure for type 1 diabetes.

JDRF’s Work in Israel

Reflecting the quality of science being conducted in Israel, JDRF continues to fund a robust portfolio of research in the country, primarily in the area of beta cell research. In the last four years alone, we have invested
more than $10 million in projects being carried out by some of Israel's most accomplished scientists. This funding supports individual grants for researchers as well as three “Network Research Grants,” which assist teams of researchers who are closely collaborating and who are committed to sharing information about their success and setbacks in “real time” as they occur. JDRF believes this is an excellent model for speeding advances in type 1 diabetes research. The projects in Israel have great potential for serving as a replicable model for other JDRF funding initiatives internationally in the future.

Through the support of JDRF, more than 28 projects related to beta cell therapies have been implemented by some of the brightest scientists throughout Israel's most prestigious institutions, including:

- Howard Cedar, M.D., Ph.D., The Hebrew University Medical School
- Yuval Dor, Ph.D., The Hebrew University–Hadassah Medical School
- Shimon Efrat, Ph.D., Tel Aviv University
- Sarah Ferber, Ph.D., Sheba Medical Center
- Benjamin Geiger, Ph.D., Weizmann Institute
- Eli Lewis, Ph.D., Ben-Gurion University of the Negev
- Danielle Melloul, Ph.D., Hadassah University Hospital, Jerusalem
- Yair Reisner, Ph.D., Weizmann Institute
- Michael Walker, Ph.D., Weizmann Institute
- Yehiel Zick, Ph.D., Weizmann Institute

**Continuing the Momentum of Diabetes Research in Israel**

JDRF's investment in beta cell and immune therapy research in Israel is significant, in large part due to the scientists' international reputation in medical research and biotechnology. With the continued support of JDRF and its generous friends, the scientific inroads forged by these researchers have the potential to produce key advances in our understanding and treatment of type 1 diabetes. Such advances will speed our progress toward better treatments and a cure, impacting the lives of the 285 million people worldwide with diabetes, as well as those who are not yet diagnosed.

In order to advance progress toward the above goals, JDRF has recently launched the Israel Initiative, a campaign to fund new research in Israel, seeded with a lead gift of $1 million from philanthropists Neil and Lisa Wallack and a $3 million grant from the Israel Science Foundation. In order to ensure that our research in Israel can move ahead, JDRF must raise a minimum of an additional $6 million by 2012 for a total of $10 million. JDRF is actively seeking philanthropic investors who will join us in this effort. Much progress has been made, but a significant investment is necessary to capitalize on recent advances in Israel. All new research funding through the Israel initiative will undergo JDRF's scientific review process. With continued support, JDRF will strengthen our collaborative efforts and build on past successes.

**Please Join Us**

Unlocking the mysteries surrounding type 1 diabetes is a challenging process and has taken decades to complete. It is only through the philanthropic support of dedicated individuals that we have recently been able to speed—and achieve—significant advances toward improved treatments and a cure for type 1 diabetes.

JDRF asks you to consider an investment in our Israel Initiative. As these advances show, each day offers the promise of a new discovery that will bring us one step closer to a cure. We hope the work of these researchers—and their resulting discoveries with the potential to improve and save lives—will inspire you to become a part of this important effort.

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For more information or to discuss your gift to the JDRF Israel Initiative, please contact:

Eileen Jear  
National Manager, Northeast Region  
JDRF Major and Planned Gifts  
(212) 478-4329  
ejear@jdrf.org