Lundbeck and ‘Keep Memory Alive’ Invest to Support Multiple System Atrophy Research and Global Taskforce

Deerfield, Ill. and Las Vegas, Nev., April 14, 2015 – Lundbeck, a global pharmaceutical company specializing in brain disorders, announced today a charitable investment toward the developing Global Multiple System Atrophy Task Force (GMSAT). The GMSAT, formed in November 2014, is a global coordinated network designed to engage and connect scientists with the promise of exploring new research and treatments for multiple system atrophy (MSA), a progressive neurodegenerative disorder.

Lundbeck’s $100,000 donation is matched by an additional $100,000 from Keep Memory Alive’s ‘Fight MSA’ initiative spearheaded by celebrity chef and restaurateur Kerry Simon (who suffers from MSA) and his business partner, Elizabeth Blau, entertainment reporter Robin Leach, and Keep Memory Alive founder Larry Ruvo. This initial funding will help cement the organizational development of the GMSAT, along with providing seed support for initial research projects. The taskforce includes MSA physicians, scientists, pharmaceutical industry representatives and leadership from the Movement Disorder Society and NIH National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke.

“GMSAT will forge a global, coordinated effort to prioritize research goals toward the development of meaningful treatments for MSA, both from a symptom management and from a disease modification standpoint – with the ultimate goal being a cure,” said Ryan R. Walsh, MD, PhD, Lee Pascal Parkinson’s Disease Scholar and Director, Parkinson’s Disease and Movement Disorders Program at Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas, Nevada. “MSA is a rare, debilitating neurological disease that strikes people hard, and the GMSAT will amplify work from those that have been tackling the problem for years, with researchers coming together in a novel coordinated and collaborative effort.”

The conceptualization for GMSAT was initiated at the November 2014 Global MSA Research Roadmap meeting held at the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas, Nevada, where researchers from 4 continents, 12 countries, 30 academic institutions, 15 industry entities and the NIH (including the Acting Director of NINDS, Walter Koroshetz, as Keynote and meeting Advisory Committee member), joined together to develop a new Research Roadmap and initiate the GMSAT. The Research Roadmap will help coalesce thinking in the field regarding obstacles to progress and potential ways forward in MSA research, which GMSAT is being developed to help execute.
MSA, which primarily affects men and women in their 50s, is characterized by symptoms of autonomic nervous system failure, including, but not limited to, fainting spells and bladder control problems, combined with motor control symptoms, such as tremors, rigidity and loss of muscle coordination.

“MSA shares many features with Parkinson’s disease for which it is often mistaken, but progresses more rapidly over 7-10 years and carries a fatal prognosis. The overlap between Parkinson’s disease and MSA even extends to the core pathology that underlies both diseases, abnormalities involving a protein called synuclein,” said Dr. Walsh. “Thus, improved understanding and treatment of MSA is not only important for patients suffering with this aggressive disease, it also offers the possibility of improved understanding and treatment for Parkinson’s disease with potentially faster answers about promising treatments given how rapidly MSA progresses.”

In 2014, Lundbeck introduced a therapy to help adults living with symptomatic neurogenic orthostatic hypotension (symptomatic nOH), a chronic condition common in people with MSA. Symptomatic nOH is defined as sustained low blood pressure that occurs upon standing caused by an underlying neurologic condition. In addition to the charitable contribution, Lundbeck Chief Scientific Officer Arthur Hewitt has joined GMSAT as an Advisory Board member to help lead the way in establishing the mission, structure and function of the organization to support the expedited development of meaningful treatments for MSA patients.

“Lundbeck is committed to being an active, supportive partner to the MSA community for many years to come, helping to address both current and future needs,” said Arthur Hewitt, Ph.D., Chief Scientific Officer, Lundbeck. “As a member of the GMSAT, I’m proud to collaborate with such an exceptional group of individuals and organizations devoted to finding improved treatment approaches for MSA.”

“Having a rare disease like MSA can be lonely, and it’s easy to feel overlooked compared to other more common conditions,” said Judy Biedenharn, president of the MSA Coalition, a non-profit organization focused on MSA research and support. “The formation of the GMSAT is something that provides hope for the entire community. There is now a well-organized group of smart leaders putting together a cohesive approach to research and the development of new therapies for MSA.”

As a next step, the GMSAT will finalize its Advisory Board and mission, and will hold a satellite meeting at the Movement Disorder Society’s annual meeting in June.

About Lundbeck
Based in Deerfield, Ill., Lundbeck U.S. was formed in 2009 as a wholly owned subsidiary of H. Lundbeck A/S in Denmark. With a singular focus on accelerating advances in brain disorders, employees are engaged in the research, development, production, marketing and sale of innovative therapies that fulfill unmet medical needs among people living with challenging and sometimes rare neurologic and psychiatric disorders. In its late-stage research pipeline, the company has neurology compounds under investigation for Alzheimer’s disease and epilepsy, in addition to therapies in
development for mental health disorders. With a special commitment to the lives of patients, families and caregivers, Lundbeck actively engages in hundreds of initiatives each year that support our patient communities. To learn more, visit www.LundbeckUS.com and connect with Lundbeck on Twitter at @LundbeckUS.

About Keep Memory Alive
Keep Memory Alive, whose mission is to provide enhanced treatment and ultimately cures for patients and their families suffering from neurocognitive disorders, raises awareness and funds in support of the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas, Nevada. By supporting Keep Memory Alive and its fight against neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer’s, Huntington’s, Parkinson’s, MSA, and memory disorders of all kinds, we can ensure progress towards better treatments and ultimately cures will occur in Las Vegas. For additional information call (702) 263-9797 or visit www.keepmemoryalive.org.

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References:

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