

News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Erika Williams, MD, PhD, Named One of ANF's 2023 Development Grant Recipients

Rochester, Minn. (Dec. 21, 2023)- The American Neuromuscular Foundation (ANF), is excited to announce that Erika Williams, MD, PhD, has been selected as one of the 2023 Development Grant recipients for her research project, "Genetically Decoding Human Afferent and Efferent Autonomic Ganglia." Dr. Williams is currently a NM fellow at Massachusetts General Brigham in Boston, Massachusetts.

Dr. Williams' research will begin with comparing single-cell sequencing data from human ganglia with existing maps for mice. She explained, "Much foundational work has been done, and is ongoing, to delineate various types of neurons, their anatomy, physiology, and molecular profile in the mouse, yielding critical insights about how the nervous system controls key functions like breathing, circulation, and digestion, among others. At a minimum, I want to know if humans have these same neurons too! The degree of similarity and difference is not only of basic scientific interest but would also provide a very concrete set of molecularly defined tools for future work."

She added, "With this project, we hope to fill the gap and to directly query at single-cell resolution the organization of the human autonomic nervous system, and how that organization changes in disease. I hope this will change how we think about autonomic disorders in our patients. In addition, a data set replete with molecularly defined targets I hope will facilitate novel therapy development for autonomic disorders."

Following completion of the research, Dr. Williams will present her findings at an AANEM Annual Meeting and hopes to eventually see her goals through in her own laboratory and clinical practice over the years to come.

About American Neuromuscular Foundation (ANF)

Based in Rochester, MN, ANF is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening the global effort to cure neuromuscular disease. As part of its mission to promote the advancement of scientific research and education, the ANF offers annual development grants intended as seed money to help launch research into muscle and nerve disorders by promising new researchers. For more information about ANF, and previous and current development grant initiatives, visit www.neuromuscularfoundation.org.

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