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Contacts:
[NCATS Office of Communications](#)
301-435-0888

NICHHD Press Office
301-496-5133

NIH clinical trial begins for treatment of rare, fatal neurological disorder *Government, industry, academia, and patient groups collaborate on Niemann-Pick Type C research*

A clinical trial to evaluate a drug candidate called cyclodextrin as a possible treatment for Niemann-Pick disease type C1 (NPC), a rare and fatal genetic disease, will start on Wednesday, researchers announced today. Scientists from the NIH's National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) and the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) will conduct the clinical trial at the NIH Clinical Center. Reaching this trial stage required collaboration among government, industry, patient advocacy groups and academic researchers.

No therapies approved by the U.S Food and Drug Administration are available to treat NPC. The disease is characterized by the inability of cells to metabolize and dispose of cholesterol and lipids. It causes excessive amounts of cholesterol to accumulate within the liver, spleen and brain. NPC leads to progressive impairment of motor and intellectual function in early childhood. In childhood onset cases, life expectancy does not normally exceed a patient's teenage years.

"A crucial part of the NCATS mission is to collaborate within and beyond the NIH on projects to improve and accelerate the translational research process and deliver tangible improvements in human health," said NCATS Director Christopher P. Austin, M.D. "The cyclodextrin project is an important step in the development of both a potential treatment for a devastating disease that ravages the bodies and minds of its victims and a more efficient way to do translational projects."

In 2009, the NIH Therapeutics for Rare and Neglected Diseases (TRND) program, which is now led by NCATS, selected NPC cyclodextrin as one of its initial pilot projects to repurpose

cyclodextrin from its conventional use as an ingredient in other drugs to a therapeutic for this rare disorder. TRND researchers work with project collaborators to conduct preclinical studies advancing potential treatments for rare and neglected diseases to human clinical trials.

TRND supported animal toxicology studies to evaluate the safety of cyclodextrin and all necessary regulatory efforts and also supported the development of an NPC biomarker. The biomarker test detects in the blood a modified cholesterol molecule specific to neuronal cells in the brain that would increase as a result of treatment with cyclodextrin.

TRND researchers and collaborators submitted the data in an Investigational New Drug application, filed Nov. 14, 2012, that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has now agreed is sufficient to start a Phase I clinical trial.

“The multidisciplinary nature of this collaboration establishes a generalizable model that can be used in the pursuit of treatment candidates for rare and neglected diseases,” said John McKew, Ph.D., acting director of the NCATS Division of Pre-Clinical Innovation, chief of the Therapeutic Development Branch and director of TRND. “In addition, the FDA was instrumental in helping our team move this project into human clinical trials.”

The NPC Phase I clinical trial will test multiple doses of cyclodextrin in nine patients. Forbes Porter, M.D., Ph.D., senior investigator and NICHD clinical director, and Nuria Carrillo, M.D., TRND staff physician, will conduct the trial. Dr. Porter also is conducting a natural history study of NPC to collect health information from patients to understand how the disease develops. The natural history study is critical to understanding the clinical significance of a treatment for NPC patients.

“Initiation of this clinical trial is the culmination of two decades of basic and clinical research to understand and develop therapies for NPC,” said Porter. “The efforts of the collaborators who make up the TRND NPC team have greatly accelerated translating cyclodextrin from the laboratory to the clinic.”

The goal of the Phase I clinical trial is to determine a safe dose of cyclodextrin that will support an expanded Phase II trial to begin to evaluate the effectiveness of the drug. The team already is in the initial stages of collaborating with the Network for Excellence in Neuroscience Clinical Trials (NeuroNEXT), which is administered by the NIH’s National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, to plan a Phase II multicenter trial.

The NPC cyclodextrin project was made possible by a collaborative approach that also included — in addition to NCATS, NICHD, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) and the FDA— the NIH’s National Human Genome Research Institute; Johnson and Johnson Pharmaceutical Research & Development; Washington University in St. Louis School of Medicine; Albert Einstein School of Medicine, New York City, and University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. A number of family support groups have made significant contributions as well that have led to the launch of the clinical trial through the funding of NPC research and patient support. They include the Ara Parshegian Medical Research Foundation, the

International Niemann Pick Disease Alliance, the National Niemann Pick Disease Foundation, and Support Of Accelerated Research for Niemann –Pick Type C.

The NPC clinical trial is the fourth TRND project to advance to human clinical trials in the last 15 months. The three other clinical trials are evaluating treatments for sickle cell disease, chronic lymphocytic leukemia and hereditary inclusion body myopathy. TRND has a portfolio of 14 projects, which focus on rare and neglected tropical diseases.

For more information about the NPC Phase I clinical trial, please visit the NIH Clinical Center trial page at http://clinicalstudies.info.nih.gov/cgi/wais/bold032001.pl?A_13-CH-0001.html@Niemann, or the ClinicalTrials.gov page at <http://clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT01747135?term=Niemann+Pick+C&rank=8>.

Information about the NPC natural history study is available at <http://www.clinicaltrials.gov/ct2/show/NCT00344331?term=Niemann+Pick&rank=5>.

To learn more about TRND clinical trials, please go to <http://www.ncats.nih.gov/research/rare-diseases/trnd/studies/trnd-crs.html>.

The National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) aims to catalyze the generation of innovative methods and technologies that will enhance the development, testing and implementation of diagnostics and therapeutics across a wide range of human diseases and conditions. For more information about NCATS, visit <http://www.ncats.nih.gov>.

About the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD): The NICHD sponsors research on development, before and after birth; maternal, child and family health; reproductive biology and population issues; and medical rehabilitation. For more information, visit the Institute's website at <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/>.

About the NIH Clinical Center: The NIH Clinical Center is the 240-bed clinical research hospital for the National Institutes of Health. Through clinical research, clinician-investigators translate laboratory discoveries into better treatments, therapies, and interventions to improve the nation's health. For more information, visit <http://clinicalcenter.nih.gov>.

NINDS (<http://www.ninds.nih.gov>) is the nation's leading funder of research on the brain and nervous system. The NINDS mission is to reduce the burden of neurological disease – a burden borne by every age group, by every segment of society, by people all over the world.

NHGRI is one of the 27 Institutes and Centers at the National Institutes of Health. The NHGRI Division of Intramural Research develops and implements technology to understand, diagnose and treat genomic and genetic diseases. Additional information about NHGRI can be found at its website, www.genome.gov.

About the National Institutes of Health (NIH): NIH, the nation's medical research agency, includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH is the primary federal agency conducting and supporting basic, clinical,

and translational medical research, and is investigating the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit <http://www.nih.gov>.

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