

## **New initiative in Parkinson's Disease, addressing unmet research needs to understand mental comorbidities**



Scientists from across the EU have come together to form a consortium aiming to investigate anxiety as a comorbidity of Parkinson's Disease (PD). Comorbid anxiety is not simply a response to the distress of the motor disabilities caused by PD but is in fact a direct result of neural changes caused by PD. Furthermore, people with PD who experience anxiety also tend to have much worse symptoms and motor difficulties compared to those who do not experience anxiety. As such, managing PD anxiety may also alleviate other PD morbidities. Better understanding of the neural changes which occur in the brain during PD could be clinically targeted to improve prevention, diagnosis, and management of comorbidities. Despite this potential, limited research has yet explored comorbid anxiety in PD, thus the AND-PD project began work in 2020 to address this unmet need.

Spearheaded by Prof Rosario Moratalla at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), AND-PD brings together world-leading experts from across research and clinical disciplines. The project has already begun to define and identify the mechanisms that lead to comorbid anxiety in PD, and recently held a virtual meeting to discuss the progress so far. To quote Prof Moratalla during this meeting: "The goals of AND-PD not only have the potential to revolutionise scientific understanding of the relationship between physical and mental disabilities, but will also have a great positive impact on the well-being of those living with PD as we understand better how to assist them".

The project is working to unravel how brainstem neural circuitry is disrupted during PD, by developing and refining research models. As AND-PD models these changes, methods to prevent and even reverse these neurological disruptions will also be developed. Finally, thanks to the close cooperation between researchers and clinicians in the consortium, these findings will begin to be translated into the clinic, to bring the benefits to people living with PD sooner.

AND-PD will take PD research in new directions, bringing knowledge that will contribute to our understanding of other neurological disorders beyond PD.

As well as the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), the AND-PD partners are: Fondazione Istituto Italiano di Tecnologia, Karolinska Institutet, Universite de Bordeaux, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Modus Research and Innovation Ltd, Transine Therapeutics Ltd, University College London, King's College London, Motac France and Fundacion Para La Investigacion Medica Aplicada.

Further details are available on the AND-PD website (<https://www.and-pd.com/>), or can be requested through email at [ANDPD-CPO@modus.ltd](mailto:ANDPD-CPO@modus.ltd). For regular updates, you can follow the AND-PD project on Twitter (@ANDPDProject1) and on LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com/in/and-pd-project](http://www.linkedin.com/in/and-pd-project)).



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 848002

## **Notes to editors:**

### **About Horizon 2020:**

Horizon 2020 is the biggest EU Research and Innovation programme ever with nearly €80 billion of funding available over 7 years (2014 to 2020) – in addition to the private investment that this money will attract. It promises more breakthroughs, discoveries and world-firsts by taking great ideas from the lab to the market.

Horizon 2020 is the financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union, a Europe 2020 flagship initiative aimed at securing Europe's global competitiveness.

Seen as a means to drive economic growth and create jobs, Horizon 2020 has the political backing of Europe's leaders and the Members of the European Parliament. They agreed that research is an investment in our future and so put it at the heart of the EU's blueprint for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs.

This communication reflects only the author's view and the EC is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains.