

# BREAKTHROUGHS Because of you.

CELEBRATING VISIONARY PHILANTHROPY FALL 2021



## ASAP Initiative's \$9 million gift elevates Parkinson's research

In his lab, neurologist Clemens Scherzer, MD, is focused on creating the healthcare of the future for patients with Parkinson's disease. Scientists have linked the neurodegenerative disease with common variants in genetic code, but how these variants cause the disease is still not clear. Scherzer now believes the answer to this question is finally in reach.

**"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Now, we have the technology and a tremendous funding opportunity to chart a new path in Parkinson's research.,,**

CLEMENS SCHERZER, MD

The Aligning Science Across Parkinson's (ASAP) Initiative has awarded a \$9 million grant to Brigham and Women's Hospital, a founding member of Mass General Brigham, to propel the work of Scherzer and his research collaborators. This grant will enable researchers to map the cellular circuits of Parkinson's across 1 million human brain cells. During the three-year project, they aim to uncover how glitches in genetic code create changes in specialized neurons and glia cells that lead brain cells to malfunction.

"This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," notes Scherzer, director of the Center for Advanced Parkinson Research and of the Precision Neurology Program at the Brigham. "We've been dreaming of this project for a long time. The technology wasn't mature enough and government funders view projects



Clemens Scherzer, MD

like this as outside their traditional scope. Now, we have the technology and a tremendous funding opportunity to chart a new path in Parkinson's research."

With this grant, the Brigham team joins the ASAP Collaborative Research Network, a group of international, multidisciplinary research teams at 60 institutions spanning 11 countries. As a collective, they seek to address key knowledge gaps in basic disease mechanisms contributing to Parkinson's disease.

"We're delighted to have Dr. Scherzer and the Brigham as part of the ASAP Collaborative Research Network," says Ekemini A.U. Riley, PhD, managing director of the ASAP Initiative. "The Parkinson's team at the Brigham is incredibly strong, and we wish them all the best with this crucial project."

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## Lemann Foundation supports future medical leaders



Peter Libby, MD (center, seated), in his lab with the Lemann Cardiovascular Research Postdoctoral Fellows (front row, left to right) Santiago Tobar, PhD, Mariana Janini Gomes, PhD, Rosangela Akemi Hoshi, PhD, Julia Marsiglia, PhD, and (back row, left to right) Samuel Moscovitch, PhD, Antonio Aurelio De Paiva Fagundes, MD, and Grasiela Sausen, PhD

As part of its mission to support education in Brazil, the Lemann Foundation helps the country's rising leaders gain access to top-tier U.S. institutions—including the Brigham.

Thanks to the foundation's recent generous grant to the Brigham, the Lemann Cardiovascular Research Postdoctoral Fellowship Program offers a full-time two-year research training program to three Brazilian fellows each year.

This grant continues more than a decade of partnership between the Brigham and the Lemann Foundation—a philanthropic organization created by Brazilian businessman Jorge Paulo Lemann, a member of Harvard University's class of 1961. To date, the Brigham's program has trained more than 26 young physicians and medical scientists interested in cardiology, including the current fellows.

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## Breakthroughs Because of You

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Dear friends,

*We're Stronger Together* is one of our shared values at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and now as the Brigham rallies against the Delta variant, our community has embodied this value—with our employees and supporters coming together to fuel breakthroughs and improve care. Thank you for your continued support of our mission.

As we continue to innovate and evolve as an institution, I'm delighted that **Robert S.D. Higgins, MD, MSHA** (pictured at right), will join us in December as the new president of Brigham and Women's Hospital

and executive vice president of Mass General Brigham. A physician leader in academic medicine for more than 25 years, Dr. Higgins is currently the William Stewart Halsted Professor of Surgery at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and director of Hopkins' Department of Surgery and Surgeon-in-Chief. For many reasons, he's the ideal choice to lead the Brigham at this moment in our history.

I'm also pleased to share our latest *Breakthroughs Because of You* newsletter, celebrating philanthropy that fuels our values. On the cover, you will learn about the ASAP Initiative, whose \$9 million gift is propelling innovative Parkinson's disease research, and the Lemann Foundation, whose generosity is sustaining a cardiology research fellowship.

Additional stories feature Michele and Howard Kessler, who are advancing healthcare delivery and medical training with their \$1 million gift, and Heather and Brett Rosenbaum and Dorothy and John Remondi, who gave \$1 million each to further Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease research.

You will also see our spirit of community thriving at events such as the Brigham Golf Classic, Women's Health Luncheon, and Chasing Hope event, to name a few.

And once again, *U.S. News & World Report* affirmed the Brigham as one of the best hospitals in the country in its 2021-2022 national ranking.

As we look to the future, we're confident our shared values will see us through to new horizons.

Gratefully,

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Susan E. Rapple

Senior Vice President and Chief Development Officer, Brigham and Women's Hospital



### ASAP Initiative, continued from page 1

The ASAP Initiative sees Scherzer's work as instrumental in achieving its mission, which is to foster research collaborations aimed at better understanding and treating the underlying causes of Parkinson's disease. To bring projects to fruition, ASAP works with The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research as its implementation partner.

"We're thankful to the generosity of our philanthropic partners," says Scherzer. "With their support, we can engage in this moonshot project and pursue a major breakthrough that gets us closer to our ultimate goal—predicting and preventing Parkinson's disease from ever progressing." •



Monika Sharma, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow in the lab of Clemens Scherzer, MD

### Lemann Foundation, continued from page 1

The Lemann Foundation supports candidates committed to education and research upon their return to Brazil. Applicants undergo a rigorous selection and interview process with a Brigham committee led by Peter Libby, MD, a cardiovascular medicine specialist who established the program in conjunction with Jorge Paulo Lemann in 2009. The fellows hail both from better resourced urban centers and less privileged regions of Brazil, where they can make an especially transformative difference.

"Despite Brazil's great potential in the global economy, the World Economic Forum estimates Brazil has developed less than 60% of our talent, which contributes to persisting inequalities," explains Anna Laura Schmidt, the Lemann Foundation's director for academic collaboration. "While our young civic-minded leaders are brimming with talent, they often lack access to resources and networks to drive change in the country in areas such as education, health, and overall quality of public service."

Lemann Fellows trained at the Brigham have become professors, medical researchers, attending physicians, and mentors at leading Brazilian universities and hospitals.

Under Libby's direction, Brigham faculty members mentor fellows on research projects that probe atherosclerosis, vascular biology, heart failure, bioengineering, cardiovascular clinical trials and epidemiology, and imaging.

**"We're honored to train future leaders in biomedical research and healthcare and to support the Lemann Foundation's important mission to help talented young Brazilians achieve their potential."**

PETER LIBBY, MD

Libby says, "Through the Lemann fellowship, my colleagues and I have the opportunity to mentor outstanding postdoctoral students in cardiology research. We're honored to train future leaders in biomedical research and healthcare and to support the Lemann Foundation's important mission to help talented young Brazilians achieve their potential." •