

Press Release from the University of Zurich

November 20, 2007

New Professorship for Research on Diseases of the Nervous System

The University of Zurich can expand its research on diseases of the nervous system. The Stavros Niarchos Foundation has funded an assistant professorship at the Institute for Neuropathology headed by Prof. Adriano Aguzzi. The Institute, which is located at Zurich University Hospital, is the largest of its kind in Switzerland and has an international reputation for prion research.

Following successful mediation by the Synapsis Foundation in Zurich, Switzerland, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation in Triesen, Principality of Liechtenstein, decided to fund an assistant professorship at the Institute for Neuropathology at the Medical School of the University of Zurich. The Foundation guarantees financing amounting to 1 million Swiss Francs over a six-year period. The assistant professorship was approved by the University Council at a meeting held on Nov. 19, 2007. The new position will be advertised internationally and is expected to be filled by the end of August 2008. It will be totally independent of the Foundation; the person selected for the position will be guaranteed freedom in teaching and research.

The Stavros Niarchos Professorship in Experimental Neuropathology will be devoted primarily to the investigation of neurological disorders such as Alzheimer's disease and the prion diseases. The Institute for Neuropathology has an international reputation based, in particular, on its broad-based research in the area of spongiform encephalopathies and the prions, the infectious agents responsible for these mysterious diseases. The prion diseases are rare diseases with a lethal course; they can affect the nervous systems of both human beings and various animal species. The prion diseases that can be transmitted to human beings include the following neurological disorders: Creutzfeldt-Jakob's Disease, Fatal Familial Insomnia, Gerstmann-Straussler-Scheinker Syndrome, and the new variant of Creutzfeldt-Jakob's Disease.

The Synapsis Foundation is a non-profit-making foundation founded barely four years ago. Via its fundraising activities, it supports research on Alzheimer's disease and other neurodegenerative disorders.

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