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The Campbell Foundation Awards Grant to Researcher Seeking to Develop HIV/AIDS Vaccine

FORT LAUDERDALE – Jan. 16, 2020 – The Campbell Foundation, a Fort Lauderdale-based nonprofit which provides grants to support alternative clinical approaches to the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS, has awarded its first grant of the year to a Tel Aviv University researcher whose goal is to develop a vaccine to prevent HIV/AIDS.

The \$80,000 research grant will allow Natalia Freund, Ph.D. to continue her work in which she, and her highly respected team, have isolated a broadly neutralizing antibody (bNab) called BG18. It has been found that a small fraction of those infected by HIV-1 develop these bNABs that, when passively transferred to mice or macaques, can treat or prevent infection. BG18 has been shown to be extremely effective in reducing HIV-1 viral loads in HIV-1 infected humanized mice.

“While much progress has been made in treating HIV/AIDS over the past few decades, finding a vaccine to prevent the disease has been elusive. We hope that with this grant The Campbell Foundation can play a role in furthering research that one day will lead to a cure,” said Trustee Bill Venuti.

Freund, who heads the Laboratory for Human Antibody Responses at The Department of Microbiology and Clinical Immunology at Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University, and her team, are hoping to use BG18 as a template for the development of a vaccine that would prevent HIV-1.

“We first must isolate the B cell ancestors of BG18, as understanding the lineage of this antibody is critical. Once that is accomplished, our team will attempt to reverse engineer what could have acted as the actual vaccine in one of these HIV-infected individuals who developed bNABs, with the goal of applying it in healthy uninfected people,” said Freund.

As with all funding requests, Freund’s went through a rigorous scientific peer review with all members giving their approval to fund.

“Her collaborators are leaders in the field and there is definitely a lot of interesting science to be learned from her proposed experiments,” noted one peer review board member.

Noted another: “The study should yield results on which to potentially move this concept forward as a new vaccine paradigm.”

About The Campbell Foundation

[The Campbell Foundation](#) was established in 1995 by the late Richard Campbell Zahn as a private, independent, nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting clinical, laboratory-based research into the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS. It focuses its funding on supporting alternative, nontraditional avenues of research. In its 25th year, the Campbell Foundation has given away more than \$11 million, with about \$1.2 million going to direct services.