**JUST A MINUTE…**

…Tomas Björklund, who defended his thesis on December 4th. He has investigated gene therapy as a treatment against Parkinson’s disease.

The standard treatment for Parkinson, l-dopa, often causes side effects, such as involuntary movements, after a few years. With gene therapy, these side effects, as well as the peaks in dopamine production, would be avoided.

**What have you found?**
– My thesis describes the whole journey from understanding the interaction between the two genes involved in the therapy, to the creation of a gene vector that is now going to be tested clinically.
– In an animal model mimicking the final stage of Parkinson’s disease, the animals become almost symptom-free with our therapy. Our goal is to have the first clinical trial within three to four years. If all goes well, we can put a new drug on the market in six years.

**Just one injection and that’s it?**
– Yes, that’s the idea. The drug industry is interested in this kind of treatment and is starting to see the possibilities.

**What will happen now for you?**
– I will continue in Lund for another year and a half, because I have gotten a postdoc position financed by Bagadilico. Eventually I will go abroad, but I don’t know where yet.

Tomas Björklund’s thesis is titled *Gene therapy by enzyme replacement for Parkinson’s disease. Optimization of continuous DOPA delivery and development of a candidate vector for clinical application*. The key article from the thesis will soon be published in Brain.

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**NEWS IN BRIEF**

**Scientific Advisory Board visits Bagadilico!**

Bagadilico’s Scientific Advisory Board comes to Lund January 11–12 to evaluate what has been achieved within the program so far and the strategies for the coming 3-years period.

The 12th there will be a workshop titled *Outcome measures for disease modifying therapies - How to design future clinical studies in Parkinson’s and Huntington’s Disease?* For more information and to register for the workshop, click here.

**Hanna Lindgren leaves us for Wales**

Hanna Lindgren has received Vetenskapsrådet’s (The Swedish Research Council’s) postdoc scholarship to go to The Brain Repair Group in Cardiff, Wales for two years.

– I will continue within Parkinson research, but will focus on neuropsychiatric symptoms like depression and cognitive problems, says Hanna Lindgren.

The scholarship also includes one year in Sweden. Hanna did her Ph.D. in Angela Cenci Nilsson’s group and defended her thesis in March. Read more about Hanna’s thesis by clicking here.

**Jenny Nelander: Of mice and men**

In a new article, Ph.D. student Jenny Nelander verifies that mice and men are reassuringly alike.

She has investigated a list of proteins and transcription factors that we know are important in the development of dopamine-producing cells in mice, and tested the antibodies for them on human tissue.

– So much is being published about what happens during the formation and development of dopamine-producing cells in mice, but nobody has known if it looks the same in humans, says Jenny Nelander.

In most cases, it looks the same in mice and men, but there were of course differences. Read more by clicking here.

**One million kronor to Huntington research**

Åsa Petersén receives one million kronor (approximately 100 000 euro) from the foundation Torsten och Ragnar Söderbergs stiftelser for the project Huntington’s disease – at the molecular interface of depression and obesity.

The funded translational and multidisciplinary project is focused on unraveling the underlying neuroendocrine and molecular mechanisms for depression in Huntington’s disease using novel animal models and clinical material.

**250 000 kronor grant for biotech business development**

Patrik Brundin and Jia-Yi Li have received a 250 000 kronor grant from VINN-Verifiering for business development within biotechnology for a new treatment for Parkinson’s disease.

The purpose of the project is to verify the possibilities to commercialize drug candidates for preventing the spreading of misfolded proteins in the brains of patients suffering from Parkinson’s disease.
On December 9th, Anna-day, Bagadilico got a visit from the Parkinson organizations in Landskrona and Helsingborg. The visitors listened to lectures and got a guided tour of the labs.

– We wanted something extra at our season final, and what could be better than to visit you? said Karl Hacker from the organization.

After a cup of morning coffee Håkan Widner, professor at the Neurological Clinic at Lund University Hospital, told the visitors about how the division works between the hospitals in Skåne. Many questions called for answers.

– Do you recommend us to get vaccinated against the swine flu? asked Karl Hacker.

– Parkinson patients is no defined high-risk group. Parkinson’s disease is in itself no risk factor. There is also an age factor: people over 60 years of age have a certain defence. And the vaccine has no serious side effects, the virus is over a thousand times meanner than the vaccine, answered Håkan Widner.

After a short break, Angela Cenci Nilsson, professor of experimental medical science at the Biomedical Center, took over with a lecture on basic research in Parkinson’s disease, its trends and conditions.

– The main ingredients in good research are ideas, techniques, research environment, and researcher positions and grants. Ideas we never have a shortage of, said Angela Cenci Nilsson.

A tour of the labs, where the visitors got to look at cells and tissue in microscopes, concluded the tour.

Malin Parmar was one of the researchers that helped showing the visitors around the labs.

Professor Angela Cenci Nilsson talked about basic research in Parkinson’s disease.

Professor Håkan Widner spoke about how the division works between the hospitals in Skåne.