Finally proven: the A9 neurons are the ones we want

For a long time, it has been assumed that a certain subtype of dopamine neuron is critical for repairing motor function after cell transplantation in the brain affected by Parkinson's disease. But it hasn’t been proven – until now.

In a new paper published in the scientific journal Brain, Ph.D. student Shane Grealish and co-authors show that the so-called A9 dopamine neurons are essential for graft-mediated recovery in tests on motor performance in a rodent model of Parkinson's disease.

Read more by clicking here.

Bagadilico career program coming together

The data from the survey preceding our career program for our young researchers has been analyzed, and the outcome is that four sets of workshops will be offered:

I: Making a strategy for your career, with a wide selection of role models from inside and outside academia.

II: Writing and talking to bring in the money: convince and structure in oral presentations, publications, grant applications and patent applications.

III: Encouraging creativity while leading yourself and others.

IV: Handling stress, balancing life, getting on with colleagues and handling conflicts.

Additionally some effort will be made to satisfy the needs of networking including opportunities outside Bagadilico.

A mentor system was not seen as a major need by the participants in the survey.

The career program is meant to start in late spring, so keep an eye out for more info! Cecilia Lundberg, Martha Escobar and Elin Bommenel are coordinating the program.

Oskar Hansson and Per Odin are new members

Oskar Hansson and Per Odin have been chosen as new Bagadilico members and will strengthen our network on the clinical side.

Per Odin is a medical doctor and an adjunct professor and will, among other things, be leading the steering group for the Swedish Parkinson Academy. He will play a key role in the clinical team for TRANSEURO, a 110 million kronor, five-year-long EU project with the purpose of transplanting fetal tissue into Parkinson patients.

Oskar Hansson is a medical doctor and associate professor at the Neurological clinic at Lund University Hospital. The aim of his research is to develop biomarkers for early and secure diagnosis of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease.

Fusion of work packages

After the advice of the Scientific Advisory Board, Bagadilico’s executive group has decided to fuse together pairs of our six work packages.

Work packages will now be as follows:

1: Basic research (former WP1: maladaptive plasticity and WP2: cell death mechanisms)

2: Translational research (former WP3: gene therapy and WP4: use of stem cells for cell replacement in PD)

3: Clinical research (former WP5: biomarkers and WP6: outcomes perspective)

The advantage of this will be optimization of resources: the work packages will share resources rather than compete for them.

The new work package leaders have not been selected yet.

Upcoming Events – mark your calendar!

March 18, 15.00: Dr Bertrand Joseph, Karolinska Institutet: P57Kip2, “Keep holding on” – new functions from neural stem cell differentiation, cell migration, to cell death. GK lecture hall, BMC F11.

April 20, 15.00: Dr Karin Danzer, Harvard Medical School: Extracellular alpha synuclein oligomers – the toxic species in Parkinson’s Disease? Segerfalk lecture hall, BMC A10.

May: Dr Myriam Heiman, Rockefeller University, New York.
Employee of the month: Birgit Haraldsson

Picture the year 1970. Japan and China had launched their first satellites, the members of the Beatles go separate ways, Swedish state television starts airing all its programs in colour. In Lund, Anders Björklund has just defended his thesis. And biomedical scientist Birgit Haraldsson starts working for him.

Birgit has been faithful

Birgit Haraldsson started working for Anders Björklund in the early 1970’s. Now she works for Patrik Brundin and, among other things, manages the cell culture lab. Many things have changed throughout the years, but one thing remains the same: the comradeships with the many colleagues that have come and gone.

Birgit Haraldsson was born in Västergötland, north-east of Gothenburg. In 1970, 23 years old, love brought her to Skåne.

– I replied to an ad where Associate Professor Anders Björklund looked for help. He had defended his thesis half a year before that, Birgit remembers.

Her first job was to manage a spectrofluorometer, a machine that occupied half a room. Olle Lindvall started his Ph.D. at the same time and Birgit worked for him during his whole time as a graduate student.

Times have changed

– In those days, you could work for one single person. That’s not the case anymore, Birgit says.

She can name a few other things that have changed throughout the years:

• Computerization. “Back then, we did the calculations with a mechanical calculator. And with the rat rotation tests, we had to sit with a mechanical counter in each hand and count the number of right-hand and left-hand turns.”
to us for forty years

• Things were a little more basic. “I remember us going out to Scan (a butcher) in Kävlinge, picking out the pituitary glands from pig’s brains and making enzymes from them.”

A new job now and then
Back then, the facilities were located at the Department of Histology, one of the huge, magnificent houses on Biskopsgatan, the street down at the southern end of Sölvegatan.

– I can’t believe I still work here after 40 years. I think to myself, “is it lack of initiative?” But it’s like this becomes a new job every now and then. It’s new people, new methods…, Birgit explains.

In the 90’s, Birgit started working for Patrik Brundin after he had done his thesis under the supervision of Anders Björklund and started his own group.

Nowadays, Birgit takes care of animals, manages the cell culture lab, and makes sure that there is always sterile material available in the lab.

Privileged
– It’s been fun to follow Anders and Patrik throughout these years. And it’s always been fun to work. I can’t remember ever having a stomach-ache because of not wanting to go to work. In part because I enjoy working in the lab, but above all because I enjoy being around my colleagues. And I’m privileged to be in this international and exciting environment, says Birgit.

When I ask Birgit about great moments of her career, two things spring to mind:
– When they started transplanting dopamine cells to Parkinson patients. Because it was the lab work that I had been involved in that led up to that.
– And when BMC was built. We were 20-30 people who got a golden shovel each, and wearing lab coats we broke the ground where the building was going to be. We also got to have a say in the design of the labs.

In two years, Birgit retires. She has no problem finding things to do in her spare time – she has always been active in various associations, for example the Scouts, her church and a charity organization that helps seniors. She also looks forward to spending more time cultivating her garden.
– But I will miss the work environment and the people.

The traditional Lucia celebrations at Professor Bengt Fälck’s house back in the 1970’s are dear memories to Birgit. She is visible to the left – but who is the spiffing young fellow in the middle of the photo?

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<th>The Facts of Birgit</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Age:</strong> 63.</td>
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<td><strong>Lives:</strong> Ever since 1971, in an old house in Asmundtorp outside Landskrona.</td>
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<td><strong>Family:</strong> Husband and three kids. Will become a grandmother in April.</td>
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