RESEARCH FUNDING

Donate

Since 2002 we have been investigating the field of **NCL research**. We want to understand what causes this **fatal disease**. Our ambitious aim is to develop a therapy in order to be able to **cure NCL**. Therefore, the € 50,000 **NCL research award** is awarded each year to projects that contribute to **curing NCL**. Furthermore we fund **scholarships** with our donations. Worldwide we are the biggest single sponsor in this area. To react quickly to new developments, we also offer short-term **start-up support**. These short projects can be extended to larger ones where appropriate.

For questions on the subjects of research and development or funding please contact Dr. Herman van der Putten.

Rare-To-Common Neurodegeneration Impact Prize

- Call for Applications -

Special Research Prize of the NCL Foundation
Funding Amount: €200,000

1. Brief Description

With the **Rare-to-Common Neurodegeneration Impact Prize**, the NCL Foundation plans to support outstanding cooperative research projects at the interface between the rare childhood dementia CLN3 (Batten Disease) and more common neurodegenerative diseases (ND's) such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease as well as aging. With mounting evidence for common mechanisms in the pathology of NCL and other more common ND's, we aim to attract researchers from these fields to bring fresh ideas to both fields and increase visibility of rare childhood dementia's such as NCL in the wider ND field.

2.Background and Therapeutic Need

Juvenile Neuronal Ceroid Lipofuscinosis (CLN3), also known as Batten Disease, is a rare, fatal neurodegenerative disorder of childhood and the most common form of the childhood dementia NCL which affects an estimated 70,000 children worldwide. The disease is characterized by progressive loss of vision as well as cognitive and motor decline, ultimately leading to premature death in early adulthood. There is thus far no approved therapy that significantly changes the trajectory of this devastating childhood disease.

The early-onset neurodegenerative pathology in CLN3 offers insights into disease mechanisms that emerge decades later in common neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, or age-related macular degeneration (AMD). Current research reveals substantial mechanistic overlaps between NCL with age-associated processes, including lysosomal dysfunction, inflammatory signaling pathways, and the accumulation of ceroid lipofuscin and lysosomal glycerophosphodiesters (GPD).

These biological commonalities underscore the potential overlap in druggable pathways between rare and common diseases; improving our understanding of these overlaps may guide the development of broader disease-modifying and aging-related therapies for neurodegenerative disorders.

3. Objectives of the Impact Prize

The Rare-to-Common Neurodegeneration Impact Prize aims to strengthen cooperative research projects that deliberately connect insights from research into common ND's or age-related processes with NCL research, with a focus on opening new therapeutic avenues that might benefit both conditions.

4. Thematic Focus

CLN3 / jNCL and one of the following areas:
- Neurodegenerative diseases
- Cellular ageing processes
- AMD and retinal degeneration
- Lysosomal dysfunction

5. Target Group & Eligibility

Applications are open to two cooperating research groups submitting a joint project. One group must be conducting research in the field of CLN3, and the other in one of the areas listed under Section 4. Both groups must be affiliated with scientific institutions. No further institutional requirements apply. The call is open internationally, applications from domestic and international institutions are explicitly welcome.

6. Selection Process

Stage 1: Submission of a brief project outline (maximum 2 pages, 12 pt, single line spacing) along with details of both project partners, to research@ncl-foundation.com. If support is needed in identifying a suitable cooperation partner, the NCL Foundation is happy to assist. Please, contact Dr. Herman van der Putten or Dr. Jerome Korzelius for queries.

Stage 2: Selected teams will be invited to submit a full project application (completed project form) within six weeks.

Deadlines:

- Project outline: August 31, 2026
- Full project application: October 31, 2026

Applications will be evaluated by our research officers and members of the NCL Foundation's international scientific advisory board based on established criteria, including scientific quality, transdisciplinary focus, translational potential, and rare-to-common impact potential.

We wish to thank our main supporters: CORDES & GRAEFE STIFTUNG, Friedrich Flick Förderungsstiftung, Werner Reichenberger Stiftung as well as many private donators.

Doctoral fellowships

Postgraduate and research scholarships are awarded for up to three years. Regular reports and visits to laboratories are part of the programme. Candidates for funding can be recommended by their supervisors followed by an interview with our research leader. Here, two of them present their projects:

Lysosomal calcium ion channels may be an important target in CLN3 disease. **Sukanya Arcot Kannabiran** is studying this channel function at the microdomain level using high-resolution microscopes. The results could be important for both childhood and senile dementia.

Supervisor: Prof. Andreas Guse, UKE Hamburg- Eppendorf, GER
Funding Partners: Bijou Brigitte Stiftung, „Hand in Hand für Norddeutschland" (NDR), Peter Jensen Stiftung.