

# Brian Kraemer awarded \$250,000 by Washington Research Foundation to develop small molecules to treat Alzheimer's disease

*WRF's grant will enable University of Washington professor to address protein tangles believed to contribute to destruction of brain neurons*



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/EINPresswire.com/ -- [Washington Research Foundation](#) (WRF) has awarded a \$250,000 technology commercialization grant to [Brian Kraemer, Ph.D.](#), to develop small molecules for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease (AD). Kraemer, a professor in the University of Washington's Division of Gerontology and Geriatric Medicine, will use the funding to progress his novel approach to treating the disease.

“

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*Brian Kraemer, Ph.D.*

AD affects nearly six million people in the United States. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC), this number could rise to 14 million by 2060. AD impairs memory, cognition and behavior, severely impacting the patient's quality of life and ability to live independently. It accounts for around 60% of dementia cases.

Current treatments for AD attempt to clear the amyloid plaques that are present in patients' brains. However, this approach does not seem to substantially improve cognition and there is little evidence that it slows the disease's progression. Recent studies indicate that amyloid plaques may be a symptom, rather than a cause, of AD.

Kraemer and his colleagues are instead addressing the misfolding of a protein, tau, that can kill neurons in the brain and is the other key indicator of AD. By reducing the activity of a related binding protein, MSUT2, Kraemer believes it is possible to make tau less toxic and arrest the progression of AD. He and his colleagues have demonstrated in mouse models that a lack of MSUT2 activity reduces pathological tau deposits (tauopathy) and rescues cognitive deficits. A grant of \$47,773 from WRF in 2020 enabled Kraemer and his colleagues to identify five protein scaffolds that he believes can reduce MSUT2 activity.

“WRF’s generous support has enabled us to make rapid progress on early-stage drug discovery work towards MSUT2-based therapeutics. We are very excited by the opportunity to continue our work developing MSUT2-targeted small molecules,” said Kraemer.

“There is a huge unmet need for therapeutics that can treat Alzheimer’s disease. This is an area where innovation in an academic setting can make a big difference and explore novel approaches that might be too risky for the pharmaceutical industry. WRF is delighted to support Dr. Kraemer to pursue his novel ideas,” said Meher Antia, Ph.D., WRF’s director of grant programs.

Kraemer will use the latest funding from WRF to further develop and test the small molecules he has identified, concentrating on their ability to safely inhibit MSUT2 and cross the blood-brain barrier. If successful, it could set the stage for first-in-human studies to develop new AD drugs with his technology.

About Washington Research Foundation:

Washington Research Foundation (WRF) supports research and scholarship in Washington state, with a focus on life sciences and enabling technologies.

WRF was founded in 1981 to assist universities and other nonprofit research institutions in Washington with the commercialization and licensing of their technologies. WRF is one of the foremost technology transfer and grant-making organizations in the nation, having earned more than \$445 million in licensing revenue for the University of Washington and providing over \$130 million in grants to the state's research institutions to date.

WRF Capital, a reserve pool of funds for investing in early-stage Washington state companies, has backed 117 local startups since 1996. Returns from these investments support the Foundation’s mission.

For additional information, please visit <https://www.wrfseattle.org/>.

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