

# International Rett Syndrome Foundation Awards Nearly \$2 Million in 2024 Grants to Advance Rett Research

*Funding supports seven groundbreaking projects investigating Rett syndrome's pathology and potential new treatments.*

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The International Rett Syndrome Foundation (IRSF) has awarded nearly \$2 million in Rett Syndrome Grants to seven leading researchers dedicated to uncovering the underlying pathology of Rett syndrome and identifying novel therapeutic approaches. These awards reflect IRSF's ongoing commitment to accelerating scientific breakthroughs that will lead to new treatments and, ultimately, a cure for Rett syndrome.



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Each of these awarded projects brings us closer to a future where families affected by Rett have more treatment options and greater hope for improved outcomes.”

*Nupur Garg, PhD, IRSF VP of Research*

“As we continue to push the boundaries of Rett syndrome research, it's essential to support projects that explore new frontiers,” said Nupur Garg, PhD, Vice President of Research at IRSF. “IRSF provides critical early-stage funding that allows scientists to test bold ideas, refine therapeutic targets, and generate the data needed to attract further investment. Each of these awarded projects brings us closer to a future where families affected by Rett have more treatment options and greater hope for improved outcomes.”

Advancing Rett Syndrome Research Through Strategic

Investment

IRSF is committed to advancing research that not only deepens our understanding of Rett syndrome but also accelerates the development of effective treatments. Our scientific strategy is built on three core pillars:

- Advancing Critical Research – Investigating the fundamental biology of Rett syndrome to unlock new treatment strategies.
- Driving Therapeutic Development – Advancing novel therapies through the treatment development pipeline.
- Ensuring Clinical Trial Success – Strengthening clinical research infrastructure to accelerate treatment availability.

"IRSF's highly comprehensive scientific strategy ensures that we are making targeted investments at every stage of research and clinical development," said Drew Jones, MD, MPH, MBA, Vice President of Clinical Development at IRSF. "By funding projects that deepen our understanding of Rett syndrome, advance genetic and drug-based therapies, and strengthen the clinical research network, we are working to accelerate the availability of treatments that can improve lives today while paving the way for future breakthroughs."

IRSF offers several funding opportunities to scientists, researchers, and clinicians, including the Rett Syndrome Innovation Awards, which provide critical early-stage funding to support projects that have the potential to drive transformative breakthroughs. These awards provide seed funding for research aimed at identifying therapeutic targets and advancing treatment approaches, help advance careers in Rett syndrome research, and enable researchers to secure follow-on funding from major institutions.

"I was a graduate student studying neuroscience when I first met a girl with Rett syndrome more than 20 years ago," said Jessica MacDonald, PhD at Syracuse University and 2024 grant recipient. "Since then, I have been driven to try and unravel the remarkable complexity of this neurological disorder. With the essential funding provided by an Innovation Award from the International Rett Syndrome Foundation, my lab is investigating novel therapeutic approaches to improve the ability of the brain to learn and adapt."

### Meet the 2024 Grant Recipients

This year's seven awardees join a global network of researchers committed to unraveling Rett syndrome's complexities and pioneering new therapeutic strategies. They are (in alphabetical order):

- Crystal Engineer, PhD (University of Texas at Dallas)
- Alyssa Huff, PhD (TBD)
- Nicoletta Landsberger, PhD (University of Milan)
- Jessica MacDonald, PhD (Syracuse University)
- Sarika Peters, PhD (Vanderbilt University Medical Center)
- Zhaolan (Joe) Zhou, PhD (University of Pennsylvania)
- Xiaowei Zhuang, PhD (Harvard University)

For more information about their research, please visit our [website here](#).

## About Rett Syndrome

Rett syndrome is a rare genetic neurological disorder that occurs most often in girls (1 in 10,000 births), more rarely in boys, and leads to severe impairments, affecting nearly every aspect of life. Rett syndrome is usually recognized in children between 6 and 18 months as they begin to miss developmental milestones or lose abilities they have gained, including their ability to speak, walk, eat, and even breathe. The hallmark of Rett syndrome is near constant repetitive hand movements while awake, and individuals with Rett may experience seizures, scoliosis, breathing issues, GI issues, and more. Rett syndrome is not a degenerative disorder; individuals can live to middle age or beyond.

## About International Rett Syndrome Foundation (IRSF)

As the leading Rett syndrome research and advocacy organization, the International Rett Syndrome Foundation (IRSF) builds upon its 40-year commitment to breakthrough discoveries and life-changing advancements in research toward a cure while supporting families affected by Rett syndrome. Through its legacy foundation pioneers, IRSF has invested over \$60M in research leading to identifying Rett syndrome's cause, demonstrating Rett syndrome is reversible in mice, and supporting the clinical trials that led to the first-ever FDA-approved treatment. IRSF fights for families living with Rett syndrome and a world without it. Learn more at [rettsyndrome.org](https://rettsyndrome.org).

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