



Joint media statement: University of Oxford and Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation

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University of Oxford Initiates Research on Endocrinology of Human Lactation

The Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation (FLRF) has awarded £2.9 million to the Nuffield Department of Women's & Reproductive Health at the University of Oxford to establish a research centre focused on studying the endocrinology of human lactation.

Breast milk is known to provide the best source of nutrition for newborns and children; it also has a positive impact on their long-term health and development. Although valuable research has already been conducted in the field of human lactation, many questions remain unanswered – such as how hormones control milk production and weaning, and influence the mother's long-term health. FLRF aims to support mothers and children worldwide by funding long-term research on the endocrinology of human lactation at the University of Oxford so as to fill these knowledge gaps.

"Although the major hormones regulating human lactation are known, details of the mechanisms involved at the molecular level are lacking," says Professor Stephen Kennedy, Head of the Nuffield Department of Women's & Reproductive Health, University of Oxford. "Our shared vision is to establish a research centre, which will investigate the molecular endocrinology of human lactation in healthy and malnourished women, especially those living in low resource settings; define the lactation-dependent endocrine mechanisms regulating maternal and infant health outcomes; and disseminate key findings to the scientific and clinical communities, as well as the public. The 5-year project, generously funded by FLRF, is the first step towards realising that vision."

The award will enable the Department to assemble a distinguished team of researchers who will develop the expertise and infrastructure needed to sustain the research centre in the long term. The aim is to create an environment that will help those scientists to compete successfully for further research funding in the future from a range of grant-giving bodies that have historically not supported this field. The expectation is that the work of the centre will translate into benefits for mothers and children by bridging the gap between bench-side research and bedside care with respect to human lactation.

"We are very pleased that the University of Oxford, one of the world's leading universities, is partnering with us to establish a centre dedicated to this important topic. Our collaboration has the chance to contribute substantially to a better understanding of this aspect of lactation, and in turn, help improve the health of mothers and children around the globe," says Göran Larsson, Chair of FLRF Board.

"This is another key step in reaching our goal to create a multidisciplinary network of research excellence in human lactation to cover a wide spectrum of disciplines and disseminate evidence-based knowledge on breastfeeding and breast milk with high translational impact worldwide," adds Dr. Katharina Lichtner, FLRF Managing Director. "We're delighted to work with the University of Oxford and lay the foundation for this centre to become a cornerstone of this global network looking at mothers' health outcomes."

The project will run from 2018 to 2023, leading to a planned endowment in 2022 that would provide permanent funding for a Chair in the Endocrinology of Human Lactation and the further development of the centre in the Nuffield Department of Women's & Reproductive Health.



About the Nuffield Department of Women's & Reproductive Health

The Nuffield Department of Women's & Reproductive Health at the University of Oxford encompasses multi-disciplinary research across the full spectrum of women's health. The department's work has four overarching themes; Cancer, Global Health, Maternal & Fetal Health and Reproductive Medicine & Genetics. It focuses on genetic studies, the dissection of molecular, biochemical and cellular mechanisms underlying normal and aberrant reproductive tissue function, clinical studies in women's health and pregnancy and growth and development across the first 1000 days of life. The department also includes The George Institute for Global Health (TGI) whose mission is to increase access to quality health care for millions of people worldwide - with a particular focus on vulnerable women in resource-poor settings. More information: <https://www.wrh.ox.ac.uk/>

About the Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation

The Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation is one of the first foundations in the world with a prime focus on promoting and supporting breast milk and breastfeeding. Based in Zug, Switzerland, it was founded in 2013 with the aim of promoting the scientific and public recognition of breastfeeding and human milk as – given the current state of science – the best nutrition for newborns and infants. It considers itself as an instigator and promoter of new knowledge. The Foundation invests globally in projects and scientific research in breastfeeding and breast milk. It places high value on multidisciplinary collaboration and supports projects with a sustainable impact on the well-being of mother and child. More information: <http://www.larsson-rosenquist.org/>

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