# News from the Hereditary Disease Foundation

**Partners in Research**
Behind every research breakthrough and every step on the path to treatments and cures is a powerful story of the partnership between brilliant research and visionary philanthropy.

HDF Board Member Sandy Fox says, "I married into a family that carried the Huntington's gene. We didn't know it at the time. We felt that since that is the hand we were dealt, we would be proactive."


**Sandy Fox**

Sandy, a mother of four and grandmother of eight, speaks candidly about her commitment to the Hereditary Disease Foundation and HDF-funded research.

"Rather than say, 'Why me?' We said, 'This is me so what are we going to do about it?'"

Sandy's husband, Bill, died of Huntington's disease in 2007. She joined the HDF Board and established a family foundation whose primary focus is to support Huntington's disease research.

"I happily serve on the Board of HDF. Our involvement with HDF began with Nancy Wexler. We fell in love with Nancy. We liked the philosophy of HDF that monies raised go to support research and that young researchers from around the world are encouraged to collaborate and share their work. We've devoted ourselves to being supporters and research partners, and we have not been disappointed. The research is vibrant with possibilities."

Among the research that Sandy is supporting is the work of Charlene Geater, PhD, a scientist in the lab of Leslie Thompson at the University of California Irvine. Charlene is using an exciting technology that allows skin cells from HD patients and healthy individuals to be "reprogrammed" into stem cells, which can form any cell type of the body. These cells are then made into neurons, the cells that are severely affected in HD. Charlene is creatively using these reprogrammed neurons to expand our knowledge of the many different processes in HD.


**Charlene Geater, PhD**

The Fox Family Foundation supported the work of Marie-Françoise Chesselet, MD, PhD, in 2016-2017. A longtime HDF Scientific Advisory Board member, Marie-Françoise tested compounds (known as D-PUFAs) in mice for their ability to protect brain cells from HD damage. Marie-Françoise's results demonstrated a positive gain in cognitive function in these mice.

Since these compounds are currently in use to treat patients with other diseases, an appeal to the FDA by the drug company is underway for compassionate use and licensing for patients with HD.


**Marie-Françoise Chesselet, MD, PhD**

"There is such promise for finding medications and cures. Because HD is linked to one dominant gene, HD-related research can be useful for Parkinson's, Alzheimer's, ALS and other brain disorders," Sandy points out.

She would like to see an increase in public awareness of HD, and she applauds the critically acclaimed TV-series, "Call the Midwife" for featuring an episode about an HD family.

"People need to know that there is a disease called Huntington's that can hold the key to treatment for many other neurological diseases. The more people know, the more likely they will be to support exciting research that is making a difference."

**Innovating Research…Discovering Cures**

**Donate Today**

***Coming Events***

**Milton Wexler Celebration of Life Symposium**

Over 200 scientists from different disciplines will gather in Boston for three days to present their latest data and unpublished research. We're looking forward to August!

**HDF Symposium and Gala**

Save the date! Our annual Symposium and Gala will be on Monday, October 22, at 6 pm, at the Harvard Club in New York.

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