

April 03, 2018 | By Gabrielle Johnston, MPH

## UC San Diego Health Named Dementia Research Center of Excellence

The Lewy Body Dementia Association (LBDA), announced today that UC San Diego Health has been named a LBDA Research Centers of Excellence (RCOE), a partnership of 24 pre-eminent academic medical research centers across the United States. LBDA is a leading advocacy group dedicated to raising awareness and advancing research and treatment of Lewy body dementia (LBD).

“I am delighted to be designated as a LBDA RCOE, and believe our center can provide state-of-the-art care, outreach and innovative research on this disease,” said Irene Litvan, MD, director of the Movement Disorders Center at UC San Diego Health. “We combine the expertise of movement disorder and dementia specialists and are able to provide personalized multidisciplinary care for a disease that affects so many.”

LBD affects 1.4 million Americans and families, making it among the most common forms of dementia. The progressive disease is caused by deposits of a protein — alpha-synuclein in the form of Lewy bodies — in the brain. These deposits affect brain regions that regulate cognition, movement and behavior. LBD symptoms can closely resemble better known forms of dementia, such as Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases, making it difficult to identify and underdiagnosed by physicians.

The LBDA RCOE program will provide a centralized, coordinated research resource, supporting an expanded effort in conducting clinical trials related to LBD and related conditions while helping to ensure expert clinical care for patients, families and caregivers.



*UC San Diego Health has been named a LBDA Research Centers of Excellence. Photo credit: Lewy Body Dementia Association*

LBDA's RCOE program aims to establish a clinical trials-ready network of leading institutions with a common vision of providing the highest level of clinical care. This increases access to support for patients and caretakers, boosts knowledge of LBD in the medical community, and provides the administrative infrastructure and resources to further LBD research and care.

"UC San Diego is proud to be a leader in clinical research related to LBD," said Douglas Galasko, MD, neurologist and co-director of the Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at UC San Diego Health. "The LBDA Center of Excellence will serve as a regional resource and will enable UCSD to further our local efforts in harmony with a national network of Centers."

Centers are chosen for their clinical expertise in LBD, experience running clinical trials, capacity of facilities and geographic location.

UC San Diego researchers were recently awarded a National Institutes of Health grant to study biomarkers of LBD. As part of the clinical trial, researchers will collect biomarker data, including plasma, cerebrospinal fluid and brain imaging to gain a better understanding of the biology behind the disease. The data will be derived from 216 study participants who have confirmed or suspected LBD.

The 24 RCOEs are located in 17 states and the District of Columbia. Each RCOE is led by nationally recognized principal investigators. A full listing of RCOE institutions is available at [www.lbda.org/rcoecenters](http://www.lbda.org/rcoecenters)

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## MEDIA CONTACT

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