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The Ultimate Experiment: Can Gaming Technology Resuscitate Medical Research?

Saratoga, California – September 7, 2010 – The Myelin Repair Foundation (MRF), a non-profit medical research foundation known for its pioneering Accelerated Research Collaboration™ (ARC™) model, is taking a lesson from online game developers to explore creative ways to accelerate the pace of medical research and shorten the time to market for new medicines.

This fall, the MRF will host two, real-time online “idea sourcing” events – **Breakthroughs to Cures** – an online gaming event designed to engage university scientists, business leaders, healthcare innovators, biopharma executives and R&D professionals, government regulators, entrepreneurs from all walks of life, patients and the general public, in conversations about the barriers that are slowing the pace of medical research and the strategies that may break down these barriers.

“The evolution of the ARC™ model over the last six years has taught us that there are many, many discrete places in the value chain of research and drug discovery that can be accelerated,” says MRF President Scott Johnson. “Reaching out to a broader universe— individuals who work within the current system of medical research as well as others with a bent for problem solving in any arena—for out-of-the-box thinking is certainly in line with our values.”

The idea-sourcing, gaming events are being supported by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Pioneer Portfolio, which seeks ideas that break free of conventional thinking, often because they reframe and refocus problems and explore different paths to breakthroughs.

“The current model used for developing effective, life-saving disease treatments is not keeping pace with scientific discovery,” says Nancy Barrant, Senior Program Officer at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Pioneer Portfolio (<http://rwjf.org/pioneer>). “Gaming is the perfect tool to help foster the type of unconventional thinking that is necessary to create radical change in health care and accelerate the speed at which treatments are delivered.”

“Gaming could be the next tool for solving some of our most pressing real-world

problems,” says Institute for the Future (ITF) game designer and creator and producer of the BreakthroughstoCures events Jane McGonigal. “Those who play games have a sense of urgency and abandon when they are engaged in a game scenario. We have seen these behaviors in corporate strategic game play where there are real stakes. The game we are building for the MRF is designed to generate that sort of urgency and unleash creative ideas for finding ways to speed medical research.”

WHO: Participants to include innovators and creative thinkers from within and beyond the medical research enterprise. Those intimately familiar with the industry’s R&D issues and those that from on-high recognize that the current pace of developing new patient treatments or cures for diseases with unmet needs is failing patients.

WHAT: Myelin Repair Foundation will host **Breakthroughs to Cures**, with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Pioneer Portfolio and produced in partnership with the Institute for the Future, this online “idea-sourcing” event is designed to engage as many as 600 individuals in conversation threads that are expected to identify a wide range of new strategies for accelerating research. Participants will watch a short (2 minute) scenario video, before sharing a brief 140-character or less idea(s) about the future of medical innovation and research. These ideas spur reactions and brainstorming, and lead to innovative and collaborative ideas about what the future could look like.

THE SCENARIO: The premise of the online gaming scenario involves a widespread contamination, estimating that as many as 100 million people in the United States have been infected. America faces a national health crisis unlike any before and leaders in Washington are meeting to discuss how to address the state of this national emergency. This idea-generating event calls upon its participants to solve a deadly disease sweeping the nation. To view the scenario visit: <http://info.breakthroughstocures.org/>

WHEN: The game will be played on October 7th.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED: **Breakthroughs to Cures** is open to the public. Registration begins September 3. If you’d like to learn more about Breakthroughs to Cures visit <http://breakthroughstocures.org> .

MRF’s Johnson adds, “While we think this activity may afford us some additional strategies to enhance the ARC™ model. We also think it’s important to broaden the base of individuals and organizations who understand the problems faced by the industry and may have process ideas for how to improve outcomes for patients.”

About the Myelin Repair Foundation

The Myelin Repair Foundation (MRF) -<http://www.myelinrepair.org> -is a Northern California-based, non-profit research organization focused on accelerating discovery and development of myelin repair therapeutics for multiple sclerosis. Its Accelerated Research Collaboration™ Model is designed to optimize the entire process of medical research, drug development and the delivery of patient treatments.

About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Pioneer Portfolio

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. Projects in the Pioneer Portfolio are future-oriented and look beyond conventional thinking to explore solutions at the cutting edge of health and health care. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime.

About the Institute for the Future

The Institute for the Future (IFTF) is an independent, nonprofit research group with 42 years of forecasting experience. IFTF's core work is in identifying emerging trends and discontinuities that will transform global society and the global marketplace. IFTF provides insights into business strategy, design process, innovation, and social dilemmas with research that generates the foresight needed to create insights that lead to action. IFTF research spans a broad territory of deeply transformative trends, from health and health care to technology, the workplace, and human identity. The Institute for the Future is located in Palo Alto, CA.