

Additional funds made available for Blazeman Foundation-supported research at Brandeis University

Research by Dr. Mugdha Deshpande, the Blazeman Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow for ALS Research at Brandeis University, will receive a boost of support from the Foundation. Working in the lab of Dr. Avital Rodal, Deshpande has discovered specific mechanisms by which growth factor receptor transport is defective in fruit fly models of ALS. In collaboration with Dr. Suzanne Paradis, also at Brandeis, Deshpande has also made exciting new progress in translating these discoveries into rat neurons in culture, which can more closely model human disease. They have found that these mammalian ALS model neurons have a significant growth and branching defect that may underlie early stages of disease, and the next stages of this work will now be accelerated by funds remaining from the previous year's Blazeman award. These funds will be used to screen for defects in specific growth signaling pathways in mammalian neurons, and the process of their cellular transport, in order to identify molecular targets for future ALS therapies. This much-appreciated additional support will enable these next steps to occur more rapidly and efficiently, speeding up the race for a cure for ALS.