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Cellular Dynamics, Michael J. Fox Foundation join on Parkinson's research



Actor Michael J. Fox, right, poses with one of the participants during the Invictus Games Sitting Volleyball competition this month in Florida. Fox was diagnosed with young-onset Parkinson's disease in 1991. Credit: Getty Images

By Kathleen Gallagher of the Journal Sentinel

Updated: Yesterday 3:40 p.m.

[Cellular Dynamics International Inc.](#), a Madison maker of human cells that might someday be used to cure disease, has forged an

agreement with the [Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research](#).

Under the partnership, CDI will make stem cells from the blood samples of 85 volunteers who include people who were recently diagnosed with Parkinson's or have genetic mutations associated with the disease. The cells will be provided to the scientific community along with clinical and imaging data from the study volunteers with a goal of accelerating the development of new therapies.

CDI is a leader at automating the process of making human cells in industrial quantities to exact specifications. Starting with a small sample of blood or skin, the company, in essence, rewinds cells to create the equivalent of embryonic stem cells. Then it nudges the cells forward in the developmental process to become any of 12 varieties of cells, including heart, liver and several types of neural cells.

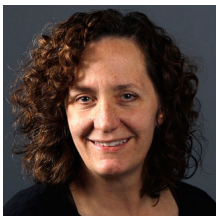
"Both by expanding access to research tools and by evaluating new avenues for cellular therapy, we are eager to help in the search for therapies that could provide long-lasting benefits for patients with Parkinson's disease," said Kaz Hirao, CDI's chairman and chief executive officer.

CDI was co-founded in 2004 by University of Wisconsin-Madison scientist James Thomson, who is viewed as one of the [most influential stem cell scientists in the world](#). It became a publicly traded company in 2013 and is at the forefront of an area known as regenerative medicine, which uses our own cells, tissues and organs to promote healing.

CDI was [acquired a year ago](#) by Tokyo-based [Fujifilm Holdings](#)

Corp. Its operations remain in Madison.

Actor Michael J. Fox created his foundation after he was diagnosed with young-onset Parkinson's disease in 1991. As the world's largest nonprofit funder of Parkinson's research, the foundation is dedicated to accelerating a cure for Parkinson's and improved therapies for those living with the condition.



About Kathleen Gallagher

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