

## **Yale research projects exploring new uses for failed drugs get NIH funding**

Yale UniversityYale University

Two Yale School of Medicine research programs are among nine nationally to receive grants under a new federal program designed to take drugs that have had disappointing therapeutic results in one disease and investigate their use in different diseases.

[National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences](#) [1] (NCAT) of the National Institutes of Health announced June 18 that it will fund Alzheimer's research headed by neurobiologist Stephen Strittmatter and schizophrenia research led by John Krystal, chair of psychiatry at the Yale School of Medicine.

The NCAT grants totaled \$12.7 million.

The average length of time from target discovery to approval of a new drug is about 13 years, and the failure rate exceeds 95 percent, the agency estimates. During that period, pharmaceutical companies have already made substantial investments in testing on potential drugs, for instance establishing their safety. The program aims to recoup that investment by investigating whether drugs might work on different diseases.

Strittmatter, the Vincent Coates Professor of Neurology, will investigate whether an AstraZeneca cancer drug might help treat patients with Alzheimer's. The AstraZeneca cancer drug acts on the same molecular pathway that Strittmatter's lab has identified as a potential cause of damage to neurons found in Alzheimer's disease. When disrupted, the pathway can harm learning and memory in mice.

"This gives us a chance to shave years off the development process," Strittmatter said. "If even one of these 12 projects succeeds, the program will be a home run."

Dr. Haakon Berge Nygaard and Dr. Christopher H. Van Dyck are co-investigators on the project.

Krystal will investigate whether a drug that Pfizer has ceased developing might help rehabilitate schizophrenics. The drug acts upon brain systems governed by neurotransmitter glutamate, which Krystal's lab has shown is a promising therapeutic target.

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### Links:

[1] <http://www.ncats.nih.gov/>

[2] [http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-115530445/stock-photo-chemistry-science-for-mula-and-tablets-medicine-symbol.html?src=http://news.yale.edu/2013/06/18/csl\\_recent\\_image-1](http://www.shutterstock.com/pic-115530445/stock-photo-chemistry-science-for-mula-and-tablets-medicine-symbol.html?src=http://news.yale.edu/2013/06/18/csl_recent_image-1)