Kessler Foundation scientists receive four grants to expand scope of research in spinal cord injury

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The New Jersey Commission on Spinal Cord Injury Research has awarded four grants to scientists at Kessler Foundation. The grants, which exceed $1.5 million, fund diverse studies aimed at expanding knowledge of learning deficits after spinal cord injury, developing new tools for cognitive assessments, identifying types of neuropathic pain, and studying brain activity during exoskeleton-assisted walking. In May, the Commission announced a total of $3 million in grants to successful applicants from qualified research organizations in New Jersey.

“These grants enable us to continue to expand the scope of our research in spinal cord injury,” said John DeLuca, PhD, senior vice president for Research and Training at Kessler Foundation. “We will look more deeply into secondary conditions that may be complicating recovery after spinal cord injury, such as cognitive deficits and neuropathic pain,” he explained, “and gather basic knowledge of the effect of exoskeleton-assisted walking on brain-muscle connections. The goal of these varied endeavors is the same – to translate our advances into improved rehabilitative care that enables individuals with spinal cord injury to participate fully at home, in their communities, and in the workplace.”

Two individual research grants were awarded. Nancy Chiaravalloti, PhD, received a three-year grant for $557,782 for her study, “Examining behavioral and neural aspects of
implicit procedural learning performance in individuals with spinal cord injury”. Dr. Chiaravalloti is director of Neuropsychology, Neuroscience and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Research, and project director of the Northern New Jersey TBI Model System. Jeanne Zanca, PhD, MPT, received a three-year grant for $595,446 for her proposed project, “Informing identification of neuropathic pain phenotypes in people with spinal cord injury.” Dr. Zanca is senior research scientist in Spinal Cord Injury Research, and an investigator with the Northern New Jersey Spinal Cord injury Model System.

Two of the awards were exploratory research grants. Silvana L. Costa, PhD, received a two-year grant for $194,306 to study, “Using eye-tracker based cognitive assessments to examine cognitive functions in spinal cord injury”. Dr. Costa is associate research scientist in Neuropsychology and Neuroscience Research; her postdoctoral research was funded by a Switzer Research Fellowship, and the inaugural Hearst Foundation Fellowship. Soha Saleh, PhD, received a two-year grant for $199,998 for her pilot study on the use neuroimaging to study brain-muscle connectivity, “Cortical control of walking; brain plasticity following exoskeleton training in incomplete spinal cord injury. Dr. Saleh is a research scientist in Human Performance & Engineering Research.

Source:
http://www.kesslerfoundation.org/content/kessler-foundation-awarded-four-grants-nj-commission-spinal-cord-research