

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**La Jolla Institute for Immunology Receives \$1 Million from GHR Foundation in Support of COVID-19 Research**

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LA JOLLA, CA - [La Jolla Institute for Immunology \(LJI\)](#) has announced a \$1 million gift from [GHR Foundation](#), an independent global philanthropy based in Minneapolis, MN.

This significant gift will support the work of the [Coronavirus Immunotherapy Consortium \(CoVIC\)](#), a global partnership headquartered at LJI. CoVIC is led by [Dr. Erica Ollmann Saphire, Ph.D.](#), a professor in LJI's Center for Infectious Disease and Vaccine Research. CoVIC is squarely aimed at accelerating discovery, optimization, and delivery of life-saving antibody-based therapeutics against SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

With more than 50 different efforts currently underway to find therapeutic antibodies across the globe, CoVIC provides a concerted and coordinated effort to compare these antibody candidates side by side under standardized criteria ultimately determining which ones are most likely to protect people and why. Having demonstrated the success of this model from 2014-2019 to test antibodies against Ebola virus, Dr. Saphire launched CoVIC to examine the activity of hundreds of antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 contributed by a range of large and small companies and academic labs across multiple continents.

"As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown clearly, infectious disease anywhere becomes infectious disease everywhere. Until a vaccine becomes available, we need a way of giving people immediate immunity," says Dr. Saphire, "and antibody therapy is the way to do it. The support of the GHR will help us expand and accelerate the analysis of antibodies from people who have recovered from COVID-19, to understand how they work and deliver the best ones across the globe."

Antibodies inactivate or "neutralize" viruses by latching onto the virus and either disarming it or blocking it from entering the body's cells. Dr. Saphire will use the funds from GHR Foundation to analyze and compare the ability of different antibodies to inactivate SARS-CoV-2 infection of different cell types and under different conditions.

Private philanthropy has been key to the Institute's ability to respond quickly to the pandemic without having to wade through a lengthy grant process to enable research to begin. Several of the most prominent private foundations in the country have recognized the opportunity to impact global health at this moment and have pivoted to focus on scientific research. With this gift, GHR Foundation is building on its legacy as a leading philanthropy in Alzheimer's Disease research to support COVID-19 research at this critical time.

“LJI’s ability to both respond to an ongoing crisis and prepare for future emerging disease aligns closely with GHR Foundation’s goals as we, alongside our partners, navigate and adapt to compounding crises,” stated Amy Goldman, CEO and Chair of GHR. “We are pleased to support Dr. Saphire’s hope-fueled antibody research and, together, be of service to people and their limitless potential for good.”

This gift will enable CoVIC to add the capacity needed to analyze and independently verify antibody candidates by allowing partner labs to perform new assays examining cell types and mechanisms involved in antibody neutralization of SARS-CoV-2. In addition, Dr. Saphire will now be able to utilize her lab’s cryo-electron microscope to provide high-resolution molecular imaging of therapeutic antibodies against SARS-CoV-2, thereby illuminating important structural features of the most effective antibodies. These projects will provide needed data that will immediately ensure ideal treatment choice, safety and utility of imminent human clinical trials against COVID-19.

“We are grateful to GHR Foundation for recognizing the importance of collaboration on a global scale and supporting CoVIC,” says Mitchell Kronenberg, Ph.D., President and Chief Scientific Officer of La Jolla Institute for Immunology. “This generous gift allows us to be more nimble and innovative in our efforts to combat COVID-19.”

#### **About La Jolla Institute for Immunology**

The La Jolla Institute for Immunology is dedicated to understanding the intricacies and power of the immune system so that we may apply that knowledge to promote human health and prevent a wide range of diseases. Since its founding in 1988 as an independent, nonprofit research organization, the Institute has made numerous advances leading toward its goal: *life without disease*.

#### **About GHR Foundation**

GHR Foundation is an independent philanthropy of service to people and their limitless potential for good. Alongside its partners around the world, GHR reimagines what’s possible when pursuing impact on issues related to Children in Families, Education, Racial Equity, Alzheimer’s Disease and more. For 50-plus years, the pioneering legacy of founders Gerald and Henrietta Rauenhorst has guided its optimistic and transformational philanthropic approach. [www.GHRfoundation.org](http://www.GHRfoundation.org)

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