

The University of California San Diego and the Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation launch critical research into breastfeeding and breastmilk and COVID-19

San Diego and Frauenfeld, Switzerland, 26 March 2020 – The University of California San Diego (UC San Diego) and the Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation (FLRF) are joining forces to initiate urgently needed studies into breastfeeding and breastmilk as they relate to COVID-19.

FLRF is donating CHF 100,000 in an expedited, unbureaucratic process to help researchers at UC San Diego's Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation Mother-Milk-Infant Center of Research Excellence (LRF MOMI CORE), as part of a larger consortium, to address two critical questions:

- Is COVID-19 transmitted via breastmilk?
- Can breastmilk protect infants from COVID-19?

As one of the world's only philanthropies dedicated to breastfeeding and breastmilk, FLRF believes it is the Foundation's responsibility to do what it can to help scientists answer these questions as quickly as possible. This donation is a first step toward generating initial data and rounding out current guidance from global health organisations. A summary of guidance from these organisations is available [here](#).

Breastfeeding is essential for optimal mother and child health. In these extraordinary times, health professionals need reliable information to both protect the practice of breastfeeding and ensure the health of breastfeeding mothers and their children during this unprecedented pandemic.

UC San Diego and FLRF established LRF MOMI CORE in 2017 to learn how breastmilk can help treat and prevent some of the world's most deadly diseases. Thus, LRF MOMI CORE is especially well-positioned to immediately launch these urgently needed investigations together with other excellent research organisations, worldwide.

"We already know breastmilk contains properties that help protect infants from diseases such as diarrhea and pulmonary infections. Now in collaboration with other human milk research labs, we urgently need to determine whether it has antiviral properties that could protect infants from COVID-19. We also need to ensure that human milk does not act as vector for the virus," says Dr. Lars Bode, Professor and Principal Investigator, UC San Diego, and Director, LRF MOMI CORE. "This generous donation from FLRF will help us to mobilise immediately."

LRF MOMI CORE will also be collaborating with peers in HIV research to learn from past experiences with a different virus, which could lead to a new platform for launching fast, coordinated investigations to address future health crises.

“We have been establishing top-level research resources around the world over the past five years, and now, with that infrastructure in place, we and our research partners are better prepared to respond to emergency situations in an agile manner,” says Göran Larsson, Chairman of the Board, FLRF.

“We take our responsibility as a philanthropy dedicated to breastfeeding and breastmilk very seriously, and are thankful we could move quickly to help the researchers, who are already conducting important investigations, look into COVID-19 questions that are of critical importance at this point in time,” says Dr. Katharina Lichtner, Managing Director, FLRF. “We also hope that our example will inspire others to contribute much needed funds without delay.”

About the Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation Mother-Milk-Infant Center of Research Excellence at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine

The Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation Mother-Milk-Infant Center of Research Excellence (LRF MOMI CORE) at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine was established in 2017 to create an engine of discovery focused on understanding human milk by fostering collaborative investigation across research, education and clinical practice to improve the health and development of infants, mothers, and society as a whole.

<http://milk.ucsd.edu>

About the Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation

The Family Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation was established in 2013, born from the vision of a world in which every child is granted an optimum start in life through the benefits of breastmilk. Based in Frauenfeld, Switzerland, it is one of the world’s only philanthropic foundations dedicated entirely to supporting and promoting breastfeeding and breastmilk.

Backed by sound science, our objective is to drive changes in practice that will increase rates of breastfeeding and improve the health of mothers and children worldwide. We further this objective by contributing to the long-term discovery, dissemination and deployment of evidence-based knowledge. Together with a global network of leading experts, we are creating publicly available, sustainable resources and educational tools that help healthcare providers, governments, communities and families overcome obstacles and achieve their breastfeeding goals.

www.larsson-rosenquist.org/en/

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