

Research Impact Report 2025

ATAXIA

At Ataxia UK, our mission is to find treatments and cures for the ataxias, and to support everyone affected by ataxia until a cure is found. The research we fund through generous donations from Friends has a real impact on the world of ataxia research, and our understanding of all ataxias. Thank you to each and every person who has donated to support research into the ataxias. This report summarises the impact of 59 Ataxia UK-funded research projects, awarded between 2015 and 2025.



More ataxia research

Almost £8m raised in further funding, and 72 research collaborations across 14 countries

Every £1 Ataxia UK spent on research projects raised over £5 in further funding, specifically to be used for ataxia research. Collaborations with companies and universities increase research into the ataxias.



Raising awareness

76 engagement activities

Engagement activities raise awareness of ataxia and research, reaching international audiences including healthcare providers, students, and the general public.



New ataxia knowledge

58 journal articles, 56 research tools and 7 databases

Journal articles, research tools, and databases increase our understanding of the ataxias and potential treatments. Sharing new knowledge with the scientific community accelerates research into the ataxias.



Supporting researchers

55 awards and recognitions

This demonstrates the quality of the researchers supported by Ataxia UK. Supporting researchers encourages them to stay in the ataxia research field.



Case Study: The many ways an FA research project can have impact

In 2022, Ataxia UK awarded a grant of £5000 for a project led by Prof Richard Festenstein of Imperial College London, to model heart cells in Friedreich's ataxia (FA) aiming to reveal the molecular mechanism of heart failure in patients. Following this project, Prof Festenstein received £25,200 in funding from the Rosetrees Trust to further study heart cells derived from FA patients' stem cells. In 2025, Prof Festenstein received over £80,000 in further funding from the French Fondation Maladies Rares for a project designed to increase Frataxin protein levels in heart cells to follow on from the Ataxia UK-funded project from 2022. These projects show that the funding received from Ataxia UK has led to a number of significant contributions to the field of FA research, helping to advance research towards treatments for FA. Prof Festenstein is a very active member of the ataxia research community and has presented at the International Congress for Ataxia Research (ICAR) in 2022 and 2024. Following the results of his Ataxia UK-funded study, Prof Festenstein has recently published a paper looking at mitochondrial imaging in a mouse model and in people with FA in the Journal of Nuclear Medicine, 2025. The paper identified a possible molecular biomarker in affected tissues for monitoring progression of FA in clinical trials. Further work will relate this to his previous finding that patients' movements measured by a motion-capture suit can predict Frataxin levels in the blood (Nature Medicine, 2023).

Case study: Making an impact in the Cerebellar ataxia community



In 2022, Ataxia UK awarded a grant of £30,000 to Prof Karen Anthony for the gene therapy project evaluating the therapeutic benefit of a type of gene therapy in Spinocerebellar ataxia type-1 (SCA1). The project showed that a gene therapy method called RNA trans-splicing could effectively turn off mutated Ataxin-1 genes in SCA1 in cell models. The results were presented at ICAR 2024. Prof Anthony hopes to replicate these results in animal models and humans. This led Prof Anthony to continue her involvement in ataxia research, as she later collaborated on a project with Prof Tony Kay at the University of Northampton which was funded by the university to co-develop a novel gamified strength and balance training programme designed to slow disease progression in hereditary ataxias. They recruited 21 participants, including through outreach via Ataxia UK which sparked interest and raised awareness of Prof Anthony's funded gene therapy work. Prof Anthony has been granted membership of the Ataxia Global Initiative – a worldwide public-private partnership organisation with the goal of facilitating the development of therapies for the ataxias – and has presented her work at a number of meetings, panels and conferences.

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