



The GoFAR (Italy), Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA), Ataxia UK and Ataxia Ireland, have partnered to organize and host the largest and most comprehensive International Ataxia Research Conference, March 25-28, 2015 in Windsor, England. The conference will highlight important research advances for hereditary and sporadic ataxias, including Friedreich's ataxia, spinocerebellar ataxias, ataxia with oculomotor apraxia and episodic ataxia. More than 350 international delegates representing academia research, biopharma industry, medical and healthcare and advocacy organizations will be attending and presenting the latest research findings from basic, translational and clinical investigations. *Filomena D'Agostino, GoFAR President says " we are confident that such an extensive international participation at the Conference and the presence of innovative research topics in the program certainly will encourage the establishment of new partnerships and give renewed urgency to the scientific community towards a more focused commitment to the identification of an effective therapy."*

The following scientific sessions have been organised to promote sharing based on topic areas or focus/stage of research; genetic research and diagnosis; molecular mechanisms and cellular pathways; animal and cell models; drug discovery and therapeutic approaches; clinical research and trials. *Jennifer Farmer, Executive Director, FARA reports that "the quality and quantity of research submissions focused on drug discovery and clinical trials and represents an important milestone for our scientific and patient communities. We are also very pleased to have an interview with a representative of the European Medicines Agency who will be giving advice and information on the regulation of the development of treatments."*

People with ataxia are at the heart of everything we do and three people with ataxia have been invited to share their personal experiences with the research community. We are also delighted that many patient group representatives are attending the conference and that the annual meeting of euro-Ataxia, (the federation of ataxia charities in Europe) will also be meeting here in parallel to the conference, -giving a perfect opportunity for patients, patient groups and researchers to meet and learn from one another. *Sue Millman, Chief Executive Officer, for Ataxia UK says "this level of participation and partnership between our advocacy organizations is evidence of the international collaboration platform and patient engagement created to advance treatments for these diseases."*

International research conferences are critical for bringing us closer towards the development of much needed treatments for the ataxias. These conferences promote timely dissemination of information, debate and discussion of new research findings and hypotheses, opportunity for networking and fostering collaborations and an atmosphere that delivers new inspiration and urgency to the research community.

Proceedings of this conference will be prepared for publication in the *Journal of Rare Diseases*.