

Smart baby jumpsuit - global research powered by Finnish innovation

11 MILLION EUROS FROM THE JANE AND AATOS ERKKO FOUNDATION FOR MEDICAL SCIENCE AND CULTURE

Jane and Aatos Erkko foundation has awarded a total of 11 million euros in grants to 13 projects. This round of funding focused on medicine and culture, with the highest number of applications received in the fields of neuroscience and biomedicine. Many of the now funded projects aim to apply research findings directly to practical healthcare. The largest grant was awarded to a consortium studying the early detection of Alzheimer's disease.

A smart baby jumpsuit tracks motor skills – from Finland to Malawi

A research project led by Professor Sampsa Vanhatalo at the University of Helsinki monitors the development of motor skills in young children using a smart baby suit. The suit allows natural movement to be measured at home during play, and AI supports tracking of possible deviations at an early stage.

The study involves infants in Finland, Hungary, Ireland, and Malawi, and analyzes on how environmental factors, culture, or neurological conditions influence motor development. The smart baby suit also aims to help break down language and cultural barriers in Finnish healthcare. Jane and Aatos Erkko foundation awarded €1.0 million to this innovative research project, which has been developed with long-term commitment.

Largest grant for early detection of Alzheimer's disease

The largest grant of this funding round – €1.4 million – was awarded to a consortium led by Professor Tarja Malm from the University of Eastern Finland. The project aims to identify biomarkers and early mechanisms predicting Alzheimer's disease. Other members of the consortium include research teams led by Professor Mikko Hiltunen from the University of Eastern Finland, Professor Ville Leinonen, radiochemist Pekka Poutiainen, and Docent Mikko Hakulinen from Kuopio University Hospital, as well as Professor Juha Rinne and his research group from the University of Turku.

Thanks to the consortium's expertise, the project will employ globally pioneering research methods. The team also utilizes a new PET imaging system developed at the University of Turku, previously supported by the Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation.

The foundation aims to enable breakthroughs at the highest level

“In this round of evaluations, we considered researchers at various career stages, including early-career scientists. The projects highlighted scientific renewal and international collaboration, supporting long-term development in the field,” says the Hanna-Mari Peltomäki, Secretary General of the Jane and Aatos Erkko Foundation.

The foundation’s goal is to support top-tier projects that are internationally competitive and highly relevant to their respective fields. It also seeks to catalyze initiatives that may lead to new breakthroughs or major scientific advances.

A list of awarded grants is provided in the appendix of this press release and can be found on the foundation’s website (www.jaes.fi). In addition, one of the awarded grants will be announced later.