



Dr. Paul A. Watkins Excellence In Research Award

Criteria and Guidelines for 2026 Abstract Submissions and Poster Presentations

ABSTRACT CRITERIA AND GUIDELINES

The United Leukodystrophy Foundation (ULF) welcomes abstracts from academic institutions and non-academic organizations that highlight new and innovative leukodystrophy research.

We have moved the timeframe to earlier in the year to accommodate requests by institutions to be able to take advantage of less expensive travel arrangements with earlier notification.

The following focus areas include but are not limited to:

- Basic science related to elucidating disease mechanisms.
- Targeted gene, small molecule, and cell-based therapies.
- Clinical studies relevant to leukodystrophies.
- Community outreach and engagement.

INVITED AUDIENCES

Academics, researchers, industry professionals, government agencies, healthcare professionals, and other individuals who have been involved in rare disease research studies are invited to submit an abstract for approval.

ELIGIBILITY

- Professional (medical residents, fellows, professionals, industry representatives).
- Trainees (postdoctoral scholars, graduate students, and undergraduate students).
- The submitted research must have been conducted at an academic institution or non-academic research center.
- All abstracts must be noncommercial and without trade names or logos.

ABSTRACT GUIDELINES

- Abstracts will only be accepted via this portal.
- The person closest to the research must submit the abstract, serve as the point of contact, and present the poster
- Abstracts should be original in research, include empirical evidence, and not have been widely presented or circulated prior to the ULF conference.
- Authors who use resources that are not their own (pictures, charts, graphics, etc.) must cite the original source in their abstract.
- Referral to webpages or URLs may not be used in the abstract.
- Abstracts should be no more than 350 words and utilize the following specifications:
 - Minimum font size: 11
 - Single-spaced rows
 - One-inch margins

ABSTRACT SCHEDULE OF DATES

Call for Abstracts Opens

January 15, 2026

Abstract Submission Deadline:

February 27, 2026

Notification of Acceptance:

March 13, 2026

Conference Registration for Accepted Authors:

March 27, 2026

Late submissions will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis until April 30, 2026. Due to limited space, early submission is recommended.

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- The following content is required:
 - Title of Abstract
 - Authors, institution, institution location (city, state or province and country)
 - Submission of an abstract constitutes a commitment by the presenting author to present their work in the Poster Hall if the abstract is accepted.

ABSTRACT EVALUATION PROCESS

Abstracts will be evaluated by the ULF Abstract Review Committee. The main contact for each abstract will be notified by ULF staff about acceptance or non-acceptance by March 13, 2026.

The ULF and MSAB reserves the right to refuse an abstract or presenter that does not meet the abstract and poster recommendations.

POSTER PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

- Posters should include data for consideration, preliminary and pilot data will be accepted.
- Posters must be presented by the academic or non-academic person who is closest to the research and whose organization is leading the study.
- Presentations must include verifiable information that is available upon request.
- Presentations must not include promotional language.
- Poster Size: Posters should be no larger than 3 feet tall by 4 feet wide.
- Registration Requirement: All poster presenters must register for the 2026 ULF Scientific Symposium by March 27, 2026.
- Registration includes meals and attendance at both the Scientific Symposium and Family Conference.

Poster Drop-Off

Drop your poster off in the designated bin located in the East Foyer/Registration area **beginning Wednesday, June 24 at 2:00 PM through Thursday, June 25 at 9:00 AM**. Please attach a clearly written note to the outside of your poster identifying the poster presenter and the title of the abstract to assist with efficient setup.

Poster presentations will take place the evening of the Scientific Symposium – June 25, 2026

Three posters will be chosen for the **Lightning Round** oral presentations that evening. First, Second, and Third-place awards will be given.



Dr. Joe Hacia (Left) and Dr. Paul Watkins (Right)

About Dr. Paul A. Watkins

The ULF is honored to name our annual Poster Competition after Dr. Paul A. Watkins for his legacy of improving the lives of those affected by leukodystrophy through his unwavering dedication to the advancement of research.

Dr. Paul Watkins is a recently retired research scientist at the Kennedy Krieger Institute and Professor of Neurology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine.

Dr. Watkins did his undergraduate, graduate and medical training at Johns Hopkins, receiving a medical degree and doctoral degree in biochemistry. In the years which followed, he served as both a research associate and medical staff fellow at the National Institutes of Health, as well as commissioned officer service for the United States Public Health Service. Dr. Watkins has been a dear friend and supporter of the United Leukodystrophy Foundation since its inception. He has had a profound impact on the lives and careers of many trainees and early career scientists in the leukodystrophy field.