

"An Alzheimer Gene Crucible in the Far Mountains of Colombia"

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Presenter: Kenneth S. Kosik, MD, Harriman Professor of Neuroscience, Co-Director, Neuroscience Research Institute University of California, Santa Barbara

Kenneth S. Kosik completed a B.A. and M.A. in English literature from Case Western Reserve University in 1972 and an M.D. from the Medical College of Pennsylvania in 1976. He served as a resident in neurology at Tufts New England Medical Center and was Chief Resident there in 1980. Beginning in 1980 he held a series of academic appointments at the Harvard Medical School and achieved the rank of full professor there in 1996. He also held appointments at McLean Hospital, Brigham and Women's Hospital, the Massachusetts General Hospital and the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. In 2004, Kosik became the Harriman Professor of Neuroscience Research and Co-Director of the Neuroscience Research Institute at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He founded and serves as Medical Director of the non-profit center, Cottage Center for Brain Fitness (CCBF).

ABSTRACT: In a remote region of Colombia resides an extended family who harbor a mutation that leads to early onset Alzheimer's disease. With the rapid recent expansion of the population since the time of the founder, the family today has grown to approximately 5000 individuals. It is the largest kindred in the world with familial Alzheimer's disease. The cultural setting in which these families reside has opened a unique window on a variety of timely issues related to genetic information, ethics and the community response to cognitive impairment. Scientifically these families have contributed to our foundational understanding of the disease, provide a wealth of population genetic data, and are now participating in a clinical drug trial with the goal of modifying the onset Alzheimer's disease.