

Esteemed Colleagues and dear Friends, distinguished Guests, our darling Students

Hello, good morning to US and good afternoon to Europe, I am Nazli, a whole-hearted and warm welcome from Istanbul....we are delighted and excited. On behalf of Koc University and the Organizing Committee, it is with the greatest pride, pleasure, and excitement that we are welcoming you to the SKCON 2024.

This Conference is the sixth of a series of symposia jointly organized by the Kiraç Foundation and its Research Laboratory NDAL, in collaboration with Professors Robert Brown and Jeffrey Macklis, who have been the co-chairs of the Foundation's Scientific Advisory Committee since our laboratories' inauguration in 2005. Like its predecessors, the 6th Conference will take a multi-faceted and multi-disciplinary approach to understanding and treating ALS and degenerative diseases of the central nervous system.

The Suna Kiraç Conference is an event that symbolizes the spirit of intellectual exchange, excellent scientific collaboration, and cultural appreciation. This Symposium is typically highly interactive and has large national attendance from across Turkey. To the best of my knowledge, more than 150 participants have registered to the Conference until yesterday and this number is rising. With the invited speakers staying the entirety of the Symposium, there is ample opportunity to connect with scientists who are world leaders in their fields. And this obviously is a unique opportunity for you especially, our young scientists and students.

As you well know, in the face of exceptional circumstances arising from the conflict in the Middle East and worldwide, we have re-scheduled the Conference in October last year to April this year. This decision was not taken lightly on this end! It was not only meant to safeguard the academic integrity of the Conference, but also to recognize the urgent humanitarian concerns worldwide.

While the 6-months delay was disappointing for all of us, we are deeply grateful now to our guests for arranging their busy schedules: the complete team of 12 speakers from October is with us today and the program, unchanged, is as brilliant as in October..

However, end of February 2024 called for another demanding decision, in light of the still ongoing political and military challenges both locally and globally. Following extensive deliberation with our international advisors, Profs Brown and Macklis, and after careful consideration with the Kiraç Foundation, we heavily-heartedly decided that the transition of the Conference to an online format was the most responsible course of action.

While we acknowledge that virtual events have their limitations, particularly in capturing the essence and energy of an in-person gathering, TODAY we are committed to ensuring that the spirit and objectives of the 6th SKConference, will be upheld to the best of our abilities.

Most importantly: This year's Conference holds special significance, marking the 20th anniversary of the Kiraç Foundation and the centennial celebration of the Turkish Republic. Additionally, it serves as a tribute to the late Suna Kiraç, whose visionary contributions resonate profoundly. We are honored to convene during this historic juncture, reflecting on her legacy and the enduring spirit of scientific inquiry and resilience.

Dear Guests. It is a profound honor to co-chair this landmark event which promises to offer so very much through its visionary, state-of-the-art lectures, delivered by pioneers in the field..... as well as the priceless opportunity it provides for us all, to meet and to connect, albeit online this time... This is a sincere call to you all dear participants, please try hard to make the best out of this virtual gathering, to the memory of Suna Kirac.... by asking questions, by contributing to the moderated discussions and by interacting with our precious guests, who have taken their valuable time to be with you during these two days.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the Kiraç Foundation for its generous assistance throughout the preparation of this Conference and the distinguished Kiraç family in person, Suna, Inan and Ipek for supporting NDAL's growth and development over the years. We are indebted. Bogazici and Koc Universities and KUTTAM deserve big thanks for their unconditional academic support and incentive throughout these years. Our very special thanks go also to Pera Museum and its wonderful team led by Özalp Birol, whose enthusiasm, experience, assistance, and sincere friendship make the organization of these Conferences a delight. This year we will miss them and the beautiful setting of the Pera Museum! And you unfortunately will miss the energy and multiple faces of Istanbul. Looking ahead, we eagerly anticipate the 7th Suna Kiraç Conference and we promise to return in-person to our traditional venue, the Pera Museum in the heart of old Istanbul at the earliest convenience.

To our esteemed speakers and all guests, we extend heartfelt thanks for your participation in the 6th Suna Kiraç Conference. May this gathering be both enlightening and fruitful, fostering collaboration and innovation in the pursuit of advancements in neurological disease research.

On behalf of the millions of patients who suffer from neurodegenerative diseases, and their families, we would like to extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who has contributed to this year's Conference. THANK YOU.