



MapLight Therapeutics Celebrates Co-Founder Dr. Karl Deisseroth on Receipt of 2026 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine for the Development of Optogenetics

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Award honors foundational discoveries in optogenetics and circuit mapping

These discoveries laid the foundation for a new era in neuroscience and helped inspire MapLight's circuit-based approach to drug discovery

SAN FRANCISCO and BOSTON, Oct. 06, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- MapLight Therapeutics (Nasdaq: MPLT) celebrates Karl Deisseroth, M.D., Ph.D., co-founder and Scientific Advisory Board member of MapLight, who was awarded the 2026 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. Dr. Deisseroth shares the honor with Peter Hegemann, Ph.D., of Humboldt University of Berlin, and Georg Nagel, Ph.D., of the University of Würzburg, for their discoveries concerning light-gated ion channels and optogenetics.

The Nobel Assembly recognized optogenetics for transforming scientists' ability to study how nerve cells shape memories, feelings and behaviors in the living brain, laying the foundation for a new era in neuroscience. Over the past two decades, optogenetics has fundamentally advanced the understanding of the biological basis of behavior, cognition and neuropsychiatric disease.

Dr. Deisseroth's academic breakthroughs enabled scientists to investigate causal relationships between specific neural circuits and behavior and inspired the founding of MapLight in 2018. MapLight translates insights from circuit neuroscience into a precision approach to drug discovery, using optogenetics and related tools to identify specific cell types and molecular targets linked to psychiatric and neurodevelopmental symptoms. The Company then develops oral small-molecule candidates designed to modulate disease-relevant circuit activity and provide potential therapeutic relief.

This approach underpins the translation of circuit biology into a diverse pipeline of early- and clinical-stage product candidates. The Phase 2 ZEPHYR study of ML-007C-MA, which evolved from optogenetic and other preclinical work at MapLight, recently met its primary endpoint, demonstrating a statistically significant and clinically meaningful improvement in schizophrenia symptoms. Based on these results, MapLight announced its intention to engage with the FDA in an End-of-Phase 2 (EOP2) meeting and subsequently initiate a Phase 3 study in schizophrenia. Similarly, preclinical work leveraging optogenetics in models of autism informed the design and conduct of the Phase 2 IRIS study. Based on these results, MapLight announced its intention to engage with the FDA in an EOP2 meeting to discuss a planned Phase 3 program in irritability associated with autism.

"Optogenetics began as a way to ask a basic question: how does electrical activity in specific cells give rise to human behavior and emotion?" said Dr. Deisseroth. "Neuroscience has long needed a better understanding of the functional biology of neural circuits and the relationship between circuit dysfunction and disease. I am deeply grateful to the institutions, trainees, and colleagues that have enabled and supported my work over the years, and to Peter Hegemann and Georg Nagel for their foundational contributions. As a practicing psychiatrist, seeing these basic biological discoveries move from the lab into human clinical trials is the ultimate realization of this work."

"On behalf of everyone at MapLight, congratulations to Karl on this monumental achievement," said Christopher Kroeger, M.D., Chief Executive Officer of MapLight. "The Nobel recognition of Karl's academic work is a triumph for basic science and underscores the transformative impact of understanding the brain at the circuit level. Karl's Nobel work inspired MapLight's founding premise: that understanding the causal relationship between neural circuits and behavior can enable a more precise approach to developing medicines for complex CNS disorders. We are incredibly proud to celebrate this extraordinary honor with Karl and to continue advancing the mission that his work inspired."

Additional information about the 2026 Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine and the discoveries recognized by the Nobel Assembly is available in its [official announcement](#).

About MapLight Therapeutics

MapLight Therapeutics is a clinical-stage biopharmaceutical company focused on improving the lives of patients suffering from debilitating central nervous system disorders. The Company was founded by globally recognized leaders in psychiatry and neuroscience research to address the lack of circuit-specific pharmacotherapies available for patients. The Company's discovery platform holds the potential to fill this void by identifying neural circuits causally linked to disease and targeting those circuits for therapeutic modulation.

For more information, please visit www.maplightrx.com.

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