



# Funding Research on Brain Disease

Why organizations such as the American Brain Foundation are essential.

**M**y father-in-law passed away early on Christmas morning of complications due to Alzheimer's disease (AD). Many other families are touched by the suffering inflicted by this disease—and all of us want nothing less than a cure.

Research is our only hope for finding better treatments and cures for brain and other nervous system (neurologic) diseases. Thanks to neuroscience research, we have seen an explosion of knowledge in the past 20 years that has led to significant advances in treatment for diseases such as multiple sclerosis, stroke, Parkinson's disease (PD), and many others.

But there is still so much that we don't know, and we can't allow the pace of discovery to decelerate. Research is expensive. For some time now, available funding for research has been flat or has decreased. Exciting treatments are on the horizon, but without continued funding for research, they will never make it into the clinic. We may be at the scientific equivalent of the "fiscal cliff"—and to go over that cliff would be a disaster for everyone touched by a neurologic disease.

Research is needed at all levels, from the animal studies that help uncover disease mechanisms to clinical trials in humans that test whether newly discovered treatments actually cure disease.

Funding for research on brain and other nervous system diseases is especially critical now for many reasons. Most importantly, one in six people—more than 50 million Americans—is affected by a brain disease. The number of people with PD is expected to double by 2030. More than 5 million Americans have AD. Seven million Americans have had a stroke. Every 11 minutes a child is born who will be diagnosed with autism. The list goes on. The economic impact of caring for people affected by neurologic diseases is enormous, and the cost in terms of human suffering is incalculable.

Funding for research comes from many places: The National Institutes of Research (your tax dollars at work), indi-

vidual foundations, the pharmaceutical and medical device industry, and private donations.

The American Academy of Neurology (AAN) saw the tremendous need for targeted funding to support vital research and education to discover causes, improved treatments, and cures for brain and other nervous system diseases. To fulfill this need, a foundation was formed. That

foundation was rebranded in 2012 as the American Brain Foundation. The vision of the American Brain Foundation is, simply put, to cure brain disease. This is an ambitious goal, but as a neurologist, I would much rather give a patient a cure than a diagnosis. And as someone touched directly by a family member with AD, a cure can't come fast enough.

Making this vision a reality will be a long process, and while the work will never really be done, steady progress in improved treatments and cures for some neurologic diseases will occur along the way. It will take the support of all of us to make this happen. We need to be strong advocates for neuroscience research in every venue—willing to volunteer for research studies and, as we are able, to donate our time and money to help create a future filled with cures. Learn more about the American Brain Foundation in this issue and at [www.CureBrainDisease.org](http://www.CureBrainDisease.org).

What would a cure mean for you or someone you know? Tell us your story at [neurologynow@lwwny.com](mailto:neurologynow@lwwny.com) and advocate for a cure every chance you get.

Take good care,

Robin L. Brey, M.D.  
Editor-in-Chief



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