



**American Brain Foundation
Research Advisory Committee Meeting
February 5, 2021
3:00 p.m. ET / 2:00 p.m. CT / 1:00 p.m. MT / 12:00 p.m. PT
Conference Call**

Meeting Minutes

In Attendance: Robert Griggs, MD, Chair; Raymond Roos, MD, Vice Chair; Jose Biller, MD; Merit Cudkowicz, MD; Jacqueline French, MD; Na Tosha N. Gatson, MD, PhD; James Grotta, MD; Walter Koroshetz, MD; Mark Mehler, MD; John Morris, MD; Bruce Ovbiagele, MD; Ralph Sacco, MD; Gordon Smith, MD, PhD; Reisa Sperling; Phyllis C. Zee, MD, PhD; Natalia Rost, MD; Mary Post, MBA, CAE; Christy Phelps

Staff: Jane Ransom; Julia Miglets-Nelson, PhD; Kim Howard; Jessica Chase

Excused: Carsten Bonnemann, MD; Jose E. Cavazos, MD; Ron Petersen, MD, PhD; Eugene Scharf, MD; Ira Shoulson, MD

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Robert Griggs at 2:01 p.m. CT. The meeting minutes of November 20, 2020 were approved.

1. **Welcome and Introduction of New Research Advisory Committee Members:** Dr. Robert Griggs led introductions of the committee members and ABF staff, and welcomed new committee members: Dr. Jacqueline French, Dr. Na Tosha Gatson, Dr. Bruce Ovbiagele, Dr. Gordon Smith, and Dr. Reisa Sperling.
2. **Charge for 2021:** Dr. Robert Griggs outlined the historical role of the RAC at the ABF, which has had a primary purpose of driving the strategic direction of the ABF's research program, as well as helping to suggest funding opportunities for those strategies. Three broad focus areas have been identified for the RAC for 2021 during a series of strategic planning meetings in Fall 2020. The RAC has been charged with expanding the number of training scholarships available through the Next Generation Research Grants program, helping to identify the ABF's next large-scale research initiative, and considering what the ABF's role should be in addressing health disparities in neurology.
3. **RAC Subcommittees:** Dr. Robert Griggs outlined the new format of RAC meetings beginning with the groups April 2, 2021 meeting. Because of the size and expertise of the RAC, the committee will be implementing three subcommittees: Healthcare Disparities, Next Generation Research Grants, and Special Initiatives.

Dr. Bruce Ovbiagele and Dr. Jose Cavazos will chair and co-chair the Health Disparities subcommittee, and subcommittee members will be Dr. Merit Cudkowicz, Dr. James Grotta, Dr. Mark Mehler, and Dr. Eugene Scharf. Dr. Jacqueline French and Dr. Gordon Smith will chair and co-chair the Next Generation Research Grants subcommittee, and subcommittee members will be Dr. Jose Biller, Dr. Carsten Bonnemann, Dr. Ira Shoulson, and Dr. Reisa

Sperling. Dr. Ron Petersen and Dr. Raymond Roos will chair and co-chair the Special Initiatives subcommittee, and subcommittee members will be Dr. Na Tosha Gatson, Dr. Walter Koroshetz, Dr. Ralph Sacco, and Dr. Phyllis Zee.

Dr. Robert Griggs emphasized that these subcommittees do not mean that the rest of the RAC should not think about or have input into any of these issues, but that the committee will have focused time with smaller groups for greater discussion. RAC meetings will continue to be one hour, and subcommittee meetings will happen during this time.

4. **Next Special Research Initiative:** Dr. Raymond Roos presented two potential topics for the ABF's next special initiative: glioblastoma multiforme (GBM), and neuroinflammation. Dr. Roos suggested that GBM may be of interest to the ABF because the disease affects multiple age groups, currently low survival rates, and new frontiers in molecular genetics and CAR-T treatments. There is funding available for GBM research and promising new technologies, however, it is not a common disease. Dr. Roos outlined the potential areas of research for ABF support within neuroinflammation, particularly within the gut microbiome, which regulates inflammation. Neuroinflammation would involve many neurologic disorders, and is still in its inception with plenty of room for research.

Dr. John Morris provided an overview of the ABF's current special initiative, the Lewy Body Dementia Biomarker Project, and discussed how that project developed from a donor-driven initiative to a fully fledged project. The LBD project can be a prototype for the kinds of special initiatives that the RAC is now discussing.

Dr. Morris outlined three topics within the dementia space that could be an appropriate next target for the ABF: neuroinflammation, big data research, and health disparities in dementing illnesses. Neuroinflammation cuts across many disorders, however, there has not been much research in humans, and there are not good biological markers. There is also room for an informatic, big data approach to understand the ways that dementing illnesses present, leading to an omic approach to look at the overlap between dementing illnesses. There is also a great need for research on the social determinants of health, alongside environmental factors, comorbid diseases, and possibly biological pathways to understand how these affect how dementia risk is manifested in different groups, and how it is diagnosed and treated.

Dr. Jacqueline French asked how much of a role Susan Williams involvement played in the perceived potential for the fundraising and success of the LBD project.

Jane Ransom noted that the two biggest donors to the LBD project are the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, and the Alzheimer's Association because LBD touches both diseases. This was a sweet spot that neither was funding, ABF filled that gap and they jumped in. Important to look for similar opportunities for next initiative. Where can the ABF especially make a difference perhaps because the area is on the edge of many different disease areas.

Dr. Jacqueline French noted that brain tumor and GBM is a very disease area that includes neurooncologists, and excludes many others, whereas an initiative centered a topic like neuroinflammation would touch many different disease areas, and would allow the ABF to include more partners.

Dr. Na Tosha Gatson noted that brain cancer does relate to many other neurological disorders, and that there is great research potential because it is so deadly and uncommon. There may also be the possibility of blending both GBM and neuroinflammation into one initiative.

Dr. Raymond Roos emphasized that having a public advocate for any next special initiative seems like an important component to its success.

Dr. Ralph Sacco echoed Dr. Jacqueline French's thoughts that neuroinflammation fits with the ABF's "Cure One, Cure Many" approach.

Dr. Jose Biller noted that lingering inflammation may play a role in the neurological symptoms of long-haul COVID, which would be timely.

Jane Ransom reminded the group that the ABF has started a COVID-19 and the Brain initiative.

Dr. Walter Koroshetz reported that Congress has appropriated over \$1B for research in the COVID-19 space, and notice just went out from NINDS about what this research will look like. This research will require multidisciplinary teams, including neurologists.

Dr. Natalia Rost emphasized the merits of neuroinflammation because of its potential to fit into the AAN Science Committee's charge to the ABF to expand programs for broader, rather than disease-specific, topics.

Dr. Gordon Smith echoed that neuroinflammation would speak to the ABF's Cure One, Cure Many approach. Overarching themes like neuroinflammation are attractive because they touch many different people and conditions, and offer the ability to raise funds around concepts rather than specific diseases.

5. **2020 Summary:** Julia Miglets-Nelson provided a summary of the ABF's research program activities and fundraising in 2020, noting that the ABF awarded twelve Next Generation Research Scholarships through the AAN and other partners, and is planning to award eleven scholarships in 2021.

Adjourned 2:59 p.m. CT.