



**American Brain Foundation  
Research Advisory Committee Meeting  
April 2, 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; Jose Biller, MD; Jose E. Cavazos, MD; Merit Cudkowicz, MD; Jacqueline French, MD; Na Tosha N. Gatson, MD, PhD; James Grotta, MD; Walter Koroshetz, MD; Mark Mehler, MD; Bruce Ovbiagele, MD; Ron Petersen, MD, PhD; Ralph Sacco, MD; Gordon Smith, MD; Reisa Sperling; Mary Post, MBA, CAE; Christy Phelps; David Dodick, MD

**Staff:** Jane Ransom; Julia Miglets-Nelson, PhD; Emily Christian; Liam Moore

**Excused:** Raymond Roos, MD, Vice Chair; Carsten Bonnemann, MD; Eugene Scharf, MD; Ira Shoulson, MD; Phyllis C. Zee, MD, PhD; Natalia Rost, MD

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Robert Griggs at 2:02 p.m. CT. The meeting minutes of February 5, 2021 were approved.

1. **Charge to the Subcommittees:** Julia Miglets-Nelson presented an overview of the format for the 2021 Research Advisory Committee meetings, and each of the Health Disparities, Next Generation Research Grants, and Special Initiatives subcommittees. Jane Ransom reminded the committee members of the ABF's commitment to work closely with the AAN and the capacity of the small ABF staff when brainstorming and considering the feasibility of new ideas.
2. **Subcommittee Breakouts:** The Health Disparities, Next Generation Research Grants, and Special Initiatives subcommittees met in Zoom breakout rooms. A summary of each subcommittee's discussion follows below.

**Health Disparities Subcommittee**

The subcommittee's key questions were:

- Should the ABF's focus be on funding young investigators?
- Should both Underrepresented in Medicine (URiM) and others be supported?

The subcommittee identified two interrelated issues: underrepresentation in the workforce, and health disparities within patient populations. The subcommittee also raised the question of whether the ABF should focus on US healthcare disparities, or if the approach should be broadened to be global in scope.

The subcommittee recommended that the ABF should be careful to avoid expecting only URiM researchers to do disparities research, and should try to fund the best research regardless of where it is done. Currently elite institutions receive much of the funding. This approach may miss opportunities to support other institutions with less resources or infrastructure. There may be room for the ABF to help form consortia of institutions and organizations that are interested in helping to address these issues. The subcommittee also discussed from whom the ABF can find funding support for these initiatives. Many of the ABF's peer organizations are interested in these issues, and there is also room for partnerships with foundations, federal agencies, and pharmaceutical companies.

Recommendations for future discussion:

- Determine whether the ABF focus its efforts on US or global healthcare disparities, or both;
- Determine the focus of the ABF's efforts, whether around diversity in the workforce, or health disparities within patient populations;
- Identify sources for funding support for these initiatives;
- Initiate discussions with institutions that train URiM or have a mission to underserved patients.

### **Next Generation Research Grants Subcommittee**

The subcommittee's key question was:

- What should this program look like in 5-10 years?

The subcommittee reviewed the program statistics for the past four years and noted a mismatch between applicant numbers and award areas. The subcommittee recommended addressing how to increase the number of applicants where the ABF is offering funding, and how to raise funds in those areas with the greatest number of applicants. The subcommittee also noted that the amount of protected time required for recipients may limit be limiting for many institutions, and reduces the diversity of the applicant pool. The subcommittee recommended considering who the ABF wishes to target with support with these grants.

Recommendations for future discussion:

- Determine who the ABF should target with its early career funding;
- Determine whether and to what extent the requirements to receive an ABF grant should be adjusted;
- Determine whether the ABF should fund early career researchers through additional mechanisms;
- Identify sources for funding support.

### **Special Initiatives Subcommittee**

The subcommittee's key question was:

- What should be the topics of ABF's next special research initiatives?

The subcommittee reviewed the history of the ABF's special initiatives efforts, and the progress of the LBD biomarker initiative to date. The subcommittee considered whether the next special initiative should focus on a specific disease, because such an effort would likely be easier to target, or a should address a cross-cutting theme, which would be more in line with the ABF's Cure One, Cure Many approach. The subcommittee recommended that a cross-cutting theme would do more to advance the ABF's Cure One, Cure Many approach, and considered the topics of neuroinflammation and artificial intelligence.

Participants coalesced around neuroinflammation, and agreed that an AI component could potentially be built into such an initiative. From a fundraising perspective, we will need educational materials for donors explaining why the potential for this research to impact the specific diseases they are most passionate about.

Recommendations for future discussion:

- Determine the scope of the ABF's next special initiative;
- Define the concept of neuroinflammation for the general public and potential donors;
- Identify sources and partners for funding support;
- Develop a mechanism to identify subsequent special initiatives.

- 3. Updates from the Subcommittees:** The chair and co-chair of each subcommittee provided a summary of their group's discussion to the Research Advisory Committee, as above. Dr. Bruce Ovbiagele and Dr. Jose Cavazos spoke on behalf of the Health Disparities subcommittee; Dr. Jacqueline French and Dr. Gordon Smith spoke on behalf of the Next Generation Research Grants subcommittee; and Dr. Ron Petersen spoke on behalf of the Special Initiatives subcommittee.

**Adjourned 2:59 p.m. CT.**