



The American Brain Coalition (ABC) is a non-profit organization that brings together people with disabling brain disorders, the families of those that are affected, and the professionals who research and treat diseases of the brain. The mission of the ABC is to reduce the burden of brain disorders and advance the understanding of the brain.

Federal Funding for Brain Research

The American Brain Coalition would like to thank Congress for its support for the \$10 billion for the National Institutes of Health in the recent economic stimulus package. This funding will provide the opportunity for a substantial number of two-year research grants and infrastructure projects to move forward and enhance our understanding of an array of physical and mental health concerns.

In the late 1990s, Congress made a commitment to double the budget of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) over the course of five years. Congress delivered on its promise, and scientists have amassed a wealth of medical knowledge. Today, researchers have a greater understanding of how the brain and nervous system function due to NIH-funded research. Insights into the biology of schizophrenia, epilepsy, Alzheimer's, and other disorders have led to the development of enhanced diagnostic techniques, better prevention methods, and more effective treatments.

Federal funding for brain research is also an economic issue, since nearly one in three Americans are affected by a brain disorder at some point in life. For example, 5 million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's disease today, and the cost of caring for these people is staggering. Treatments that could delay the onset and progression of the disease by even five years could save \$50 billion in healthcare costs each year. The cost of investing in NIH today is minor compared to both current and future healthcare costs.

Health funding also benefits our economy. It is estimated that each billion of dollars of NIH funding generates 15,000 to 20,000 jobs. Science funding also generates more than twice as much in state and local economic output. A strong federal investment in research can assist your state in maintaining a biomedical research foundation that attracts companies and investors. For instance, in FY2007, NIH dollars generated more than \$50 billion in new state business.

Recommendation

While The American Brain Coalition appreciates the Congressional commitment to science funding in ARRA, there is still much work to be done to uncover the mysteries of the brain. Therefore, we support a 10 percent increase in funding for NIH for FY 2010. Strong, reliable funding increases are necessary to maintain the momentum generated by ARRA funds, and to compensate for the 13 percent lost purchasing power that has occurred in the past six years. Such an increase is necessary to attain President Obama's goal of another budget-doubling over ten years. It will also help NIH achieve its broad research goals and provide hope for the millions of Americans affected with neurological and psychiatric disorders.

Stem Cell Research

The American Brain Coalition, along with over 70 percent of the American public, supports federal funding for embryonic stem cell research. This research holds much promise in better understanding brain disorders and for developing new treatments and possibly cures for people with brain disorders, particularly those suffering from Parkinson's disease and spinal cord injury. Stem cells can genetically mirror the healthy cells of a living person. In other words, patients might be cured using cells created from their own DNA, avoiding the risk of immune system rejection.

The ABC is grateful to President Obama for rescinding the restrictions on federal funding of embryonic stem cell research that have been in place since 2001. The Executive Order signed on March 9, 2009, ensures that scientists can fully pursue all relevant scientific opportunities and that politics is removed from science. ABC also supports the NIH's ethical guidelines released in July 2009 to ensure that this research is conducted with strong oversight and meets the highest ethical standards.

Recommendation

Embryonic stem cells may provide new treatments and perhaps cures for the 50 million Americans suffering from a disease or disorder of the brain. The American Brain Coalition looks forward to working with the NIH and Congress to ensure that all opportunities in this field can be fully pursued within a sound ethical framework. Along with all of the major scientific and professional medical societies, the ABC supports an immediate ban on human reproductive cloning.

Chronic Care

The U.S. healthcare system, including Medicare, pays providers to treat patients who are sick or injured while often denying payment to ensure that they remain healthy. The system mistakenly focuses on acute care. Thus, the system lacks appropriate services and does not address all of the needs of chronic care patients. The U.S. Department of Commerce estimates that 70 percent of those who reach the age of 65 will require some form of long-term care, 88 percent of those over age 75 will have one chronic condition, and 70 percent will have more than one. According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), an estimated 44 million Americans provide unpaid assistance and support to adults with disabilities. Given these factors, and that people are living longer and the number of older adults is increasing, too many American families are seriously impacted by chronic conditions.

Recommendations

The American Brain Coalition supports the following specific federal legislative initiatives:

- Legislation mandating healthcare coverage for all US residents, which would enable people with chronic conditions to have increased access to healthcare services and providers.
- Improved payment for high quality evaluation, patient-centered disease management, comprehensive service integration, interdisciplinary care, preventive services and promotion of self-management by patients and caregivers.

The Ethical Use of Animals in Research

The use of animals in research has played a critical role in nearly every major medical advancement of the last century. From the development of life saving medications, to better diagnosis and prevention techniques, the knowledge generated through this research is essential to both human and animal health. In order to treat and cure disorders of the brain, continued research on the complex functions of the living nervous system is absolutely necessary.

Models of a number of human illnesses have been developed in several animal species. These models have been useful for the development of effective treatments as well as for understanding of the neurobiological mechanisms underlying these disorders. At times, the only suitable vehicle to study the brain is an animal model. There is no adequate alternative, and therefore research must be done on animals in order to further our knowledge of the brain. For many human illnesses, the affected organ can be examined directly. Most organs can be probed, biopsied and excised for treatment and study. In general, the brain cannot be examined directly during life, except for rare instances during neurosurgical procedures. For most behavioral disorders, there is no clearly abnormal part of the brain that can be removed and studied. Thus, animal models are critical for the development of understanding normal brain function.

The ABC stands behind the specific laws and regulations in place to ensure the humane treatment and safety of animals utilized in educational studies or trials. These include minimum, set standards for handling, housing, watering, feeding, sheltering and ventilation of experimental animals. Additionally, institutions that conduct research on animals are required to establish a committee to evaluate and monitor animal use procedures.

Recommendations

The American Brain Coalition supports the ethical use of animals in research to advance the understanding and treatment of diseases. The ABC believes that scientists and their families deserve protection from activists who sponsor violent acts against the research community. The ABC is in favor of the Animal and Enterprise Terrorism Act, which was established to protect the animal researcher.