

**Annual Membership Meeting (VIRTUAL)**  
**MINUTES**  
**Monday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021**  
**1:00-3:00pm ET**

I. Welcome – *Matthew Rizzo, MD, Chair; Mark Rasenick, PhD, Vice Chair*

Dr. Rizzo welcomed members and guests thanking them for participating virtually again this year.

A. Introduction of Board Members

Dr. Rizzo thanked outgoing Board member, Dr. Emanuel DiCicco-Bloom. Dr. DiCicco-Bloom is a Professor at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School in Neuroscience and Cell Biology/Pediatrics. He has been a tremendous asset to the ABC Board especially related to any developmental disorder discussions. Dr. DiCicco-Bloom has been asked to serve as an ABC Emeritus Board Advisor.

Dr. Rizzo announced a new position within the Board – the position of Vice Chair. **Dr. Mark Rasenick**, former Secretary and Advocacy Committee Chair, assumes this position. Dr. Rizzo also welcomed **Bobby Heagerty** as new Secretary, and **Leslie Ritter**, as new Advocacy Committee Chair.

Dr. Rizzo introduced new Board members:

**Josie Cooper**, Executive Director, Alliance for Patient Access

**Damien Fair, PA-C, PhD**, Professor, Department of Pediatrics, University of Minnesota School of Medicine - Dr. Fair was nominated by ABC member, Oregon Health Science and University.

**Theanne N. Griffith, PhD**, Assistant Professor, Department of Physiology & Membrane Biology, University of California, Davis - Dr. Griffith was nominated by ABC member, Northwest Noggin.

**Gentry Patrick, PhD**, Professor, Neurobiology Section, Division of Biological Sciences, University of California, San Diego - Dr. Patrick was nominated by ABC member, Cure Alzheimer's Fund.

**Madhukar Trivedi, MD**, Founding Director of Center for Depression Research and Clinical Care, Betty Jo Hay Distinguished Chair of Mental Health, UT Southwestern Medical Center

## B. Introduction of New ABC Members

Dr. Rasenick introduced the new members who joined the ABC this past year.

### Nonprofit members who joined include:

Cerebral Palsy Research Network

Cohen Veterans Bioscience

COMBINEDBrain

Focused Ultrasound Foundation

Haystack Project

Hope for HIE

INADcure Foundation

LEAD Coalition – Leaders Engaged on Alzheimer’s Disease

PhRMA

SynGAP Research Fund

The Aneurysm & AVM Foundation

The Headache & Migraine Policy Forum

The Mac Parkman Foundation for Adolescent Concussive Trauma

### Nonprofit academic member:

Center for Law, Brain & Behavior at Massachusetts General Hospital

### Corporate members include:

Eli Lilly

Kernel

Praxis Medicines

Sage Therapeutics

Sunovion

Pear Therapeutics also just joined us earlier this month.

II. Action: 2020 Annual Membership Meeting Minutes – *Bobby Heagerty, Secretary*

Ms. Heagerty called for a motion to approve the 2020 Annual Membership Meeting minutes, which were approved.

III. *Neuroscience Champion Award* Presentation to Representatives Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)

The ABC is grateful to Representatives Cathy McMorris Rodgers and Earl Blumenauer for their founding leadership of the bipartisan Congressional Neuroscience Caucus these past 10 years.

The CNC has greatly advanced understanding among Congress on how the brain develops and functions across the lifespan in conditions of health and disease. Their educational work has galvanized support for national policies, programs and research on potential treatments that may ultimately benefit the millions of Americans afflicted with neurological disorders or mental illnesses.

Since the CNC's inception a decade ago, our co-chairs have hosted and organized close to 50 briefings and information sessions on neuroscience research and findings; collaborated with patient advocacy, physician, and research organizations to build awareness; and led Dear Colleague letters, appropriations requests, and Congressional Record statements and more in support of neuroscience. CNC membership now stands at over 35 members and keeps increasing yearly.

The ABC was honored to present Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rodgers with the first Neuroscience Champion Award. Representative McMorris Rodgers, first elected in 2004, represents the 5<sup>th</sup> district of the state of Washington. She serves as the Ranking Member of the powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee, which oversees important health-related programs and initiatives. Representative McMorris Rodgers is the first woman to hold the top role for her party on that committee. As co-chair of the CNC, Representative McMorris Rodgers is a longtime supporter of federal funding for the National Institutes of Health. Inspired by her son, who has Down syndrome, Representative McMorris Rodgers is a vocal champion for individuals with neurological conditions and disabilities. In addition to the CNC, she serves as co-chair of the Congressional Task Force on Down syndrome. The ABC is grateful for the continued support of Representative McMorris Rodgers, and Dr. Rizzo was pleased to share her video response.

[View video](#) of Representative Cathy McMorris Rodgers.

Congressman Blumenauer represents the 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional district in Oregon. A lifelong resident of Portland, and long-time friend of mine, Representative Blumenauer was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1996 and has used his time in Congress, and as a member of the Ways and Means Committee, to promote health care access and environmental issues. Of critical importance to the ABC, Representative Blumenauer has been a tireless champion for both the patients suffering from neurological and psychiatric disorders and the researchers developing the treatments and cures to mitigate the impact of these disorders. Most recently, with colleagues from the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, Representative Blumenauer introduced the Bringing Regulatory Advances Into Neuroscience or BRAIN Act. The BRAIN Act seeks to advance the signature policy priority of the ABC—establishing a Neuroscience Center of Excellence at the FDA. Ms. Heagerty was pleased to introduce Representative Blumenauer’s video acceptance of the Neuroscience Champion Award.

[View video](#) of Representative Earl Blumenauer.

The ABC looks forward to continuing our relationship with Representatives McMorris Rodgers and Blumenauer.

IV. Special Congressional Guests: Neuroscience Center of Excellence –  
*Leslie Ritter, MA, Advocacy Committee Chair*

Dr. Rizzo reminded attendees of the efforts to-date the ABC has made regarding our premier advocacy initiative.

In January of this year, the ABC began our advocacy campaign to support the creation of a Neuroscience Center of Excellence at the FDA – an idea that was presented to us by a few different ABC members, after the success of the Oncology Center of Excellence.

In February we debuted our NCOE Advocacy Toolkit, including sample member alerts, a grassroots action alert, sample social media posts, congressional meeting talking points, and other materials that help outline the unique needs of patients with brain diseases, and the need for an NCOE.

In May, we had a meeting with the leaders of the FDA - then Acting Commissioner, Janet Woodcock, the Center Directors, and Director of the Office of Neuroscience. We articulated the need for a Neuroscience Center of

Excellence. FDA officials were very receptive to the issues ABC raised and understand that there are significant unmet needs with respect to treatments for patients with brain and central nervous system disorders. The Directors indicated the need to additional resources needed to focus on strategic initiatives.

Cures 2.0 discussion draft was released in June. It included section 306 directing the FDA to create two new Centers of Excellence, including one that addresses diseases that are a leading cause of mortality or disability, affect at least 50 million Americans per year, contribute to increasing health care costs, and for which medical products take longer to be approved – all of which apply to brain and central nervous system conditions. The ABC was thrilled to support Cures 2.0 and provided comments during the comment period outlining the need for a NCOE.

Most recently, the ABC has provided a [statement of support and sign-on letter](#), with 90 organizations supporting, the BRAIN Act introduced by Representatives Blumenauer, Pascrell and Bacon.

*A. Cures 2.0 – Sherie Lou Santos, Health Policy Director, Office of Congresswoman Diana DeGette*

Ms. Ritter introduced Sherie Lou Santos, Health Policy Director for Representative Diana DeGette. Representative DeGette, from Colorado's 13<sup>th</sup> district, is a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, helping to oversee numerous health and health care-related policies in Congress. Along with her colleague Representative Fred Upton, Representative DeGette led efforts to advance the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act, which was signed into law in 2016. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Cures Act was groundbreaking legislation designed to foster innovation and bring new cures and treatments to patients who need them. Continuing their efforts, this summer Representatives DeGette and Upton introduced a discussion draft for Cures 2.0 legislation. The draft bill included language that would pave the way for the creation of a Neuroscience Center of Excellence at the FDA. The ABC supports this provision of the proposed legislation, and we thank Representatives DeGette and Upton and their staff for their work and support on this issue. In particular, our thanks to Ms. Santos for speaking at the ABC Membership Meeting and sharing her insight on the next steps for Cures 2.0.

**Off the record.**

B. BRAIN Act – *Asha Samuel, Legislative Assistant, Office of Congressman Earl Blumenauer*

Ms. Ritter introduced Asha Samuel, legislative assistant for Representative Earl Blumenauer, covering health and other issues in her legislative portfolio. As such she helps lead the efforts of the Congressional Neuroscience Caucus and works to advance brain health issues in the House of Representatives. Asha joined Representative Blumenauer's office within the last few months and *immediately* she was tremendously helpful in leading the recent introduction of the BRAIN Act on behalf of Representative Blumenauer and his colleagues—Representatives Bill Pascrell and Don Bacon—of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force. ABC is grateful for Ms. Samuel's work in advancing neuroscience and we look forward to hearing from her about the BRAIN Act and other work.

**Off the record.**

V. Panel Discussion: Train & Retain International Talent to Enhance Access to Care

Craig Obey, Chief of Government Relations for the American Psychiatric Association, and current ABC Board member lead the panel discussion.

**Craig Obey, JD – Moderator, American Psychiatric Association**

International medical graduates (IMGs) make up 25% of licensed physicians in the US and constitute a significant portion of the workforce including psychiatry and neurology. Shortages of physicians are already significant and expected to grow, and would be even worse without IMGs.

Most IMGs work in the US under a [J-1 Visa](#), which historically requires them to return to their home country for two years before they could continue their careers in the US after residency. The only exception is a waiver to the requirement through the [Conrad State 30 Program](#). The Program helps IMGs and institutions navigate the complex Visa system, while also boosting the workforce of physicians in rural and other underserved areas. This Program has never been made permanent and requires periodic reauthorization. Current legislation to reauthorize are [S.1810](#) – Conrad State 30 and Physician Access Reauthorization Act on the Senate side; and [H.R.3541](#) on the House

side. It's important for Congress to extend the Program beyond its December 3<sup>rd</sup> authorization.

Mr. Obey turned it over to Dr. Matthew Rizzo to provide a department chair perspective.

**Matthew Rizzo, MD, University of Nebraska Medical Center**

The ABC and its members have a shared mission and responsibility to improve access to mind and brain health care for our patients. There are not enough American doctors to do this. We have pockets and vast stretches of medically underserved across our nation.

As a leader of the Neurological Sciences at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, Dr. Rizzo has a responsibility to accomplish this across our region, including rural and urban underserved. Nebraska is a state that rolls 500 miles west from Omaha. Helping our patients, families and communities, fortunately, are some of the finest, most dedicated international physicians.

In Nebraska, they have hired some of these smart, big-hearted doctors to provide world class care to the underprivileged with diseases like the epilepsies, multiple sclerosis, neurodegenerative disorders including Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's, ALS, neuropathy, muscular dystrophies, stroke, tumors, major psychiatric disorders, and any other condition our ABC members can imagine.

Many of them have stayed on, building access to world class care, treatments and cures, and have helped build our workforce, which is many dozens of physicians short. These doctors from other nations and overseas are advancing our missions of world class clinical care, teaching the next generation of caregivers and scholars, research to discover and disseminate the latest treatments and cures, and community outreach to people who need our help. They improve diversity, bring new ideas and vigor, add to the culture, and speak languages spoken by our patients and not us.

**Dr. Sukhjeet Ahuja, MD, MPH, American Academy of Neurology**

IMGs are an important part of the neurology workforce. More than 31% of active neurologists are IMGs, and over 1/3 of neurology residents are IMGs, as well. More and more Americans are requiring specialized neurological care, and this is only increasing. The US has a shortage of neurologists and is

projected to increase. Dr. Ahuja discussed the effects of COVID and long-COVID on neurologists and neurologic and psychiatric care.

Congress recently increased the number of Medicare-supported graduate medical educational positions by 1,000 in 2021 – the first increase in nearly 25 years – [Increase Medicare Support for Graduate Medical Education](#) (GME). The [Resident Physician Shortage Reduction Act of 2021](#) is another area the AAN supports, along with the Conrad-30 Program. The AAN has established a Coalition to strengthen the Conrad-30 Program.

### **Janet Hieshetter, Dystonia Medical Research Foundation**

The patient advocacy community agrees it has been increasingly more difficult to get access to neurologists and psychiatrists. It's extremely important for patients to be able to see physicians who can diagnose and treat them. Where a patient lives, dictates how easy it is to see a specialist, get into a clinic, and the wait time is increasing. In addition, there is much concern over international medical graduates not being able to continue to do their research. These are huge access to care issues for patients and patient advocates.

There were a number of good questions, and there was agreement for the ABC to further educate our members on this important issue and look into ways we can advocate alongside the AAN and other organizations.

## VI. Advocacy

### A. Advocacy Committee Report – *Leslie Ritter, MA, Advocacy Committee Chair*

In addition to advocating for a Neuroscience Center of Excellence, ABC has been active in advocacy by supporting a number of sign-ons, statements, and other legislative efforts of our members. ABC has provided our own [statements](#), as well, including:

- A statement on Dr. Francis Collins Retirement
- A statement endorsing the speedy nomination and confirmation of a permanent FDA Commissioner
- Statements supporting biomedical research funding for the current and upcoming fiscal years

[Online Legislative Action Center](#)

We continue to utilize our online legislative action center, which allows our members to easily contact their member of congress.

#### Advocacy 101: A Broadcast Series

Earlier this year, ABC teamed up with the American Neurological Association in presenting a broadcast series to help advocates at all levels successfully navigate the halls of Congress – virtually or in-person – and to establish and maintain relationships with their legislators. These three short broadcasts can be found on the ABC’s website [here](#).

#### Congressional Neuroscience Caucus Briefings

ABC teamed up with the Congressional Neuroscience Caucus in hosting briefings including:

March 17<sup>th</sup> Neurodevelopmental Disorders: The Challenges and the Opportunities – ABC, along with members Autism Speaks, American Academy of Neurology, Cerebral Palsy Research Network, and the Society for Neuroscience, hosted a briefing examining the critical need to improve our understanding of what causes neurodevelopmental disorders and some new approaches for treatment and prevention.

May 25<sup>th</sup> A Path Forward: Identifying Solutions for Recognized Gaps in Traumatic Brain Injury Diagnostics and Treatment – ABC teamed up with ABC member Cohen Veterans Biosciences in hosting a joint Congressional Neuroscience Caucus and Congressional Brain Injury Task Force briefing which included a panel of experts presenting findings from the Brain trauma Blueprint 2019 State of the Science Summit on TBI and recent Roadmap recommendations, outlining the identified gaps across research and defining the potential solutions for progress.

More information on both briefings can be found on the [ABC’s website](#).

#### BRAIN Initiative Alliance

ABC is thrilled to have joined the BRAIN Initiative Alliance this year. Comprised of federal and non-federal members, the Alliance mission is to coordinate and facilitate communications from its members related to the BRAIN Initiative.

ABC worked with the Alliance in coordinating a Congressional BRAIN Initiative Briefing on June 21<sup>st</sup>.

B. Washington Update – *Lyle Dennis, Cavarocchi, Ruscio & Dennis Associates*

Lyle Dennis of CRD Associates provided an update on the current status of funding for key agencies and programs in the federal government, which is currently operating under a Continuing Resolution (CR), due to expire on December 3, 2021.

- For the existing Institutes and Centers (ICs) in the National Institutes of Health, the House has passed a \$3.5 billion increase; the Senate has proposed (but not passed) at \$2.7 billion increase.
- Within those amounts, funding dedicated to the BRAIN Initiative is \$612 million in the House-passed bill and \$640 million in the Senate proposed version.
- Finally, for the newly-proposed, but not yet authorized, Advanced Research Projects Agency – Health (ARPA-H), the House has included \$3.0 billion in its bill; the Senate has proposed \$2.4 billion. Both chambers' bills require that an authorization bill be enacted to make the funding available.

It is expected that Congress will not complete negotiations on funding issues by the December 3 deadline and that the CR will be extended until later in December or to a date in the New Year.

VII. Treasurer's Report – *Diana Felner, Treasurer*

The ABC continues to keep a very modest operating budget. This year's total budget is just over \$300,000, which means we do quite a bit with little resources.

Membership dues remain the largest portion of our income, with non-profit membership dues making up over half of our income. We also receive a modest amount of income from a few sponsorships over our educational programming.

New in 2021, the ABC Board approved a new corporate member dues structure, which allows smaller, device companies to join the ABC, along with the larger pharmaceutical companies who have been active for some years now.

In 2020, ABC was provided a COVID-related Payroll Protection Plan loan, which was forgiven in 2021.

Our expenses remain low with our two-and-a-half staff working from home

- Our Executive Director, Katie, is a three-quarter time employee
- The ABC's Program Coordinator, Sheila, is a half-time employee
- ABC's new Social Media Intern started in June working 5-10 hours per week

VIII. Program Committee Report – *Patrick McCartney, Program Committee Chair*

COVID Resources

Last year, the ABC created a 'Neuroscience in the Midst of COVID-19' resource page, which is regularly updated with the latest education and advocacy resources related to COVID and the brain.

On April 28<sup>th</sup>, ABC teamed up with the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology in hosting a Congressional Neuroscience Caucus Briefing on COVID and PTSD Among Healthcare Workers. The pandemic has highlighted the critical need to focus on its impact on the mental health of Healthcare workers involved in the response to this emergency. This Briefing included a doctor who, from day one, was on the frontlines himself and described his experience and challenges.

A recording of this Briefing, as well as a summary, can be found on the ABC's website [here](#).

Other Resources

ABC is committed to providing its members with resources on the brain, and has increased its resource pages to include the following:

[Awareness calendar](#) including a compiled list of advocacy events

[Brain Awareness Week](#)

[Research and submission opportunities](#) for scientists

[Career and internship opportunities](#) at our various members' organizations and offices

Neuroscience [diversity resources](#)

Responsible use of [animals in research](#) resources

In addition, ABC has increased its resources on ways the membership and public can get involved in neuroscience. The ABC Board will be discussing this idea further during our upcoming meeting, in hopes of increasing our efforts even further in 2022.

IX. Executive Director Report – *Katie Sale, Executive Director*

In June, the ABC hired a Social Media Intern, who is still employed and helping the ABC with social media needs.

The ABC's Program Coordinator, Sheila Stern, is stepping up with everyday membership activities, as well as redesigning a new ABC website, which we hope to launch early in 2022.

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