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IMMUNOLOGISTS



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October 15, 2014

Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D.

Director

National Institutes of Health

Building 1, Room 126

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Bethesda, MD 20814

Cornelia Bargmann, Ph.D.

Co-Chair, Advisory Committee to the
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Thomas Insel, M.D.

Co-Chair, BRAIN Multi-council Working Group

Director, National Institute of Mental Health

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William Newsome, Ph.D.

Co-Chair, Advisory Committee to the

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by email to francis.collins@nih.gov, thomas.insel@nih.gov, cori.bargmann@rockefeller.edu,
and bnewsome@stanford.edu

Dear Drs. Collins, Insel, Bargmann, and Newsome:

As you know, to support President Obama's Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) offered funding to "build a new arsenal of tools and technologies for unlocking the mysteries of the brain." (<http://www.nih.gov/news/health/dec2013/nih-17.htm>) NIH's initial investment of \$46 million supported six awards for research in nine high priority areas that were identified by the NIH Advisory Committee to the Director's BRAIN Working Group in September 2013. (<http://www.nih.gov/science/brain/funding.htm>)

As NIH considers new funding opportunities for fiscal year 2015, The American Association of Immunologists (AAI) urges inclusion of research on the impact of the immune system on the brain and nervous system. AAI, a professional association of 7,800 of the world's leading research scientists and physicians who are dedicated to understanding the immune system through basic research, believes that immunologic research would directly support a core principle of the BRAIN Initiative* by greatly advancing our understanding of both the brain and many debilitating neurological diseases and disorders.

Letter from The American Association of Immunologists

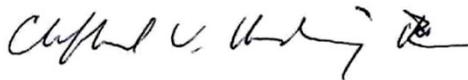
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The immune system is intimately related to brain and nervous system function in health and disease. It plays a critical role in brain inflammation in neurological diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's; autoimmune disorders such as multiple sclerosis; viral, bacterial and parasitic infections of the brain; and traumatic brain injury and brain damage. Moreover, recent studies increasingly suggest a link between immune dysregulation and select neuropsychiatric conditions including autism and schizophrenia. The possibility of bringing immunologists and neuroscientists together to address major questions at the interface of immunology and neuro-degenerative diseases offers a key opportunity to both enhance the pace of basic and translational discoveries and to save and transform lives.

AAI encourages NIH to ensure that the BRAIN Initiative actively embraces these timely and important opportunities seminal to the Initiative by offering funding for studies that explore how the immune system functions in the brain and nervous system and how it influences brain diseases.

Sincerely,



Clifford V. Harding, M.D., Ph.D.
Chair, AAI Committee on Public Affairs

* In the Executive Summary of the report (**BRAIN 2025: A Scientific Vision**) issued by the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Working Group Report to the Advisory Committee to the Director, NIH, the Working Group states as follows: "Over the course of our deliberations, specific themes emerged that should become core principles for the NIH BRAIN Initiative..."

2. *Cross boundaries in interdisciplinary collaborations.* No single researcher or discovery will solve the brain's mysteries. The most exciting approaches will bridge fields, linking experiment to theory, biology to engineering, tool development to experimental application, human neuroscience to non-human models, and more, in innovative ways."

<http://www.nih.gov/science/brain/2025/index.htm>