

## American Brain Coalition eNEWSLETTER

### The Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative: The NIH Perspective

On June 12, 2013, the American Brain Coalition organized a Congressional Neuroscience Caucus Briefing that explored the recently-announced Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies (BRAIN) Initiative, an unprecedented public-private partnership to revolutionize our understanding of the human brain. The BRAIN Initiative is poised to capitalize on scientific advancements to provide researchers with new tools to identify ways to treat, prevent and even cure brain disorders. The Capitol Hill event was sponsored by the American Academy of Neurology and the Society for Neuroscience.



Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-OR), Congressional Neuroscience Caucus co-chair, welcomed nearly 100 attendees to the briefing, a mix of Hill staff and representatives from advocacy organizations. Rep. Blumenauer noted the importance of NIH research and introduced the Briefings speakers Dr. Francis Collins, Director of the National Institutes of Health and Dr. Story Landis, Director of the National Institute for

Neurological Disorders and Stroke.



Dr. Collins provided a general overview of BRAIN. He said that NIH is excited about this initiative and they think the time is right – progress in neuroscience is yielding new insights into brain structure and function; progress in optics, genetics, nanotechnology, informatics, etc. is rapidly advancing the design of new tools. Dr. Collins then laid out the FY2014 BRAIN Initiative partners. Government agencies include NIH, DARPA, and NSF; private organizations include the Allen Institute, Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Salk

Institute, and The Kavli Foundation. He then provided the goals of the NIH BRAIN Initiative and how it will work. The Plan will be developed by a working group of the

Advisory Committee to the NIH Director, and will include timetables, milestones and costs. The NIH BRAIN Working Group will seek broad input and will deliver a final report in June of 2014.



Dr. Landis spoke about the potential of the BRAIN Initiative for understanding and treating brain disorders, and how outcomes from BRAIN might have applications for specific diseases. One such example Dr. Landis provided was deep brain stimulation, and how it is a significant benefit for Parkinson's patients in the mid-course of the disease. OCD, intractable depression, dystonia, essential tremor and other circuit disorders can be treated with deep

brain stimulation by using different electrode placements. Dr. Landis outlined the NIH Blueprint for Neuroscience Research, and how funds allow exploration of new strategies to accelerate progress in the neurosciences. She talked about the Neuroinformatics Framework, which is the largest searchable collation of neuroscience data on the web, the largest catalog of biomedical resources, and the largest ontology for neuroscience. Dr. Landis discussed the Human Connectome Project, the Blueprint Neurotherapeutics Project, and the 'Virtual Pharma' Model, as well.

During the Q&A, Dr. Collins addressed the challenges that the tight funding environment and sequestration present to NIH. He noted that BRAIN would likely be funded at a much higher level if more funding were available and that all areas of research suffer given the current situation. One attendee asked how NIH plans to involve the patient advocacy community. Dr. Collins said the NIH is working with the American Brain Coalition in determining the best way to educate and engage the patient advocacy community.

The Congressional Neuroscience Caucus was established in 2010 by co-chairs Reps. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) and Earl Blumenauer (D-OR) to promote a better understanding of how the brain develops, functions, and ages. The Caucus also seeks to raise awareness about the millions of Americans afflicted with neurological disorders or mental illnesses.

For Congressional Offices: To join the Congressional Neuroscience Caucus, please contact Michael Harold with Congressman Blumenauer at 5-4811 or Karen Summar with Congresswoman McMorris Rodgers at 5-2006. For more information about the American Brain Coalition, please contact Executive Director Katie Sale ([ksale@americanbraincoalition.org](mailto:ksale@americanbraincoalition.org)) or visit <http://www.americanbraincoalition.org>.

Photos courtesy of the Society for Neuroscience