



A public brain awareness fair organized in Montevideo, Uruguay, by 2015-16 Global Advocacy Seed Grant awardee, la Sociedad de Neurociencias del Uruguay.

2016 REVIEW

Since the launch of activities in 2014, the Global Advocacy Initiative aims to increase public awareness of brain research and build support for neuroscience research, informed policymaking, training and education around the world.

FOUNDING PARTNERS

- Australasian Neuroscience Society (ANS)
- Dana Foundation
- Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS)
- International Society for Neurochemistry (ISN)
- Japan Neuroscience Society (JNS)
- Society for Neuroscience (SfN)

The Global Advocacy Seed Grant activities in 2016 further highlighted the critical importance of this joint initiative.

Those awarded the first global advocacy seed grants in 2015 will have completed their activities by the end of 2016. Most awardees have already successfully concluded their events.

Events have ranged from stakeholder forums, scientific meetings, symposia, public lectures, press conferences, national campaigns, website development, virtual conferences, courses, poster sessions and Brain Awareness Week activities.

They are taking place in 11 different countries in the African, Asia Pacific and Latin American regions: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nigeria, South Africa and Uruguay.

The second round of seed grant applications in 2016 showed increased interest with a higher submission rate.

There were a total of 64 applications, over a 15% increase from last year. A slight drop in submissions occurred in the African region but both the Asia Pacific and Latin American regions experienced significant increases.

Notably, the Latin American region received several high quality applications and was awarded six grants (although with lower overall funding per grant). The African and Asia Pacific regions were awarded four grants each.

Events will take place in 13 different countries in 2016-17: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Japan, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Puerto Rico, South Africa, Somaliland and Sri Lanka.



Advocacy event at the Mongolian National University of Medical Sciences, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, organized by 2015-16 Global Advocacy Seed Grant awardee, Mongolian Neuroscience Society.

BUDGET SUMMARY

Expenses in 2015-16, covered a total of 11 seed grants of €5,000 each for an overall expenditure of €55,000. Four grants each were awarded to the Latin American and Asia Pacific regions and three to the African region.

For the year 2016-17, a total of 14 seed grants were awarded. Six grants of €3,300 each were distributed to Latin America and four grants each (€5,000 per grant) were awarded to the African and Asia Pacific regions, with an overall expenditure of €59,800.

Funding for activities supported by the Global Advocacy Initiative since 2014 has come from generous contributions made by IBRO, the Dana Foundation, the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS), the International Society for Neurochemistry (ISN), the Japan Neuroscience Society (JNS) and the Society for Neuroscience (SfN).

REVIEW PROCESS

Reviews and rankings of the Global Advocacy Seed Grant applications are made by the IBRO Africa (IBRO-ARC), Asia Pacific (IBRO-APRC) and Latin America Regional (IBRO-LARC) Committees. Next year, the Pan-Europe Regional Committee (IBRO-PERC) will also be involved in submission reviews for European applicants.

After proposals have been evaluated and ranked by the appropriate regional committees, they are then sent to a super reviewer who makes a final evaluation. For the past two years, the super reviewer has been the IBRO Secretary General. From 2017, IBRO Senior Director of Grants will replace the Secretary General as super reviewer. Once he or she completes the final assessment, the awardees are then officially reported to the members of the IBRO Global Advocacy Committee.

Review rankings for 2016-17:

Africa: Out of 18 total applications, 7 were ineligible, 7 were average and 4 were considered excellent.

Asia Pacific: Out of 27 total applications, 5 were ineligible, 18 were average/above average and 4 were considered excellent.

Latin America: Out of 21 total applications, 4 were ineligible, 11 average and 6 were considered excellent.

AFRICA

Three global advocacy seed grants of €5,000 each were awarded to the Africa region for 2015-16.

EGYPT: Tamer Emara, Ain Shams University, Cairo

Tamer Emara, Associate Professor of Neurology and Head of the Teleneurology Unit at Ain Shams University, used the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to organize the *Arab African Teleneurology Conference: A Treat and Teach Initiative*. It was the first of its kind at the regional level and was designed to develop short- and intermediate-term strategies to increase numbers of trained neurologists and neurology education programs in the region with a mix of online education and on-site clinical training. It successfully facilitated networking between regional and international centers of excellence, scholars and patients, and complemented current efforts to improve neurology education and practice. The efforts made were part of an overall plan to establish higher education programs and relationships that might lead to national neuroscience services run by local professionals.

Link: <http://atnc.asu.edu.eg/>

NIGERIA: Owolabi Joshua, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo

Owolabi Joshua, Lecturer in the Anatomy Department at Babcock University, used the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to support the ongoing Nigeria Brain Advocacy Program at Babcock University. Activities carried out included a radio program series, *BrainHealth and BrainPower*, on Hope 89.5 FM; a brain awareness talk series on campus; and printing and distribution of a free public book, *Optimal BrainHealth and BrainPower – Demystifying Neuroscience in Contemporary Language*. The overall seed grant project was one of only two national brain health activities in Nigeria in 2016. A final meeting is also being organized to encourage and persuade policymakers and other stakeholders to make funding available for brain and mental health research and prioritize neuroscience as a research field of immediate national concern.

SOUTH AFRICA: Jacqueline Bracher, Neurosciences Institute, University of Cape Town

Jacqueline Bracher, Strategic Projects Manager of the Neurosciences Institute at the University of Cape Town (UCT), is using the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to support the creation and development of an Institute website to provide an online platform that will communicate and present all research, training and advocacy activities of the UCT Institute, Groote Schuur Hospital and affiliated institutions for the public to explore. The UCT Institute aims to be the flagship neuroscience research and treatment facility in South Africa and perhaps even the African continent. It will advance clinical care and transform research and teaching in the neurosciences in Africa by drawing together experts in basic science, clinical work, and public health.

ASIA PACIFIC

Four global advocacy seed grants of €5,000 each were awarded to the Asia Pacific region for 2015-16.

INDIA: Prahlad K Seth, Indian Academy of Neurosciences, Lucknow

Prahlad K. Seth, Senior Advisor to Biotech Park Lucknow, is in the process of organizing the activities supported by the Global Advocacy Seed Grant and plans to carry them out by the end of the year.

The overall objective is to lay the foundation for a sustained advocacy program in India. These initial activities will attempt to sensitize the public about the importance of neuroscience research and discuss the need for greater funding with policymakers. The anticipated activities include: Videos and public lectures in local languages and school activities; sensitizing patient support groups by collaborative outreach and symposiums; strategic meetings with parliamentary committee members; and special symposia aimed at industry representatives.

JAPAN: Tadaharu Tsumoto, RIKEN Brain Science Institute, Wako

Tadaharu Tsumoto, Leader of the Laboratory for Cortical Circuit Plasticity at the RIKEN Brain Science Institute, used the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to support the Non-Profit Organization, *Brain Century Promotion Conference*, and its 24th Brain Century Symposium in Tokyo. The objective of the symposium was to educate and inform the general public, science communicators and journalists about brain science in order to maintain and grow current public interest in advancements in brain research. The 2016 theme of the symposium was "Foods and Brain" and included a special lecture by Takuji Takahashi, a third generation master chef of the Kyoto restaurant, Kinobu.

Link: <http://www.braincentury.org/brainsympo/> (in Japanese)

MALAYSIA: Michael King Hwa Ling, Universiti Putra Malaysia

Michael King Hwa Ling, Senior Lecturer in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at the Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), used the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to support an inaugural workshop entitled *Embrace, Network and Change: Towards National and Global Neuroscience Advocacy* and the 6th UPM Annual Neuroscience Seminar. The workshop facilitated discussions with policymakers, NGO leaders, industry representatives and researchers on several key issues: Challenges in neuroscience R&D in Malaysia for the next decade; problem-based-driven research prioritization; roles for academia, societies, agencies and NGOs in neuroscience R&D; and the importance of networking as a driving component in changing the national neuroscience landscape. The one-day seminar featured 10 interdisciplinary neuroscience lectures for academics, neuroscientists, medical and health professionals, technicians and research officers.

Link: <http://www.neuroscience.org.my/>

MONGOLIA: Battuvshin Lkhagvasuren, Mongolian Neuroscience Society, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Battuvshin Lkhagvasuren, Executive Director of the Mongolian Neuroscience Society (MNS) at the Mongolian National University of Medical Sciences (MNUS), used the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to support four major activities in 2015/16. A national press conference about brain science announced the 2nd Annual MNS meeting, *Multidisciplinary Brain Science*, and included a brief description of brain science, an introduction to MNS and a Q&A session. The annual meeting on 28-30 August 2015 gathered more than a hundred specialists together to discuss and develop brain science in Mongolia. The first public event on neuroscience in Mongolia was held on 13-14 April 2016 at MNUMS. Free public neuroscience lectures were offered, 3 interactive presentation stations about brain functions, 2 onsite consultation centers and fun games were all offered to more than 300 participants. A follow-up Board Meeting in May 2016 with key decision makers including the Department Head of the Ministry of Education, Culture & Science and Director of the National Center of Mental Health established common agreement over the urgent need of neuroscience-based advocacy in education, research and policy in the country. MNUMS President, Dr. Batbaatar Gunchin, also took the occasion to announce that neuroscience has been introduced into the official university curriculum as an elective subject. At the end, it was agreed that this Board Meeting will be continued annually.

*Links: <http://neuroscience.mn/meetings-calendar/meetings/mns-2015/>,
<http://neuroscience.mn/neurosciencepublicevent/>*

LATIN AMERICA

Four global advocacy seed grants of €5,000 each were awarded to the Latin American region for 2015-16.

ARGENTINA: Ana Belén Elgoyhen, Sociedad Argentina de Investigación en Neurociencias, Buenos Aires

Ana Belén Elgoyhen, President of the Sociedad Argentina de Investigación en Neurociencias (SAN), used the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to support advocacy and awareness activities at the XXX Congress of the Argentine Society for Research in Neuroscience and the society's 30th Anniversary in Mar del Plata, Argentina, from 27 September – 1 October 2015. The event included an expanded scientific meeting with a 2-day pre-meeting course on *State-of-the-Art Methods in Neuroscience Research* with 170 students, 3 plenary lectures, 6 international symposia, 2 young investigator symposia, 2 parallel short talk sessions for postgraduates and poster sessions (248 presentations). A workshop for journalists was conducted and a course and poster session on *Bridging Neuroscience and Neurology* were also organized. There were approximately 400 participants who enjoyed an environment that provided active discussions on the latest advances in different areas of neuroscience among students, researchers, decision makers and the public.

Link: http://www.saneurociencias.org.ar/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Program-SAN-2015_Julio-31.pdf

BRAZIL: Cecilia Hedin-Pereira, Rio de Janeiro Society for Neuroscience (SfN) Chapter

Cecilia Hedin-Pereira, Professor at the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), used the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to organize activities for Brazil's 5th National Brain Awareness Week from 16-20 March 2016 in Rio de Janeiro. It provided an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the brain and its function in health and disease and a public forum where advances in neuroscience could be discussed between international scientists and the general public. Guided visits, ongoing experiments, discussions and talks were conducted under the title *código neural*. These activities permitted discussions about the neural code at the interface between art and science, bringing the public a different view about the signals generated in the brain and their meaning, rethinking them through an artistic perspective. Artist Dandara Dantas transformed musical text into imagetic scores to stimulate discussions about neural codes through her images, sculptures, installations and audio-visual performances. The public participated in this textual transformation as a real experiment and analyzed results together with artists and scientists.

CHILE: Andrés Oscar Couve Correa, The Biomedical Neuroscience Institute, Santiago

Andrés Oscar Couve Correa, President of the Biomedical Neuroscience Institute (BNI), used the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to help establish and launch a new scientific platform *Loligo Education*, an open access online site in Spanish, to support teaching neuroscience in Chilean schools. Developed by a BNI partnership with Biointeractive and Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI), the platform gathers a variety of educational materials (22 total) adapted to the curricular needs of the Chilean educational system and aims to promote science education in the school community combining cutting-edge content and entertainment. The platform was launched on 5 April 2016 at the Faculty of Medicine of

the University of Chile in Santiago. The event illustrated how students can now learn different aspects of biology and neuroscience and their relevance to daily life. They can also benefit from supplemental teaching about the brain. Rodrigo Tapia, BNI Outreach and Education Director, said the project “provides a great opportunity to generate resources for Spanish-speaking students, which currently have very limited access to high quality scientific material.” Tapia hopes the platform can lead to the development of a partnership with the Ministry of Education to increase its public impact.

Link: www.loligo.cl

URUGUAY: Francesco Rossi, Sociedad de Neurociencias del Uruguay, Montevideo

Francesco Rossi, President of the Sociedad de Neurociencias del Uruguay, used the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to support two main activities, the 6th edition of the *Semana del Cerebro* (Uruguayan Brain Awareness Week between 12-17 March 2016) and the *Primera Jornada de Promoción del Apoyo a la Investigación en Neurociencias*, the first event promoting support for research in neuroscience at the Uruguayan Parliament on 17 March. The Brain Awareness Week (BAW) took place in four cities and offered a fair including an art-photo exhibition, *Inside Us- el preceptor del sentir*, posters, interactive hands-on activities and games for families, public lectures (including one by past IBRO President, Dr. Carlos Belmonte), classroom activities in local schools and workshops for school teachers. There was also a free cycle of movies on brain science offered with *Cinemateca Uruguay*. Approximately 2,000 people participated and wide media coverage was enjoyed. The parliamentary workshop brought together policymakers, scientists and journalists to discuss the importance and impact of neuroscience research on decision making and to open new channels for dialogue. The main challenge was to attract politicians to the event but the talks were recorded and disseminated through government TV.

FEEDBACK FROM AWARDEES

Five 2015-16 seed grant awardees have provided program feedback so far: The Mongolian Neuroscience Society, the RIKEN Brain Science Institute (Japan), the Biomedical Neuroscience Institute in Chile, the Sociedad Argentina de Investigación en Neurociencias and Ain Shams University (Egypt). All of them agreed that the global advocacy seed grant program was valuable and rated it highly. Feedback highlights include: Important links made such as those between U.S., European and Egyptian researchers through the Arab/Africa teleneurology initiative; the integration of neuroscience into the Chilean educational system by the Loligo Education project; long-term media and government relationships in Mongolia; and an audience of around 600 at the Japanese symposium resulting from excellent media coverage and discussions on current topics of public interest. All grantees expressed the need for continued funding to ensure success of advocacy work in the future, and other support from partners in the form of event participation, partnerships, advice on relating advocacy to education and exchange of experiences and lessons learned.

Fourteen global advocacy seed grants were awarded to the African, Asian Pacific and Latin American regions for 2016-17. Descriptions of the advocacy projects follow.

AFRICA

NIGERIA: Theresa Ekanem, President, Neuroscience Society of Nigeria

The Neuroscience Society of Nigeria is the umbrella body of neuroscientists in the country and it meets annually to discuss relevant regional priorities in neuroscience and to share basic and clinical research results. Unfortunately, neuroscience is still misunderstood nationwide. There is a lack of understanding about the relevance of neuroscientists in health care delivery, funding constraints, lack of trained personnel, weak collaboration between clinicians and basic researchers and no functioning laboratories with appropriate facilities for research. The Global Advocacy Seed Grant will allow NSN to convene a workshop that will involve politicians, policymakers, university heads, healthcare professionals, students, researchers and the general public. It will provide the opportunity for the different stakeholder groups to understand the importance of neuroscience research in helping to alleviate the burden of neurological conditions such as depression, schizophrenia, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases. The primary objective of the workshop will be to build a link to policymakers that conveys the need to fund neuroscience research on major neurological diseases currently affecting Nigeria and other African countries.

NIGERIA: James Olopade, Professor, University of Ibadan

Neuroscience is not a priority in Nigeria nor throughout Africa. There is a lack of willingness from senior colleagues to start neuroscience degree programs, relatively little interest in neuroscience research among postgraduate students and low funding opportunities for neuroscience research. The Neuroscience Group at the University of Ibadan is acutely aware of these challenges, especially since there is no official neuroscience program. With the Global Advocacy Seed Grant, the Neuroscience Group will run a series of Advocacy Lectures targeted at two audiences, university students and lecturers and policymakers, in order to highlight the importance of neuroscience in Nigeria and greater Africa and increase support for research. The first lecture will be given by Professor Marina Bentivoglio who will speak about "Using Neuroscience Research to Solve the Neurological Challenges of Our Time: The Role of Africa and African Based Research." University undergraduates and postgraduates in the biological sciences, chemistry and physics will be invited. The second lecture will be given by Professor Richard Brown on "Developing Neuroscience Postgraduate Program in Ibadan: the Expected Gains" for neuroscience lecturers and professors, policymakers and university administrators.

SOMALILAND: Temesgen Sidamo Summoro, Dean, Faculty of Pharmacy, Edna Adan University Hospital

Somaliland in northern Somalia has one of the highest prevalence of mental illness worldwide. Forty percent of people are estimated to be living with severe mental health disorders, probably as a result of two decades of civil war, social stigma, substance abuse and a huge shortage of trained professionals. The Edna Adan University Hospital will organize a conference with the aim of advocating for brain awareness throughout the country. The target audience will include educators, health professionals from around the country and government officials from the Ministry of Education and Health. A call for participation and abstract submission will be opened in selected areas of brain function and fitness as well as brain diseases and disorders, preferably the neuroscience of psychoactive substance use and dependence, hypoxic brain

injury and hydrocephalus. Other activities will include panel discussions, Q&A sessions and an exhibition of movies related to brain function, diseases and disorders.

SOUTH AFRICA: Janine Roos, Director of the Mental Health Information Centre of Southern Africa, Stellenbosch University, Cape Town

Modern neuro-imaging research has led to tremendous advances in understanding the human brain and how it is affected by disease processes in recent years. However, expertise is still lacking in this field in Southern Africa. This makes advocacy and further training of neuro-imaging researchers in the regional context extremely important for the continuation of world-class research. The Mental Health Information Centre of Southern Africa (MHIC) at Stellenbosch University (SU) promotes mental health in Southern Africa by being actively involved in psycho-educating members of the public, referring individuals for treatment, hosting an online referral database, conducting and publishing research in psychiatry and related fields and translating such scientific information to the lay public. The Global Advocacy Seed Grant will allow MHIC to partner with Dr. Stefan Du Plessis, researcher/clinician at the SU Department of Psychiatry, to organize workshops tailored for local school learners, undergraduate and postgraduate students during Brain Awareness Week 2017 to stimulate interest in neuroscience, more specifically the use of structural and functional MRI in brain research, with specific emphasis on findings from his work in HIV associated neurocognitive disorders. It will also help build partnerships with policymakers in Southern Africa by illustrating the effectiveness of such educational outreach activities.

ASIA PACIFIC

JAPAN: Yasushi Miyashita, Professor, University of Tokyo

Japan has made great progress in brain research but it has suffered from wavering public support and government attention in the recent past. This experience has taught the Japanese neuroscience community that constant advocacy is necessary to maintain interest, funding and inclusion in national health and research policy discussions. The highly successful Non-Profit Organization, the *Brain Science Promotion Conference*, has proven it is an effective annual symposium that serves as a reliable channel for brain advocacy with the general public and policymaking communities. It is building a strong following and the University of Tokyo wishes to encourage that trend. It will contribute to the event in 2017 with the Global Advocacy Seed Grant. Attendance is expected to be around 800 participants and the focus will be on the ageing brain. With an ageing population, it is an important topic that would have wide application and relevance to Japanese society. It will also help to bring neuroscientists, government representatives, industry leaders and the public together to discuss future research and strategies for mental health treatment and care in Japan.

NEPAL: Sunil Dhungel, President, Neuroscience Society of Nepal, Kathmandu

In Nepal, less than 1% of the total government health budget is allocated to mental health, with one psychiatrist per one million people. Poor health facilities and a lack of doctors create a severe problem in treating adolescent mass hysteria, chhopne rog in Nepalese. It is still believed to be caused by evil spirits or angry deities. Villagers depend on local shamans for treatment. Despite neuroscience research that shows this is due to a psychological disorder characterized by the conversion of psychological stress into physical symptom or a change in self-awareness, the incidence of mass hysteria is increasing in government schools in rural Nepal. The root causes have not yet been identified. The Global Advocacy Seed Grant would support an educational intervention, *Neuroeducation to psychological disorders – mass hysteria in rural government school in Nepal*. It will involve a week-long neuroeducation program that will discuss psychological disorders and engage government officials, policymakers, expert psychiatrists, neuroscientists and musicians capable of delivering knowledge in different ways. In the long term, we hope to incorporate such activities into the public school curriculum.

PAKISTAN: Sadaf Ahmed, CEO, Advance Educational Institute & Research Centre, University of Karachi

There are many constraints to neuroscience progress in Pakistan as it is still a developing country. Less than 0.4% GDP is spent on research and the Ministry of Science is unable to provide significant support for any neuroscience research at the national level. Also, there is no formal channel to bridge the gaps that lie between knowledge and practice, obstructing the ability to reduce the burden of progressive neurodegenerative disorders and maladaptive mental health issues. In order to highlight the dire need to support brain research in Pakistan, the Advance Educational Institute & Research Centre (AEIRC) in collaboration with the Pakistan Society of Applied and Basic Neuroscience will organize a Festival of Neuroscience at the University of Karachi in July 2017. It will bring together researchers, clinicians and

others to celebrate the latest research and progress in the field of neuroscience, focusing particular attention on emerging mental health issues in Pakistan. The event aims to increase public awareness, educate people about the importance of neuroscience and develop a scientific community network that can work to promote and advocate for brain research at the national level.

SRI LANKA: Ranil De Silva, President, Neuroscience Society of Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka ranks as the fastest ageing population in South Asia according to World Health Statistics (2013), leading to a dramatic increase in non-communicable diseases including neurodegenerative disorders. The country also ranks fourth among 172 countries in suicides and suffers from alcoholism, inherited neurological diseases due to a high rate of consanguineous marriages, impacts of the 30-year civil war and the 2004 tsunami. The rural population comprises 80% of the total population with limited access to health care and a lack of public awareness regarding neurological diseases. It is estimated that around 500,000 adults with diabetes mellitus go undiagnosed in Sri Lanka and is one of the major risk factors for neurological disorders such as stroke and Alzheimer's. The Neuroscience Society of Sri Lanka will use the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to address these issues and increase advocacy efforts through activities that support dialogue and interaction between policymakers, scientists, legislators, industry leaders, clinicians, patients and the public. They include establishing state sector centers for neuroscience, professional training opportunities, developing international collaborations and funding sources and conducting media awareness campaigns.

LATIN AMERICA

ARGENTINA: Arturo Romano, Vice President, Sociedad Argentina de Investigación en Neurociencias, Buenos Aires

Neuroscience is among scientific disciplines that are particularly prone to be reported inaccurately. It is therefore essential that activities are organized involving neuroscientists, policymakers, journalists and the general public in order to improve communication and understanding. The Sociedad Argentina de Investigación en Neurociencias (SAN) has already organized a broad range of advocacy events. Based on this experience, the society has identified three main aspects that can benefit from neuroscience advocacy programs in Argentina: Opportunities for dialogue between journalists and neuroscientists, public lectures and Brain Awareness Week (BAW) activities. SAN will use the Global Advocacy Seed Grant in 2017 to support a one-day workshop on communicating neuroscience for journalists during BAW 2017 and organize a free half-day conference with a series of lectures given by prestigious neuroscientists at the Cultural Science Center in Buenos Aires on October 15 as a FALAN satellite event. Dr. Carlos Belmonte, Dr. Mariano Sigman and Dr. Diego Golombek are scheduled to speak.

BRAZIL: Newton Canteras, Vice President, Sociedade Brasileira de Neurociências e Comportamento, São Paulo

Brazilian neuroscience has improved over the past decades and gained international recognition. However, there is a large gap between scientific research activity and the general public within Brazil. The Sociedade Brasileira de Neurociências e Comportamento (SBNeC) believes that disclosure of research in neuroscience developed in Brazilian institutions is an important way to inform both national and international communities and show results of incoming investment. However, with increasing access to information and communication especially through electronic means, there are both opportunities and challenges regarding the dissemination of scientific information. To address these issues, SBNeC will organize a symposium or workshop to create professional mechanisms for SBNeC to disseminate neuroscience subjects tailored for Brazilians. It will take place during the 2017 SBNeC Brain Awareness Week, originally initiated by the Dana Foundation, and include the SBNeC Board of Directors, selected researchers already involved in scientific journalism and professional scientific journalists from several Brazilian institutions.

COLOMBIA: George Barreto, President, Colegio Colombiano de Neurociencias, Bogotá

Despite some improvements in neuroscience research in Colombia over the last few years, there is still a need to promote public awareness, education training programs and networking activities to consolidate support for brain research at the policy level and in the public domain. There is minimal communication between neuroscientists and policymakers/public strategists, a significant divide between neuroscientists and neurologists and no motivation or support for students and researchers to advocate for neuroscience. As a result, the Colegio Colombiano de Neurociencias (COLNE) wishes to use the Global Advocacy Seed Grant to address these challenges through student support (national

award, travel grants and the creation of a Neurosciences Student Association); enhanced communications (YouTube Channel, improvement of COLNE website); and public awareness activities in schools and universities, a scientific symposium for neuroscientists and neurologists and Brain Awareness Week activities.

MEXICO: Luis Beltran-Parrazal, Fundación Beltran-Morgado para el avance y difusión de la neurociencia en Veracruz, Xalapa

Traditionally, Veracruz is a state in Mexico not associated with scientific development. There is a lack of infrastructure, resources and government interest. However, active public participation in neuroscience education events makes it clear that there is community interest in the brain. The Fundación Beltran-Morgado para el avance y difusión de la neurociencia en Veracruz, a group of professors and graduate students committed to neuroscience advocacy in the state, believes it can help grow this public interest and attract more legislative support through advocacy and increasing public understanding of the neurological disease *spinocerebellar ataxias type 7* (SCA-7). This is a rare disorder with a global prevalence of <1/100,000. In Veracruz, SCA-7 occurs with a prevalence of 10.63/100,000, most likely due to hereditary transfer. Supported by the Global Advocacy Seed Grant, activities will educate the public and policymakers about this. They will include a free and public lecture, *The Brain and Me*, about SCA-7; lectures and public activities during the 2017 Brain Awareness Week organized by the Brain Research Center (Universidad Veracruzana) and the Southeastern Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience (SfN); a series of interdisciplinary scientific conferences; and an educational symposium for legislators to sensitize the government about public health problems related to neurodegenerative diseases.

PERU: Luis Angel Aguilar Mendoza, President, Society for Neuroscience of Peru, Lima

Peru is characterized by a deficiency of public knowledge about the brain because of poor dissemination of scientific knowledge in general. Media and businesses exacerbate this problem by popularizing pseudoscientific information, especially related to the brain, under such terms as *neuromarketing*, *neurocoaching* and *neuroeducation*. In order to address this pervasive misinformation about the brain, the Society for Neuroscience of Peru (SONEP) will organize a series of neuroscience conferences in Lima focused on the structure, operation and care of the nervous system. The audience will include professionals, students, patients, caregivers, doctors, educators and the public interested in learning about the brain. Topics will cover the physiology of sleep, the importance of nutrition in brain development, addiction, stages of neurodevelopment in humans, the importance of brain education in society and neurodegenerative diseases, especially Parkinson's and Alzheimer's. High public participation and media coverage will also be sought to fully promote and increase public awareness of brain research and its importance to Peruvian society.

PUERTO RICO: Amaya Miquelajauregui, Assistant Professor, Institute of Neurobiology, University of Puerto Rico

Autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders usually go undetected in minority populations mainly because of a lack of awareness of normal development and limited access to health services and care. The prevalence of autism in the general population of Puerto Rico is comparable to the

worldwide diagnosis rate (1:68). However, services and information available to the public are scarce, particularly for families with infants at higher risk of autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders. Affected families have created networks and associations such as the *Alianza de Autismo de Puerto Rico*, which have been fundamental in directing policy and promoting education. The Institute of

Neurobiology at the University of Puerto Rico proposes to trigger a continuous, bi-directional interaction between the general public, clinicians and researchers who are involved in autism and other disorders. Educational symposia in English and Spanish will provide a forum to share knowledge and experience. Multimedia bilingual recordings will make the discussions and Q&A sessions accessible to the public and policymakers once uploaded. It will promote a culture of interaction and knowledge in the management and detection of autism-spectrum disorders and hopefully lead to improved understanding, care and policies.



Observing neuronal preparations under the microscope in the Brain-Dome at the launch of Loligo Education organized by 2015-16 Global Advocacy Seed Grant awardee, the Biomedical Neuroscience Institute, Santiago, Chile.

2017 LOOKING AHEAD

Next year will be the third year that the Global Advocacy Initiative will offer seed grants.

All funding partners - IBRO, The Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS), the International Society for Neurochemistry (ISN), the Japan Neuroscience Society (JNS) and the Society for Neuroscience (SfN) - have expressed strong support in continuing their generous contributions.

Increasing interest in advocacy work, higher program application submissions and successful implementation of selected activities have encouraged this ongoing commitment to Initiative seed grant funding.

Brain advocacy around the world has proven to be a necessary prerequisite for increasing public awareness and understanding of neuroscience, developing multi-disciplinary partnership networks, communicating research advances and attracting more funding and policy support for brain research.

In order to further develop our efforts and build on previous work, 2017 seed grants will be open to applicants from European countries that have more challenging research environments, including restrictive funding and institutional support. World Bank categories of lower and middle income countries will be used to distinguish eligibility.

Comprehensive evaluations of completed seed grant experiences will continue to be conducted next year to assess lessons learned from participants and identify particular challenges and opportunities across the regions.

Conclusions from these reviews will continue to help partners in determining the overall impact and effectiveness of the global advocacy seed grants program and plan strategically for future activities.

IBRO thanks its partners and participating awardees for their dedicated commitment to brain advocacy.