The McKnight Brain Research Foundation and the American Federation for Aging Research announce Recipients of the 2022 McKnight Brain Research Foundation Innovator Awards in Cognitive Aging and Memory Loss

Emilie T. Reas (UCSD) and Tara Tracy (Buck Institute) receive $750,000 each to lead transformative research in the field of cognitive aging

NEW YORK and ORLANDO—The American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR) and the McKnight Brain Research Foundation (MBRF) are pleased to announce the 2022 recipients of the McKnight Brain Research Foundation Innovator Awards in Cognitive Aging and Memory Loss: Emilie T. Reas, PhD, of the University of California San Diego (UCSD), and Tara Tracy, PhD, of the Buck Institute for Research on Aging.

Now in its second year, the Innovator Awards aim to build a cadre of outstanding research scientists across the United States to lead transformative research in the field of cognitive aging.

Emilie T. Reas, PhD, is an Assistant Professor, Neurosciences, at the University of California San Diego. With the support of this award, Dr. Reas will investigate the mediating role of blood-brain barrier dysfunction in effects of systemic inflammation on brain microstructure and memory. Dr. Reas’ research program aims to optimize trajectories of brain aging by clarifying the risk factors for, and pathways towards, cognitive decline. A complementary goal is to develop more sensitive markers of early brain changes that precipitate cognitive decline in order to identify individuals at greatest risk for dementia. To this end, Dr. Reas’ lab employs a multimodal approach, integrating cutting-edge brain imaging methods with behavioral testing, genetics, and fluid measures. By focusing this research on human participants without manifest cognitive impairment, Dr. Reas hopes that her research will translate directly to clinical settings for early disease detection and therapeutic intervention.

Tara Tracy, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Buck Institute for Research on Aging as well as an Adjunct Assistant Professor at the University of Southern California Leonard Davis School of Gerontology. With the support of this award, Dr. Tracy will investigate the role of KIBRA, a protein found in neurons that plays an important role in the normal function of synapses during the formation of new memories, in age-related memory loss. This builds on Dr. Tracy’s research studying synapses, the small specialized structures that form where neurons connect with each other in the brain to transmit information. Synapses are critical for the encoding of new memories in the brain. In her ongoing research, Dr. Tracy aims to establish how the levels of KIBRA protein found in synapses can affect the susceptibility of an individual to memory loss in aging.
Dr. Reas and Dr. Tracy will each receive $750,000 for an award period of three years. The MBRF Innovator Awards in Cognitive Aging and Memory Loss are supported by a $4.5 million grant from the McKnight Brain Research Foundation and will support six investigators over a period of five years.

"The Innovator Awards in Cognitive Aging and Memory Loss are an extension of the Foundation's mission to support the next generation of world-class scientists in the field of cognitive aging and memory loss," says Michael Dockery, MD, Chair of the McKnight Brain Research Foundation board of trustees. "Understanding cognitive decline as we age remains an understudied area of research, and with Dr. Reas and Dr. Tracy already showing the potential to become leaders in the field, we look forward to seeing the impact of their research in helping us better understand and alleviate the effects of age-related cognitive decline and memory loss."

AFAR has long supported the careers of talented investigators and research on cognitive health. "By providing research funding, AFAR and MBRF are building a cadre of outstanding research scientists across the United States who have the potential to lead transformative research in the field of cognitive aging," says Stephanie Lederman, EdM, Executive Director, AFAR.

Learn more about The McKnight Brain Research Foundation Innovator Awards in Cognitive Aging and Memory Loss here.

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**About AFAR**
The American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR) is a national non-profit organization that supports and advances pioneering biomedical research that is revolutionizing how we live healthier and longer. For more than four decades, AFAR has served as the field’s talent incubator, providing more than $193 million to nearly 4350 investigators at premier research institutions to date—and growing. In 2022, AFAR is expected to award over $11,000,000 to more than 60 investigators. A trusted leader and strategist, AFAR also works with public and private funders to steer high quality grant programs and interdisciplinary research networks. AFAR-funded researchers are finding that modifying basic cellular processes can delay—or even prevent—many chronic diseases, often at the same time. They are discovering that it is never too late—or too early—to improve health. This groundbreaking science is paving the way for innovative new therapies that promise to improve and extend our quality of life—at any age. Learn more at www.afar.org or follow AFARorg on Twitter and Facebook and American Federation for Aging Research on LinkedIn.

**About the McKnight Brain Research Foundation**
Founded in 1999, the McKnight Brain Research Foundation is the nation’s only private foundation devoted exclusively to discovering the mysteries of the aging brain. Over the past two decades, the Foundation has funded more than $180 million in research specifically targeting cognitive aging and age-related cognitive decline and memory loss through direct contributions and strategic initiatives in partnership with the four McKnight Brain Institutes and the National Institute on Aging through the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health. Learn more about the Foundation at: www.mcknightbrain.org or follow McKnight Brain on Twitter and Facebook.