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Contact: John Chaich
john@afar.org

The McKnight Brain Research Foundation and the American Federation for Aging Research Announce Recipients of the 2023 McKnight Brain Research Foundation Innovator Awards in Cognitive Aging and Memory Loss

Denise Cai (Mount Sinai) and Christoph Thaiss (University of Pennsylvania) each receive \$750,000 to lead transformative research in the field of cognitive aging

NEW YORK CITY and ORLANDO— The American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR) and the McKnight Brain Research Foundation (MBRF) are pleased to announce the 2023 recipients of **The McKnight Brain Research Foundation Innovator Awards in Cognitive Aging and Memory Loss: Denise Cai, PhD** of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, and **Christoph Thaiss, PhD**, of the University of Pennsylvania.

Now in its third year, the Innovator Awards program funds research scientists pursuing groundbreaking studies in the field of cognitive aging.



Denise Cai, PhD, is an Associate Professor at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Dr. Cai's project "[Memory stability and flexibility across a lifetime](#)" aims to identify biomarkers and behavioral markers that can predict age-related cognitive deficits and provide early intervention to prevent or slow age-related cognitive decline.



Christoph Thaiss, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Thaiss' project "[Counteracting age-associated cognitive decline via gut-brain signaling](#)" aims to develop a framework for how age-related diseases of the brain may be treated by means of peripheral intervention from the gastrointestinal tract.

Dr. Cai and Dr. Thaiss will each receive \$750,000 for an award period of three years. The MBRF Innovator Awards in Cognitive Aging and Memory Loss are funded by a \$4.5 million grant from the McKnight Brain Research Foundation that will support six investigators over a period of five years.

"The Innovator Awards are a primary example of the Foundation's commitment to supporting the next generation of world-class scientists dedicated to the field of age-related cognitive decline and memory loss," says Michael Dockery, MD, Chair of the McKnight Brain Research Foundation. "With Dr. Cai and Dr. Thaiss already demonstrating a strong commitment to the field, we are excited to support their efforts to uncover novel intervention and treatment methods to help people remain cognitively healthy later in life."

“AFAR has long supported the careers of talented investigators and research on cognitive health,” notes Stephanie Lederman, EdM, Executive Director, AFAR. “AFAR is pleased to continue our partnership with the McKnight Brain Research Foundation and proud to support these inspiring researchers.”

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 nearly \$200 million to some 4,400 investigators at premier research institutions to date—and growing. In 2023, AFAR expects to provide approximately \$12,500,000 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. The science funded by AFAR 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.

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 \$200 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.