Research in Cognitive Aging and Age-Related Memory Loss Boosted through Renewed $4,626,500 Funding of Innovator Awards

Grant from the McKnight Brain Research Foundation to the American Federation for Aging Research extends support for groundbreaking studies across next five years

NEW YORK CITY and ORLANDO — The American Federation for Aging Research (AFAR) and the McKnight Brain Research Foundation (MBRF) are pleased to announce renewed funding of the Innovator Awards in Cognitive Aging and Memory Loss, a program that supports scientists who are pursuing groundbreaking studies in the field of cognitive aging.

The Innovator Awards program was launched in 2021 with a $4,615,000 million grant from the MBRF to AFAR. The successful program has supported six investigators to date, who each have received three-year awards of $750,000. This year, MBRF renewed its commitment with a $4,626,500 award to AFAR to expand the network of investigators who focus their research on cognitive aging and memory loss.

For the next three years, MBRF and AFAR will provide up to two, three-year awards of $750,000. One award will be made to support studies focusing on clinical translational research, and another award will support studies of the basic biological mechanisms underlying cognitive aging and age-related memory loss. The awards are intended for full-time independent investigators at the rank of Assistant Professor or Associate Professor (or equivalent) who have already demonstrated a firm commitment to cognitive aging research.

“The Innovator Awards program affirms the Foundation’s commitment to supporting the next generation of world-class research scientists in the field of cognitive aging,” said Michael L. Dockery, MD, MBRF Chair. “By supporting mid-career scientists who have shown the potential to become leaders in the field, we’re investing in research to help us better understand and ultimately alleviate the effects of cognitive decline and age-related memory loss.”

In the program’s first three years, funded investigators have furthered a range of research approaches and topics impacting cognitive aging and memory loss. Read research profiles on the past recipients here: 2023, 2022, and 2021.

“The renewed Innovator Awards help support proposals that are high risk/high gain in nature, which may be less suitable for conventional sources of funding. AFAR and MBRF expect that the proposed research will yield transformative discoveries,” says AFAR Executive Director Stephanie Lederman, EdM.
The Innovator Awards are reviewed by an esteemed committee comprised of leaders in cognitive aging research. The committee’s recommendations will be presented to MBRF and AFAR for final funding decisions.

The application window for the 2024 Innovator Awards is open now, and applications are due August 12. AFAR anticipates awarding the next two recipients in September.

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 provided 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.