

*The purpose of the International Research Grant Program Announcement is to help applicants understand the context and history of the Alzheimer's Association International Research Grant Program and to publicize high-priority areas of focus for the current fiscal year. However, applicants should not consider areas of focus restrictive—projects exploring other topics are actively encouraged, even if they fall outside the areas discussed below.*

## **I. BACKGROUND: ASSOCIATION MISSION AND SCIENTIFIC AGENDA**

The Alzheimer's Association was founded in 1980 by a small group of family members caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's disease. These individuals were united in disappointment with the quality of information available to them and in dissatisfaction with the lack of medical and social awareness of this devastating condition. Two years after its founding, the fledgling organization funded its first research grant, awarding a total of about \$80,000 to a handful of investigators. Since then, the Association has grown into the largest nonprofit funder of Alzheimer's research, awarding over \$12.8 million during the 2011 grant cycle (nearly a 10 percent funding level) to bring the cumulative total of Association-funded research to more than \$292 million.

The Association supplements its own funding efforts with public policy initiatives directed toward increasing Alzheimer's research funding at the federal level. The Association also works tirelessly to support and educate its constituents by providing high-quality information in non-specialist language about its grants program and general issues in Alzheimer's research, prevention, treatment and care.

The Association's International Research Grant Program has served historically as an incubator for novel ideas, complementing the programs of the National Institute on Aging and the other institutes of the National Institutes of Health. As our funding initiative has grown and matured, grant categories have expanded to support researchers at every stage in their careers. Funded projects now explore the broadest possible spectrum of biological approaches to understanding, preventing and treating Alzheimer's; social and behavioral strategies for ameliorating the effects of the disease on individuals and their families and professional caregivers; clinical studies; and adaptive technologies.

Surveys conducted on behalf of the Association continue to affirm that research support is the highest priority of our constituents and the general public. In response to this overwhelming sentiment, the Association's National Board mandates research as an ongoing major emphasis. For the 2012 grant cycle, our areas of focus include historically underserved populations, as well as the growing number of specific cultural and ethnic groups, and their aging members, in this rapidly diversifying society.

Expanding our emphasis in these directions affirms the Association's long support of research and emphasizes the following strategy in the Association's 2012–2014 Strategic Plan:

**Strategic Objective:** Accelerate progress in global Alzheimer's research by increasing funding by the Association, engaging more people in Alzheimer's science priorities, leading global efforts to advance key issues and supporting emerging needs.

There are three priority activities the Alzheimer's Association is committed to moving forward to help achieve this strategic objective:

1. Increase participation by 30 percent in Alzheimer's disease science priorities by engaging individuals, chapters and institutions in the global research effort.
2. Advance key issues in Alzheimer's research by leading global efforts in the creation, standardization, validation and qualification of diagnostic and interventional tools for the scientific community. Initiate and/or facilitate two global or national efforts.
3. Accelerate progress in global Alzheimer's research by addressing emerging needs with a focus on new investigators and the launch of three novel and innovative programs that reshape the field.

In addition, there are three overarching objectives embedded in all programs of the Association, as well as the Strategic Plan:

1. Support and extend the ability of people with Alzheimer's disease to function independently through safe and effective interventions, using pharmacological, behavioral and other approaches.
2. Find the cause(s) of Alzheimer's disease, from its biological underpinnings to the impact of cultural, behavioral, social and environmental factors on disease progression.
3. Prevent Alzheimer's disease through improved methods of detection, early intervention and the discovery of risk factors, including the interactions of molecular, genetic, environmental and cultural variables.

The thrust of the Association's research program can be summed up in three words: quality of life. All of the Association's research efforts are aimed at some aspect of improving the quality of life of people with the disease, their families and care providers. This will be accomplished through social and behavioral research, studies to improve diagnosis or design new treatments, research to elucidate the cause of the disease and ultimately, studies and programs to eradicate Alzheimer's disease.