Pilot Awards for Global Brain Health Leaders
2021–22
Dementia is rapidly increasing around the world. By 2050, the number of people with dementia could triple from 50 million to 152 million, overwhelming families, communities, public health care systems, and economies worldwide.

The Global Brain Health Institute (GBHI), the Alzheimer’s Association, and Alzheimer’s Society in the UK share the commitment to developing the next generation of brain health leaders and aim to support these emerging leaders by funding small-scale pilot projects, activities or studies to advance skills, knowledge, and general efforts to delay, prevent, and mitigate the impact of dementia.

The goal of the Pilot Awards for Brain Health Leaders is to both support leadership development of the Atlantic Fellows for Equity in Brain Health and to advance pilot projects that improve outcomes in brain health. The program prioritizes activities that demonstrate potential to evolve into larger projects in the awardees’ home regions, especially those that use an evidence-based approach to identify need, direct change, and improve care and outcomes around age-related cognitive loss and dementia.

AWARDS IMPACT

Since the program was established in 2017, 114 pilots across 36 countries and administrative regions* have been awarded a total of $2.85M and resulted in...

- **114 pilots across 36 countries awarded $2.85M**
- **$42.9M in total funding secured by awardees & $1.9M of that in leveraged funds**
- **83 publications in leading journals**
- **44 distinct conferences and seminars**
- **35 media outlets covered 14 pilot awards**

*Argentina, Belgium, Bermuda, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Denmark, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Jordan, India, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, Romania, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey, UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales), USA, Zimbabwe

AWARDS FUNDED

Funded pilot projects range from advocacy and systems change to applied research. Fellows are addressing challenges to brain health such as access to care, stigma, education, and social determinants of brain health. As the range of project topics grows, so does the geographical diversity, including several forthcoming projects across Africa, Europe and South America.

Following is a sample of the diverse pilot projects funded to date.
In times of loneliness, how does one cope? In the absence of a cure for dementia, Alzheimer’s disease, or COVID-19, it is key that we create ways for elders to be socially connected, provide opportunities for creative engagement, and make health information accessible. Can You Hear Me?, a sing-along audio program that highlights the voices and music of elders, aims to address the stigma of aging and dementia and to increase well-being through creative engagement.

Lonely individuals are twice as likely to develop dementia. Though there is no pill for loneliness, research suggests engagement in singing groups and other creative experiences can address the health and well-being of older adults. Hosted by Cheyenne Mize, Music Therapist, Can You Hear Me? is a model for arts-driven community engagement that not only addresses health inequities and stigmas of aging and dementia, but also has the capacity to enhance well-being and connect people, even in times of isolation.

Listen to episodes online at CanYouHearMeLouisville.org and on Anchor.fm and Spotify.

“Through Can You Hear Me?, we hope to create socially connected, inclusive, less lonely communities to reduce the scale and impact of dementia worldwide.”

Cheyenne Mize
Music Therapist,
Atlantic Fellow for Equity in Brain Health
What if a dementia diagnosis could be made earlier? Primary progressive aphasia (PPA) is a neurodegenerative syndrome characterized by prominent and progressive loss of language that often begins in mid-life, with serious implications for family life, work, and social functioning. However, many PPA cases remain misdiagnosed or are only diagnosed at an advanced stage when disease-modifying therapies would be futile. Moreover, clinical progression is highly variable, and it is impossible to determine the cause of PPA based on a patient's clinical presentation, thus hampering the application of experimental treatments.

This multicenter study—with participants from the UCSF Memory and Aging Center (USA) and Hospital de Sant Pau (Spain)—aims to validate a new magnetic resonance imaging method to better characterize the earliest changes in the brains of patients with PPA.

“Our results have important implications to design clinical trials testing novel treatments for this challenging disease.”

Ignacio Ilàn Gala, MD, PhD
Neurologist, Spain

Read about Ignacio’s project in Alzheimer’s Research & Therapy.
SUBSTANCE USE IN EARLY-ONSET ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE: Evaluating the Relationship Between Substance Use with the Onset of Different Stages of Alzheimer’s Disease
Claudia Ramos, MD
Psychiatrist, Colombia

At what point does substance use affect one’s risk for dementia? Substance use can increase the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease, but it’s unclear at what point and how fast this happens. Therefore, evaluation of consumption in people who already have a high risk of dementia is important.

This project considers the relationship between substance use and the onset of Alzheimer’s disease, aiming to determine its association with age of onset and progression speed of the cognitive decline.

Led by Claudia Ramos, MD, a psychiatrist, the study considers the four stages of Alzheimer’s disease—asymptomatic pre-mild cognitive impairment (pre-MCI); symptomatic pre-MCI; MCI; and dementia. Findings may help to understand the biological mechanisms behind this potential association, as well as shed light on other genetic conditions, including sporadic forms of dementia.

“We need to encourage people to learn more about the first symptoms and signs of dementia.”
Claudia Ramos, MD
Psychiatrist,
Atlantic Fellow for Equity in Brain Health

Read about Claudia’s project in the Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease.
2021–22 PILOT AWARDS CYCLE

Role of social interaction and physical activity in brain health and FTD (India, Faheem Arshad)

APP4PPA: a remote speech-language therapy for Italian PPA (Italy, Petronilla Battista)

Examining the association between fear of dementia and lifestyle risk factors (Ireland, Francesca Farina)

Brain health navigation to improve health equity in Greater Manchester (UK, Sarah Fox)

International network for language assessment across neural disorders (Chile, Adolfo García)

Understanding and improving dementia care via clinical-creative partnership (Ireland, Gráinne Hope)

Storytelling in action: dance program for people living with dementia (USA, Magda Kaczmarska)

Exploring casual inferences between kidney function and cognitive disorders (USA, Dearbhla Kelly)

Social determinants and dementia phenotype in Israelis of diverse ancestry (Israel, Ophir Keret)

A trauma focused physiotherapy intervention in refugees (Jordan, Hanan Khalil)

“Preparada Mente”: An online course on dementia for primary care teams (Chile, Tomás León)

Virtual initiative for training to informal caregivers and families (Nicaragua, Milton López)

The frontotemporal education initiative in Argentina for psychiatrists (Argentina, Nahuel Magrath Guimet)

EEG markers of apathy in dementia (Brazil, Luciano Mariano)

The return home – evaluation of a novel intervention for people with dementia (Israel, Inbal Mayan)

The frontotemporal education initiative in Argentina for psychiatrists (Argentina, Nahuel Magrath Guimet)

Person public involvement for transformative change in Lithuania (Lithuania, Ieva Petkutė)

Genetics of Parkinson’s disease dementia in the Mexican population (Mexico, Miguel Rentería)

Climate change, ecological stress, and brain health in indigenous people (Germany, Susanne Röhr)

Economic evaluation of support monitoring and reminder technology (Sweden, Sanjib Saha)

Aging in place: Immigrant embodiment of brain health in California (USA, Dvera Saxton)

Feasibility study to co-produce a center for theater and dementia research (UK, Nicky Taylor)

Characterizing the neurocognitive and social health in Ecuador (Ecuador, Kuri Tituaña)

Dementia diagnosis training project in Ecuador (Ecuador, Maria Unaucho)

Cognitive, clinical, and genetic characterization of dementia in Colombia (Colombia, Lina Zapata)

Number of Pilots

>20
11–20
6–10
2–5
1

EMERGING LEADERS

The Atlantic Fellows for Equity in Brain Health program at the Global Brain Health Institute—which includes artists, journalists, and entrepreneurs, as well as neuroscientists, neurologists, and psychologists—takes an inter-professional approach to disrupt conventional thinking about aging and dementia. Fellows nurture and learn from each other in a unique bi-directional thought exchange, fostering innovative interventions.

The experience and knowledge around dementia prevention, care and treatment varies greatly around the world, with regions facing the greatest increases in incidence of dementia also having the fewest resources to address it. The Atlantic Fellows program at GBHI strives to tackle these issues by training, mentoring and supporting emerging global leaders across multiple disciplines to create a sustained and resourced momentum for equitable change and action on dementia.
If you are interested in finding out more about the Pilot Awards for Global Brain Health Leaders or how to get involved as a supporter, please contact pilots.projects@gbhi.org. You can also learn more at www.gbhi.org/pilots.

**Global Brain Health Institute**

The Global Brain Health Institute is a leader in the global community dedicated to protecting the world’s aging populations from threats to brain health.

[gbhi.org](http://gbhi.org)

**Alzheimer’s Association**

The Alzheimer’s Association leads the way to end Alzheimer’s and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support.

[alz.org](http://alz.org)

**Alzheimer’s Society (UK)**

Alzheimer’s Society is the UK’s leading dementia charity. Campaigning for change, funding research to find a cure and supporting people living with dementia today.

[alzheimers.org.uk](http://alzheimers.org.uk)