

ACT

FALL - 2018 NEWSLETTER

ACT Symposium Highlights

We'd like to share some highlights from our recent ACT Symposium, which included two full days of presentations and lively discussion. Nearly 140 people attended from across the country including researchers involved with ACT for decades, as well as several younger scientists with great ideas and skills to keep aging research moving forward in the years to come.

1. We know that risk related to blood vessels can play a role in dementia risk. We are looking at how levels of blood sugar interact with blood pressure and cholesterol levels, and components of vascular risk. This should help us guide efforts to target safe risk factor levels, thereby lowering risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and dementia in general.
2. Our study about the relationship of air pollution to the aging brain is off to a great start. We placed more devices than planned in areas where ACT subjects live, and are planning to look at address histories of where people have lived. This work will allow us to better understand, even in a region with low air pollution levels, the extent to which air pollution affects brain and general health in an aging population.
3. One mystery is why some people live a long life and are RESILIENT to developing dementia. Some people have plaques and tangles of Alzheimer's disease when they die, but they don't experience dementia in life. In this funding cycle, we've asked you to wear devices measuring activity levels and sleep. We are beginning to analyze this data, and plan to look at trends over time. This will help us develop guidelines for activity levels that promote brain health during aging, including the value of periodic standing to break up long periods of sitting. At the meeting we practiced this by giving standing ovations for every speaker!! The speakers loved the recognition and the audience enjoyed a nice stretch.
4. We are, however, beginning to understand and publish findings on some associated features of these "resilient" people. These features include higher education levels, higher brain weights, and absence of other brain changes like microscopic strokes, scarring of the memory center of the brain (the hippocampus) and protein deposits seen in Parkinson's disease (Lewy Bodies).
5. We learned about scientists doing "deep" human biology science using material from ACT. They are looking at changes in small molecules in the brain, and even growing single brain cells to study minute changes that may lead to Alzheimer's disease. This would have been unthinkable 40-50 years ago when I was in medical school!!
6. We also heard about a study exploring early life environment, especially socio-economic characteristics. This should give us information on how the brain develops during early life and the subsequent effects on later life brain health and cognition. These findings will have enormous significance for public health!

Lastly, an additional bit of good news is that a bill was recently signed to expand funding for Alzheimer's research! This included an extra \$430 million dollars, bringing the total Alzheimer's funding to \$2.6 billion. This bodes well for the future of ACT and associated studies. Thanks to all of you who volunteer and contribute to ACT. We can't say it enough; this research can't be done without you!!!

JUST FOR FUN:

Question: Why did Cinderella get kicked off the soccer team?

Answer: She kept running away from the ball.

Send comments or suggestions to:

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