

# University of Miami Miller School of Medicine

## News

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### McKnight Brain Research Foundation Announces Support for Proposed National Brain Study

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Miller School's Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute one of only four in U.S.

The Miller School of Medicine's Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute is joining the McKnight Brain Research Foundation and its three other McKnight Brain Institutes in strongly supporting President Barack Obama's plan for a decade-long scientific effort to examine the workings of the human brain by way of a national study.

"The Obama Administration's plan to study the workings of the human brain not only shines a light on a critical area of research," said Clinton Wright, M.D., M.S., Scientific Director of the Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute, "but we hope holds out the promise of federal money at a time when obtaining funding has never been more difficult."

Cognitive decline and dementia associated with aging are major components of the brain diseases in the aging population, and the costs of this group alone are estimated to be \$47.3 billion in 2012 in the United States. The decline in cognitive abilities resulting from the aging process is of universal concern. Older adults make up the fastest growing age group worldwide. There are now 700 million people over the age of 60, and there are projected to be two billion by 2050.

According to a report published by PricewaterhouseCoopers in May 2012, total costs of all diseases of the brain in the United States will reach \$515 billion and are expected to be 19 percent of the total national health expenditures for 2012. People with diseases of the brain also have a shortened life expectancy and their quality of life is diminished.

“At the University of Miami Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute, we are focusing our research on evaluating vascular factors that contribute to age-related memory loss and cognitive decline and can be modified,” said Ralph L. Sacco, M.D., M.S., professor and chair of neurology and Executive Director of the McKnight Brain Institute. “Our multidisciplinary team unites investigators across many departments to address a public health issue that is of growing concern for our aging population.”

In addition to the Miller School, the McKnight Brain Research Foundation has established Brain Institutes at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the University of Arizona and the University of Florida. The research scientists in each of the McKnight Brain Institutes investigate the fundamental mechanisms that underlie the neurobiology of memory and combine their findings with clinical relevance to the problems of age-related memory loss.

“The McKnight Brain Research Foundation and its four McKnight Brain Institutes are very excited to merge our complementary goals and objectives with the national brain study,” said Robert Wah, M.D., trustee of the McKnight Brain Research Foundation. “We pledge individual and collective dedication to any collaborative research which has the potential of preventing, retarding, or ameliorating cognitive decline associated with the aging process.”

Since its inception in 1999, the McKnight Brain Research Foundation and the host institutions of the four McKnight Brain Institutes have invested more than \$70 million in support of research in cognitive aging and memory loss associated with the aging process. The foundation promotes research of the brain with the goal of preventing or delaying age-related memory loss, and strives to develop therapeutic interventions.