

“A lot of nonprofits don’t want to collaborate with other nonprofits because they look at them as competitors. I don’t look at it that way. Why not partner with an organization like BRF that has decades of experience identifying and funding the most ground-breaking brain research?”

Kevin Jameson, Founder and President, Dementia Society of America



The first grant funded by the Dementia Society of America could one day have important implications for treating Alzheimer's disease.

Collaborating for a shared purpose

The Dementia Society of America and Brain Research Foundation Team Up to Support Brain Health Research

Kevin Jameson founded the Dementia Society of America in 2013 after experiencing first-hand the challenges families face when a loved one has dementia. When his wife and partner of 20+ years, Ginny, began experiencing symptoms of dementia, it took years of running through a gauntlet of different physicians to get a diagnosis. In the process, Jameson learned a lot about the condition and realized there was a need for more accessible information.

"I really started to dig in and learn about dementia and thought nobody is really telling this story the way I think it needs to be told," said Jameson, who now serves as the organization's president.

Now, an innovative partnership between Brain Research Foundation and the Dementia Society of America is helping accelerate research on brain health and dementia.

The collaboration will leverage BRF's nearly 70-years of experience in identifying and funding innovative, high-impact brain research and fostering the careers of promising scientists. The Dementia Society of America will provide additional funding for projects helping to expand BRF's research grants.

"This unique collaboration will allow BRF to fund even more ground-breaking brain research and advance both organizations' missions," said Terre A. Constantine, Ph.D., CEO and Executive Director of BRF.

"Working with BRF allows us to continue focusing on what we do best—sharing easy to understand information about dementia—while also allowing us to invest in research on brain disease," Jameson said.

The Dementia Society of America will fund two BRF Seed Grants. The first grant funded by the Society is a 2021 Seed Grant for Xiaojing Gao at Stanford University to support his work refining the delivery of gene therapy in the brain, which could one day

have important implications for treating Alzheimer's disease. The Dementia Society's Board of Directors chose the project from a selection of options identified by the BRF's Scientific Review Committee.

"We are relying on BRF's expertise to present us with the best of the best in terms of Seed Grant opportunities," Jameson explained. This will allow the Dementia Society of America to expand its reach into funding research without taking resources away from the organization's core education mission.

The Dementia Society of America focuses on educating the public about what Jameson calls the "dementias."

"Dementia is plural because it's not a disease; it's a syndrome with multiple causes," explained Jameson. Though he and his wife Ginny never learned the exact causes of her dementia, they did learn she had multiple risk factors including having been hospitalized for a concussion, undergoing hours of anesthesia during back surgery, and taking medication associated with a higher risk of dementia. To help others, the Dementia Society of America shares information about protecting brain health to prevent the disease.

The Society also creates programs and resources to help improve the quality-of-life of people with dementia and their caregivers. Jameson said that too often people with dementia and their caregivers hear the condition described in "horrific terms." Caregivers are told their loved one's life is over and that they are not the same. But Jameson said that's the wrong message. He said he learned from Ginny, who asked immediately after her diagnosis where they were going for lunch, that quality of life is what's most important. After her diagnosis the two of them traveled to China and India, Egypt, Sweden, Ireland, and England and took advantage of simpler pleasures like holding hands and going for walks.

"It's how you live in the moment," he said.