

Dr. Sharon Inouye and Team of Delirium Experts Awarded Federal Grant to Develop Network to Advance Delirium Research Worldwide

BOSTON – A team of delirium experts led by Sharon K. Inouye, M.D., M.P.H., Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Director of the Aging Brain Center at the Institute for Aging Research (IFAR) at Hebrew SeniorLife, have been awarded a projected \$3.7 million grant over five years. This award is the first of its kind from the National Institute on Aging / National Institutes of Health to build an interdisciplinary collaborative network of delirium researchers nationally and internationally. "We are delighted to support the launch of this team effort to build a research infrastructure advancing our understanding of how delirium impacts the aging brain," said NIA program officer Molly Wagster, Ph.D. "This highly collaborative and innovative effort promises to inform delirium research and clinical care for years to come."

Delirium is a common clinical syndrome in older adults, which presents as an acute mental condition characterized by confused thinking and disrupted attention. Affecting over 2.6 million older adults in the U.S. each year, typically following surgery, hospitalization or acute illness, delirium can be serious and life-threatening, often leading to loss of independence, cognitive decline, an increased risk of morbidity and mortality, and costing more than \$164 billion per year in healthcare expenditures. Despite its importance for the health and wellbeing of older adults, delirium is not well understood and is vastly under-recognized.

Dr. Inouye, along with 12 leading experts in delirium research, will create an interdisciplinary Network for Investigation of Delirium across the U.S. (NIDUS) and beyond to foster collaboration and accelerate scientific discovery in delirium. NIDUS will unite delirium researchers from 27 organizations across the U.S. in focused collaborative efforts. "The study of delirium is inherently difficult with multiple challenges that have influenced the pace of scientific discovery. By bringing together multiple experts across disciplines--with varying approaches and skill sets-- I truly believe we will accelerate advancements in delirium," says Inouye. Eva Schmitt, Ph.D. of Hebrew SeniorLife will serve as the overall Program Director, assisted by Program Coordinator, Kristen Erickson.

NIDUS will be comprised of two resource cores. The Research Resources and Database Core, led by Edward Marcantonio, M.D., S.M., of Harvard Medical School, and Pratik Pandharipande, M.D., M.Sc., of Vanderbilt University Medical Center, will develop a database of ongoing delirium studies. "In creating such a database", says Dr. Marcantonio "we will encourage multi-site collaboration, secondary analyses of existing delirium data, and facilitation of pilot studies, to catalyze advances in the field". A second resource core, the Measurement and Harmonization Core, will develop resources to help researchers choose and compare tools for assessing delirium. This core is led by Richard Jones, Sc.D., of the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University, and Dale Needham, M.D., Ph.D., of Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, and will ultimately assist in integrating information collected across multiple delirium studies. Thomas Trivison, Ph.D., of Harvard Medical School and Hebrew SeniorLife, will provide support in development of databases to support these cores.

Three task forces will be established in NIDUS. First, to encourage innovative research into new areas of study, the Pilots and Innovation Task Force will provide pilot grants each year.

This task force is led by the joint efforts of Thomas Robinson, M.D., of the University of Colorado School of Medicine and Michael Avidan, M.B.B.Ch., of Washington University School of Medicine.

The second Task Force, the *Mentorship and Career Development Task Force*, co-led by Donna Fick, Ph.D., M.S.N., of the Pennsylvania State University, and E. Wesley Ely, M.D., M.P.H., of Vanderbilt University Medical Center, will create an intensive training bootcamp for researchers new to the field of delirium, as well as provide ongoing opportunities for mentorship and career development. “This initiative will encourage new researchers to join this exciting and important field,” says Fick.

Andrew Auerbach, M.D., of the University of California San Francisco, and Jan Busby-Whitehead, M.D., of the University of North Carolina School of Medicine, will lead the *Dissemination Task Force*, which will hold an annual scientific symposium for delirium researchers and use social media and other approaches to communicate information about delirium research broadly. Dr. Auerbach notes that this task force “will help ensure that scientific efforts are disseminated with existing organizations, such as the American Delirium Society and European Delirium Association”.

NIDUS will also draw on the expertise of the 16-member external Scientific Advisory Board, chaired by Malaz Boustani, M.D., Professor of Medicine at Indiana University School of Medicine, and former President of the American Delirium Society. The Advisory Board will provide feedback on program activities twice a year. Its members include members of the European Delirium Association, as well as experts in a variety of relevant areas including geriatric medicine, nursing, anesthesiology, emergency and ICU medicine, psychiatry, neurology, neuropsychology, palliative care, epidemiology, and patient advocacy.

About the National Institute on Aging (NIA)

The NIA is one of 27 institutes and centers of the National Institutes of Health, which sponsors and conducts research on aging and the health and well-being of older adults. The five-year NIDUS grant will be overseen by NIA program officials Molly Wagster, Ph.D., Division of Neuroscience and Susan Ziemann, M.D., Ph.D. and Basil Eldadah, M.D., Ph.D., Division of Geriatrics and Clinical Gerontology.

About the Institute for Aging Research at Hebrew SeniorLife

Scientists at the Institute for Aging Research seek to transform the human experience of aging by conducting research that will ensure a life of health, dignity and productivity into advanced age. The Aging Brain Center within IFAR studies cognitive aging and conditions affecting brain health. Hebrew SeniorLife, an affiliate of Harvard Medical School, is a national senior services leader uniquely dedicated to rethinking, researching and redefining the possibilities of aging. Based in Boston, the non-profit, non-sectarian organization has provided communities and health care for seniors, research into aging, and education for providers since 1903.