

# Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation



Alzheimer's  
Drug Discovery  
Foundation

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## Mission

The Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation (ADDF) was established in 2004 as a public charity to support the advancement of drugs to prevent, treat, and cure Alzheimer's disease (AD), related dementias, and cognitive aging.

## Strategy/Approach

ADDF's biomedical venture philanthropy model adapts the operating principles of venture capital investing to the philanthropic mission to advance biomedical research in Alzheimer's disease. It seeks to fill the translational funding gap between basic research and later stage drug development by funding high-risk, early-stage drug discovery and development projects and catalyzing scientists to enter the drug discovery field. ADDF also helps to create new biotechnology companies and to fund early-stage biotechnology companies with programs dedicated to Alzheimer's disease drug discovery.

ADDF engages research grant recipients whose projects are potentially viable in the marketplace and seeks a return on investment based on the achievement of scientific and/or business milestones. When these milestones are met, funds come back to the foundation and are used to support new research.

ADDF funds research in four categories:

- **Drug Discovery** – this includes target validation; high throughput screening; medicinal chemistry, including hit to lead development and lead optimization; in vitro and in vivo studies of efficacy, ADME (absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion), toxicology, pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics; and in vivo proof-of-concept with lead compounds and biologics.
- **Early Detection** – development of biomarkers to accelerate drug development and early diagnosis.
- **Clinical Trials** – early-stage proof-of-concept clinical studies testing novel therapies in human patients. The program must include biomarkers in the study design that are tied to the mechanism of the drug being tested.
- **Prevention** – targeted pharmacological and non-pharmacological approaches to prevention.

Program areas of particular interest include:

- **Repurposing** – Testing drugs approved for other indications in Alzheimer's disease preclinical models or in human clinical trials.
- **Developing new compounds for Alzheimer's disease** – Requires *both* a medicinal chemist and a biologist as co-PIs/collaborators. The program should focus on new scaffolds, synthetic approaches of chemical entities designed for AD-related targets,

improving CNS-focused chemical libraries, and optimizing novel lead compounds.

- **Preclinical proof-of-concept** – Testing of novel lead compounds in animal models.
- **Pilot clinical trials** – Early-stage proof-of-concept clinical studies testing novel therapies in human patients. The program must include biomarkers in the study design that are tied to the mechanism of the drug being tested.

## Research Portfolio

ADDF funds research programs from domestic and international investigators in academia and biotechnology companies. ADDF draws the reviewers for its grant selection from two different bodies: the Scientific Review Board and the Business Advisory Board. The Scientific Review Board is comprised of more than 150 scientists who encompass various areas of expertise within AD research and also includes scientists overseas. The Business Advisory Board comprises members from various backgrounds, including venture capital and the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry.

ADDF grants typically support one year of research at a time, with potential for future follow-on funding. Funding for academic grants averages \$150,000/year, while biotechnology grants average \$200,000 - \$300,000/year and must be justified based on a scientific work plan. The foundation also selectively supports scientific conferences that stimulate discussion around novel targets.

Funding mechanisms include:

- **Academic Drug Discovery and Development Program** – seeks to create and support innovative translational programs in academic medical centers and universities.
- **Biotechnology Development Program** – supports qualified scientific projects in existing, private, early-stage biotech companies. ADDF will provide support for qualified projects in more advanced companies if a clear need for nonprofit funding is demonstrated.
- **Biotechnology Founders Technology Transfer Program** – supports academic programs that are eligible for tech transfer and the start-up of new biotechnology companies.
- **Assistance for Unfunded NIH Grant Applicants** – beginning with applications reviewed by the NIH in calendar year 2011, ADDF will consider providing financial assistance for relevant NIH grant applications that were scored but not funded.

- **Program to Accelerate Clinical Trials** – funds biomarker-based, Phase IIa proof-of-concept pilot clinical trials for Alzheimer’s disease.
- **Preclinical Drug Discovery**—seeks to fill critical translation funding gap between basic research and later stage drug development by funding promising preclinical drug discovery and biomarker development programs.

## Partnership Practices

ADDF partners with individuals, corporations, foundations, and government agencies in efforts and initiatives to advance scientific progress. Partnership programs combine the resources of ADDF with those of other organizations to provide significant funding in areas of mutual interest.

ADDF’s **Named Partnership Award** program allows individuals, foundations, and corporations to endow a drug discovery research achievement grant in academia or the biotechnology industry. ADDF assists award sponsors in identifying programs in their communities.

**ADDF partners with biotech and pharmaceutical companies.** The **ADDF Biotechnology Development Program** supports qualified scientific projects in existing, private, early-stage biotechnology companies, and the **ADDF Biotechnology Founders Technology Transfer Program** supports academic programs that are eligible for technology transfer and the startup of new biotechnology companies with programs dedicated to Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. Examples include:

- **Madera Biosciences, Inc.** – Awarded a grant to further develop its small molecule drugs designed to clear accumulated beta-amyloid from the brain and thus halt or reverse the progression of Alzheimer’s disease.
- **Axxam SpA** – Awarded a grant to develop small molecules to treat Alzheimer’s disease by targeting inflammation.
- **Yuma Therapeutics Corporation** – awarded a grant to develop small molecules to treat Alzheimer’s disease.
- **ADispell Inc.** – awarded a grant to develop novel drug candidates designed to halt the progression of cognition loss that occurs with Alzheimer’s disease.
- **ALS Biopharma, LLC** – awarded a grant to develop therapeutics targeted at clearing toxic proteins implicated in Alzheimer’s disease.

ADDF, in partnership with New York Academy of Sciences, launched a challenge grant to accelerate drug development for Alzheimer’s disease and dementia. This program challenges scientists to develop sensitive biomarkers that closely correlate to clinical outcomes.

## Financials

ADDF is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization. The most recent financial information available is from 2011.<sup>1</sup> All of ADDF’s overhead and administrative costs are covered by a private foundation, allowing 100 percent of funds raised to be used toward discovering the drugs that can conquer Alzheimer’s.

Year ending 12/31/11:

- Revenue: \$8,051,810
- Assets: \$7,707,145 (market value)
- Gifts received: \$7,946,390
- Expenditures: \$5,761,641
- Grants: \$4,588,875

## Key Accomplishments

- In July 2013, the Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery Foundation launched ADDF Access, a program to connect scientists with networks of collaborators, consultants, contract research organizations (CROs) and experimental tools.
- To date, ADDF has granted more than \$60 million to fund more than 400 Alzheimer’s drug discovery programs and 240 unique research programs, as well as clinical trials in academic centers and biotechnology companies in 18 countries.
- As a result of ADDF’s initial seed funding, grantees have received follow-on funding from government, pharmaceutical companies, and venture capital firms in excess of \$2 billion.
- ADDF’s funded investigators have published hundreds of peer-reviewed articles, created entirely new classes of drugs in development for AD, screened millions of compounds, identified hundreds of leads – executing many patents and licenses – and entered clinical trials with several new drugs.
- ADDF’s seed funding led to FDA approval of Amyvid™, the first diagnostic Test for Alzheimer’s Disease.
- ADDF created the Fund for Alzheimer’s Drug Discovery, a philanthropic venture. Contributors receive a pro rata return on investment when scientists reach contractual milestones and may designate ADDF or another nonprofit to receive the return.

## Leadership

ADDF is governed by a **Board of Governors** and a **Board of Overseers** and managed by a New-York based **executive staff**.

- **Executive Director:** Howard Fillit, MD, [hfillit@alzdiscovery.org](mailto:hfillit@alzdiscovery.org)
- **Director, Scientific Affairs,** Diana Shineman, [dshineman@alzdiscovery.org](mailto:dshineman@alzdiscovery.org)
- **Vice President and Chief Philanthropy Officer,** Nancy MacCowatt Sanford
- **Honorary Chairman: Sandra Day O’Connor**

<sup>1</sup> Information obtained from Foundation Center Directory, <http://fconline.foundationcenter.org>, May 2012.