American Heart Association.

Brain Health

November 2026



BRAIN HEALTH INTRODUCTION

Brain health supports how we think, feel and move throughout life, including learning and memory, experiencing emotions and moving safely in our environments. Brain health looks different for everyone and can change over time. It is shaped by many factors.



THE HEART-BRAIN CONNECTION

The heart and brain are deeply interconnected through:

- **Shared biology:**
Blood flow, nerves and other systems in your body connect your heart and brain.

- **Shared health conditions:**
Problems with your heart and brain health can affect one another and happen together.

- **Shared healthy habits:**
Being active, eating healthy foods, getting good sleep and managing stress can help keep both your heart and brain healthy.

1 in 3

Stroke survivors experience post-stroke depression

1 in 3

Cases of dementia could be prevented if cerebrovascular disease was eliminated

Understanding the heart-brain connection can help people lower their risk of health problems, spot warning signs earlier, get the right treatment sooner and live healthier lives.

THE AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION CENTER FOR THE BRAIN

The American Heart Association Center for the Brain draws heart and brain health closer together to advance a healthier future for all, including through the work of the American Stroke Association.

~$800 M

has been awarded by the American Heart Association to support research related to the brain and stroke.

11.5 M+

patient records have been collected in Get With The Guidelines® Stroke to support better stroke care.

$32 M+

in grants and investments related to brain health have been made through American Heart Assocation Ventures™.

The Center brings together researchers, health care professionals, communities, advocates and innovators to accelerate science, improve systems of care, share trusted information and turn promising ideas into real-world impact.



Science

We accelerate science through research funding, scientific forums, guidelines and scientific statements.



Healthcare

We translate science and evidence into better care and outcomes across healthcare systems.



Communities

We increase awareness and action through trusted information and engagement.



Advocacy

We advance evidence-based policies that support health at the federal, state and local levels.



Innovation

We invest in solutions that bridge the gap between research and the real world.

SCIENCE
RESEARCH FUNDING

Since 2001, the American Heart Association has awarded nearly **$800 million to support brain-related research**. This investment spans a wide range of programs and approaches that advance understanding of brain health and disease.

Focused-Topic Opportunities
Strategic Networks

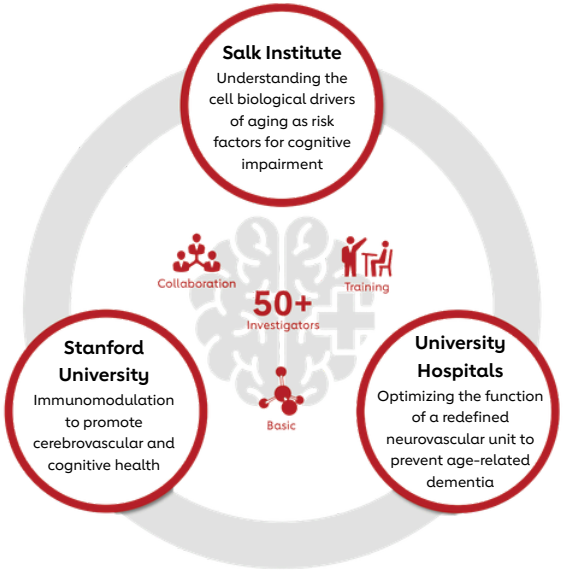
The American Heart Association's **Strategically Focused Research Networks** bring together multidisciplinary teams spanning basic, clinical and population health to address areas central to the Association's mission. Networks receive **$15-20 million to support three to five research centers over four years.** Brain health-related networks include:

- **Inflammation in Cardiac and Neurovascular Disease (2024-2028)**
- **Biologic Pathways of Chronic Psychosocial Stressors on Cardiovascular Health (2023-2027)**

The American Heart Association / Allen Initiative in Brain Health and Cognitive Impairment

From 2019 to 2026, **the American Heart Association / Allen Initiative in Brain Health and Cognitive Impairment** invested more than **$43 million** to advance the understanding of brain aging and cognitive impairment. Its multidisciplinary research network included more than 50 investigators, with teams at the Salk Institute, Stanford University and University Hospitals in Cleveland. Its impact includes:

- **More than $50 million in subsequent NIH funding**
- **60+ directly attributable publications and 435+ related publications**
- **5 patent applications filed**



Collaborations

The American Heart Association collaborates with leading health and research organizations to bring together complementary expertise and advance research across diverse areas of brain health. Examples include:

- **American Academy of Neurology** jointly funds the Ralph L. Sacco Scholarship Program in Brain Health ("The Sacco Scholars"), supporting early-career trainees undertaking mentored two-year research projects related to brain health.
- **American Brain Foundation** co-funds the Lawrence M. Brass, MD, Clinical Research Training Scholarship in Stroke.
- **American Headache Society** co-funded an Innovative Project Award supporting research on links between cardiovascular and cerebrovascular health and migraine and other headache disorders.
- **Autism Speaks** co-funds Pre- and Post-Doctoral Fellowship Awards supporting research on how to enhance cardiovascular and cerebrovascular health in autistic people.

> *"Research suggests autistic people are more likely to have poor cardiovascular health... We need to know why."*
>
> Andy Shih, Ph.D., Chief Science Officer, Autism Speaks

Investigator-Led Opportunities

Rapid Impact Research Awards

The Rapid Impact Research Awards support innovative research by early- and mid-career investigators. For the 2026-2028 award period, 28 proposals related to stroke or vascular dementia received funding, with awards of $100,000 over two years.

SCIENCE PUBLICATIONS

The American Heart Association and American Stroke Association publish statements and advisories across multiple aspects of brain health. Much of this work is led by professional members of the Stroke Council and its committees, including the Brain Health Science, Neurocardiology and Psychological Health and Well-Being Science Committees.

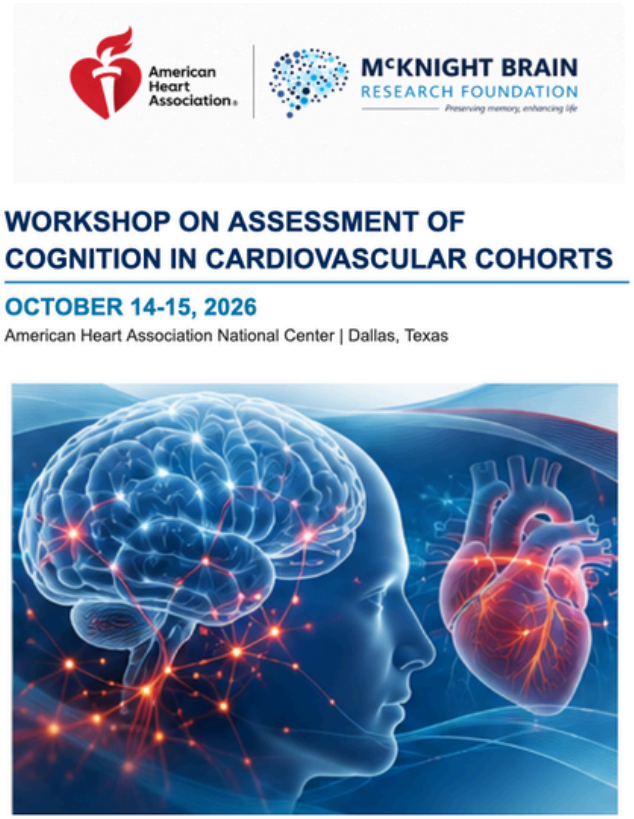
Selected Scientific Statements and Advisories
2026
Brain Health Across the Life Span: A Framework for Future Studies
Observational Research in Brain and Cardiovascular Health and Disease
Vascular Contributions to Cognitive Impairment and Brain Health: Clinical Update and Mechanistic Considerations
2025
Optimizing Psychological Health Across the Perinatal Period: An Update on Maternal Cardiovascular Health
Post–Myocardial Infarction Psychological Distress
Vascular Contributions to Cognitive Impairment and Dementia in the United States: Prevalence and Incidence
2024
Cardiac Contributions to Brain Health
Fostering Psychological Safety and Supporting Mental Health Among Cardiovascular Healthcare Workers
Improving Outcomes After Post–Cardiac Arrest Brain Injury
Impact of Sleep Disorders and Disturbed Sleep on Brain Health
Nursing's Role in Psychosocial Health Management After a Stroke Event
Vascular Neurology Considerations for Antiamyloid Immunotherapy
2023
Aggressive LDL-C Lowering and the Brain: Impact on Risk for Dementia and Hemorrhagic Stroke
Cognitive Impairment After Ischemic and Hemorrhagic Stroke
Neurodevelopmental Outcomes for Individuals with Congenital Heart Disease
The Neurovasculome: Key Roles in Brain Health and Cognitive Impairment

For a comprehensive list of publications, see Recent Guidelines and Statements on Professional Heart Daily.

Upcoming publications include the American Heart Association / American Stroke Association Guideline on Prevention and Optimization of Brain Health Across the Life Course.

SCIENCE MEETINGS

Recent meetings have included the second **ARIA Summit: Cardiovascular and Stroke Considerations for β-Amyloid Immunotherapy in Alzheimer Disease** (May 11-12, 2026) and **American Heart Association McKnight Brain Research Foundation Workshop on Assessment of Cognition in Cardiovascular Cohorts** (October 14-15, 2026).



Brain health sessions at scientific meetings have included:

Scientific Sessions, November 6-9, 2026

- Saving Hearts is Not Enough: Why Brain Health Must Define the Future of Cardiovascular Care
- The Other Side of the Coin: Why Brain Health Is Necessary for Cardiovascular Health
- The Brain Checkup: Measuring, Protecting and Preserving Your Cognitive Function
- Psychological Trauma after Life-Threatening Cardiac Events: An Overlooked Driver of Nonadherence, Rehospitalization and Cardiovascular Risk
- Subclinical Vascular Brain Injury – Time to Recognize it for Cardiovascular and Brain Health
- GLP-1 Receptor Agonists and Brain Health: Neuroprotection or Cardiometabolic Spillover? A Cardio-Neuro Debate
- Social Connection as Medicine: What Cardiology Needs to Know About Loneliness, Risk and Intervention

Selected 2027 Meetings

International Stroke Conference
February 10-12, 2027
Houston, Texas

Brain Health Pre-Conference Symposium
February 9, 2027

EPI | Lifestyle
March 1-4, 2027
Boston, Massachusetts

Vascular Discovery: From Genes to Medicine
July 22-25, 2027
Bellevue, Washington

AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION VENTURES™

American Heart Association Ventures is purpose-built to advance the scale and reach of heart and brain health innovation. American Heart Association Ventures invests from multiple perspectives to accelerate novel solutions with the goal of reaching and benefiting people, communities and the healthcare system faster.

Across all funds, American Heart Association Ventures has supported 62 organizations related to brain health, representing more than $32 million in grants and investments deployed across stroke, cognitive decline, specialty neurology and mental and behavioral health, including:

- **Cartwheel,** a mental health services platform that partners with schools across the US.
- **Mammha**, a company that accelerates screening, care coordination and support for pregnant and postpartum women facing depression and anxiety.
- **Neura Health**, a virtual neurology clinic leveraging advanced data analytics and AI-powered diagnostics to accelerate early detection and deliver personalized treatment and monitoring of neurological conditions

THE HEART-BRAIN CONNECTION WEBINAR SERIES

The Heart-Brain Connection Webinar Series: From Science to Social Impact aims to increase awareness and understanding of factors that influence both cardiovascular and brain health, translate science into actionable insights and build the unique community and collaboration that is only possible by looking across disciplines.

Next episode - Blood Pressure
Wednesday, Nov 18 – 1 p.m. CT.

The Heart-Brain Connection Webinar Series: Scientific Horizons brings together leading researchers and clinicians to discuss the next horizons in brain research and debate when and how they may be reached.

Next episode - Vascular Biomarkers:
Wednesday, Dec 3 – 12 p.m. CT.



Brain health is central to health and well-being throughout life. Building on decades of leadership in cardiovascular and cerebrovascular health, the American Heart Association is bringing together science, healthcare, policy and community action to advance brain health. Through the Center for the Brain, we are working to accelerate discovery, translate knowledge into action and help more people maintain brain health throughout their lives.

©Copyright 2026 American Heart Association, Inc., a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit. All rights reserved. American Stroke Association is a registered trademark of the American Heart Association. Unauthorized use prohibited. 8/26