# AutismBrainNet

Advancing research through the gift of brain donation

**April 22, 2021**

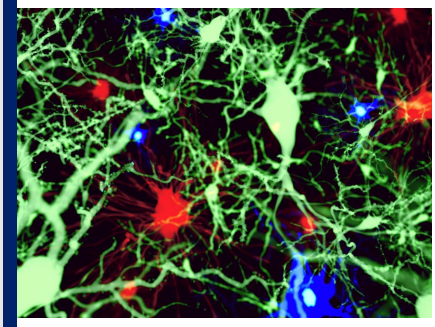
## Message from David G. Amaral, Scientific Director of Autism BrainNet

It seems like 2021 just got started, and here we are midway through April! Despite so many daunting challenges in our society that are not to be minimized, I feel like things are looking up and am optimistic that many well-intentioned people are willing to take on these challenges. For Autism BrainNet, we are thankful that 37 families in 2020 made the selfless decision to donate the brain of a family member to advance autism research. As laboratories around the world are beginning to reopen after the COVID-19 closures, we are experiencing an uptick in interest and applications for postmortem human brain tissue. While we make every effort to use each donation as efficiently as possible to serve as many research projects as possible, there will undoubtedly be an increased need for donations in the future. **Read more**

## SCIENCE

Cells called microglia support the brain immune response to infection and inflammation, and provide regular maintenance for many cellular processes. As researchers are learning more about these cells, changes in microglia function have been found in association with neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions, including autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Two recent articles explored the role of microglia in neuronal communication and brain inflammation— both processes have been linked with ASD.

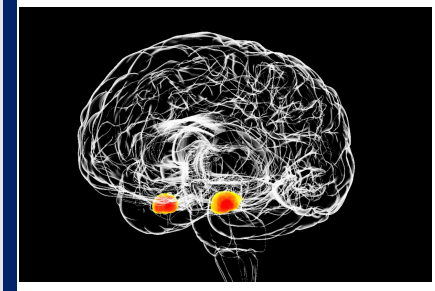
### New insights into the function of microglia, a type of brain cell involved in autism



In this study, Ana Badimon and collaborators investigated how microglia help modulate neuronal activity. While the study did not focus on autism directly, its findings suggest that microglia may play a bigger role in autism than previously appreciated.

**Read more about the study**

### Microglia-mediated inflammation of the amygdala in autism



In this study, Irene Tsilioni and colleagues examined mechanisms of inflammation in the brain of individuals with autism, with a focus on the role of an anti-inflammatory protein called IL-38.

**Read more about the study**

## DONOR FAMILIES

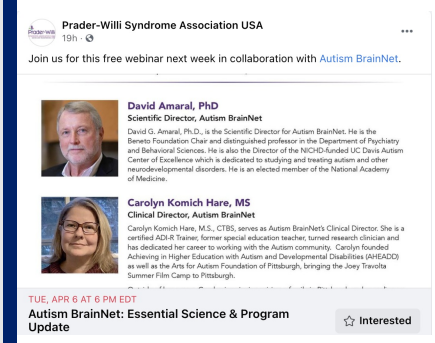
## Remembering Bridget Mary McAllister: A Conversation with Annie Scheumbauer

The research facilitated by Autism BrainNet would not be possible without the generosity of our donor families. We recently spoke with Annie Scheumbauer, mother of donor Bridget M. McCallister. Bridget had a talent for poetry, writing, painting and was diagnosed with Asperger syndrome and a sensory integration disorder at the age of seven. In her testimony, Annie recounts Bridget's life, her passions and challenges, and what led her family to make the decision to support autism research through the gift of brain donation.

Read more

## COMMUNITY EVENTS

### Thanks to all the individuals, families, researchers and organizations that joined us virtually to support and learn more about Autism BrainNet, and help advance autism research.




**Prader-Willi Syndrome Association | USA**

David G. Amaral, scientific director of Autism BrainNet, and Carolyn Hare, clinical director of Autism BrainNet, joined families at the Prader-Willi Syndrome Association|USA webinar to share scientific advances in understanding autism and related neurodevelopmental conditions and the importance of brain tissue donation to advance research.

View the presentation

## HOTLINE

### Contact us, we are here to help.

If you have questions about Autism BrainNet and the donation process, email us at:
**info@autismbrainnet.org**

If you have questions about making a donation, call our 24 hour hotline:
**1-877-333-0999**

STAY CONNECTED

https://autismbrainnet.org