AutismBrainNet

Advancing research through the gift of brain donation

April 16, 2026

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

Dear Friends,

Happy Autism Awareness and Acceptance Month!

At Autism BrainNet, we've been hard at work supporting important research. Thanks to the generosity of more than 400 families who have donated brain tissue, we're now able to provide this invaluable resource to scientists across the United States and Europe. Because of these donations, researchers can now pursue studies that were previously not possible due to a lack of tissue.

Many families have asked: *Who is using these donations, and what are they learning?* In this newsletter, we're excited to let the researchers share their work directly with you. In this issue, Dr. Tomasz Nowakowski, Ph.D., from the University of California, San Francisco, explains how donated tissue is helping his team better understand how the human brain develops—and how development may differ in autism. In future issues, we'll continue to feature researchers and the work they're doing with Autism BrainNet tissue.

Read More

Investigators Series

Meet Tomasz J. Nowakowski, PhD

"Our laboratory studies how the human brain develops and how the process of neuronal and glial development unfolds differently in autism and related neurodevelopmental conditions. We use modern genomic technologies to examine individual brain cells one at a time, reading the activity of thousands of genes in each cell simultaneously."

Read More About Dr. Nowakowski's Research

Science

New Preprint: Molecular Dynamics of Broadmann Area 22 in development and autism

Verbal communication is a common challenge in autism. In this study, researchers analyzed donated brain tissue from autistic and non-autistic individuals to better understand the cellular and molecular changes in the brain that may be associated in verbal communication.

Read About the Study

How Brain Donation is Driving Autism Research

In a recent article published in Drug Target Review, Dr. Karl Murray, Director of the UC Davis/NIH NeuroMab and Tissue Coordinator for Autism BrainNet discusses how brain donation is driving autism research.

In the article, Dr. Murray says, "While there are many strategies for studying the human brain, such as magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) or electroencephalography (EEG), these methods do not allow direct access to the brain tissue...Research using postmortem brain tissue provides one of the most

direct paths to understanding the cellular changes that are associated with autism and related conditions."

Read the Article

Mark Your Calendar! April 29, 12pm - 2pm ET

Autism BrainNet to Host "Ask Me Anything" Session on Reddit

Join us as we host our first "Ask Me Anything" session on Reddit on **April 29 from 12-2pm ET**.

Dr. David Amaral, Scientific Director of Autism BrainNet and Dr. Alycia Halladay, Chief Science Officer of the Autism Science Foundation will be available to answer questions about what brain donation is, how someone can become a donor, the process for brain donation, and more.

Mark your calendars and join to ask us anything!

Learn More

In the News

Happy Healthy Caregiver Podcast: Autism Advocacy and Brain Donation with Kathy Stein

Hear Kathy Stein's interview with the Happy Healthy Caregiver Podcast about her decision to extend her brother Ed's legacy through the gift of brain donation and how this precious gift is contributing to autism research.

Listen to the Podcast

Helpline

Contact us, we are here to help.

If you have questions about making a donation or the donation process, call our 24 hour helpline:
1-877-333-0999

If you have questions about Autism BrainNet, email us at:
info@autismbrainnet.org

STAY CONNECTED

autismbrainnet.org