



Advancing research through the gift of brain donation

July 30, 2026

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



Dear Friends,

Once a year, the entire Autism BrainNet team meets in person to strengthen connections and learn new methods for brain research and tissue processing.

This year's meeting was held in Boston and focused on new areas of research that could benefit from studying donated human brain tissue after death.

Researchers from several institutions were invited to give talks about their work on the human brain.

[Read More](#)

For Our Donor Families

**Autism BrainNet Donor Families:
Opportunity for Parent Participation**

Your loved one made an extraordinary contribution to autism research through their brain donation. As a biological parent, **your DNA is uniquely valuable** to this work. By contributing a simple saliva sample, you help scientists better understand the genetics related to autism and neurodevelopmental disorders — information that cannot be obtained any other way.

Parental DNA allows researchers to:

- Distinguish inherited genetic variants from those that arose spontaneously
- Build more complete and accurate genetic profiles of ABN donors
- Advance understanding of the genetic architecture of autism spectrum and other neurodevelopmental disorders
- Contribute to findings that may benefit families for generations to come

What Would Participation Involve?

Participation is **simple, non-invasive, and can be done from home.**

1. **Contact Carolyn Hare via email** (chare1@mgb.org)
2. **Review and sign** an informed consent form (provided electronically or by mail)
3. **Receive a saliva collection kit** at no cost to you
4. **Provide a saliva sample** using the enclosed tube — takes approximately 5 minutes
5. **Return the kit** in the pre-paid, pre-addressed UPS envelope provided

There are no clinic visits, blood draws, or medical procedures involved.

Please contact Carolyn at chare1@mgb.org if you are interested in participating!

Science: Investigators Series

Meet Genevieve Konopka, PhD

"My lab investigates how gene function has evolved uniquely in the human brain to support advanced cognitive abilities. In line with this, we examine how these human-specific patterns of gene function and expression are altered in neuropsychiatric and cognitive disorders. We are particularly focused on understanding gene function at the level of individual cell types.



Given that the human brain contains nearly 200 billion cells, a major challenge is to link genes to specific cell populations and, ultimately, to behavior."

[Read More About Dr. Konopka's Research](#)

In the News

Autism Spectrum News: A Lasting Legacy: How Brain Donation Is Advancing Autism Research



In a recent article published in [Autism Spectrum News](#), Nicole Coman, Ed.S., discusses her role as clinical coordinator for Autism BrainNet and how brain donation can further autism research.

[Read the Article](#)

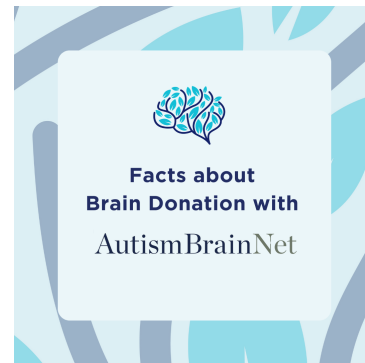
Planning for Donation

10 Facts about Brain Donation with Autism BrainNet

The decision to become a brain donor is a personal one, and we encourage you to learn about the donation process in advance and to discuss it with your loved ones.

Long-term planning can help minimize the stress associated with decision-making at the time of death.

Read the facts to help you determine if postmortem brain donation is right for you and your family.



[Read the Facts](#)

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

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