

Resource allocation to brain research in Europe – a full report

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Executive summary

Background

Brain diseases are all diseases affecting the brain, spinal cord and peripheral nerves, and they include both neurological and psychiatric diseases. Brain research is all research relating to the nervous system and thus covers the traditional concepts of clinical and basic neuroscience.

We have previously assessed the burden of brain diseases in terms of disability-adjusted life years (DALY) and in terms of their economic cost. In Europe, brain diseases account for 35% of the overall disease burden and a conservative estimate of their cost is €386 billion per year. These costs will rise considerably in the coming years due to the ageing European population. One way of curbing this increase and possibly decreasing the cost of brain diseases is to intensify research. More brain research may lead to decreased disease burden, but is also important in itself as it provides better knowledge about normal brain functions such as emotions, aggression, learning and memory.

The aim of the present study was to collect information about spending on brain research in Europe and compare this to the burden and cost of brain diseases, research spending in other disease areas, and similar estimates for the US.