












Brain Awareness Week Event

"Patient Engagement in EU-funded Brain Research Projects"

16 March 2021, 12:30 - 14:00 CET

#ILoveMyBrain

Programme

Time	Topic	Speaker
12:30-12:40	 Welcome & Introduction	 Joke Jaarsma President, European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA)  Monica Di Luca President, European Brain Council (EBC)
12:40-13:20	 Concrete Examples and Solutions	 Pierre Meulien Executive Director, Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI)  Paola Zaratin MULTI-ACT Project - White Paper for innovative routes for patient engagement – call to action  Representative from the Belgian Centre for Evidence-based Medicine (CEBAM)
13:20-13:50	 Panel discussion	 Irene Norstedt Director, People Directorate, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission  Erik Van der Eycken EU Research Project Officer, Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks (GAMIAN - Europe)  Donna Walsh Executive Director, European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA)  Tomislav Sokol (HR, EPP) Member of the European Parliament
13:50-14:00	 Concluding Remarks	 Hilkka Kärkkäinen President, Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks (GAMIAN - Europe)

Background

Patient engagement in research is an approach that involves meaningful and active collaboration with patients in the governance, priority setting, conducting and knowledge translation of research. While patient engagement is becoming increasingly popular and vital prerequisite in research projects, many researchers are still unsure or hesitant in the involvement of patients in their work and why such engagement is of value. The process is unclear to many and how to fully involve patients can be unclear. However, many patients are keen to be part of research – “nothing about us without us” –arguing that no research can be fully done without direct insight from the people actually living with these conditions every day.

For some time now, the European Commission, through its research programmes and related initiatives, has been increasing its encouragement of involving patients in research, particularly within the projects it funds. The Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) approach has been highlighted throughout the objectives of the EU Horizon 2020 Programme. In health research this means to put the expectations of patients and society at the heart of research programs. European initiatives such as the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) have spearheaded the growth of involving patients in European research, encouraging patient involvement in their activities and project, and involving patients as speakers and panellists in their events and consultations. Furthermore, H2020-funded projects such as MULTI-ACT were launched with the aim to increase the impact of health research on people with brain diseases and to create and implement a new model allowing for the effective cooperation of all relevant stakeholders.

However, most patients and patient representatives still feel like not enough support is given to have their voices fully heard in research—requests and demand for involving patients is growing but a pool of “patient experts” is still lacking. The discussion needs to shift from “we need to show that patients are on board” to “how can we best involve patients and why/ how are we involving them to the full benefit for the research conducted”. “What can be done concretely in EU funded health research projects to enforce patient engagement”? This needs to be more than a “box ticking exercise”.

This Brain Awareness Week looks to explore the current state of patient engagement in EU-funded Brain Research projects, looking at IMI and MULTI-ACT as concrete examples and solutions and analysing in discussion with key officials what has been done and what can still be done in order to guarantee change.

Speakers' biographies



Monica Di Luca
President, European Brain Council (EBC)

Monica Di Luca, EBC President, is Professor of Pharmacology and Head of Laboratory of Pharmacology of Neurodegeneration – DiSFeB at the University of Milano.

Her primary research interest is related to synaptic plasticity in physiological and pathological conditions, with the primary aim to apply basic findings to the cure of neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Disease.

She has been member of Council of several national and international scientific organizations including Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS, President 2014-2016), the International Brain Research Organization (IBRO), EMBO and the European Dana Alliance for the Brain (EDAB).



Pierre Meulien
Executive Director, Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI)

Pierre Meulien is Executive Director of the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI), a €5 billion public-private partnership between the European Union and the European pharmaceutical industry. At IMI, he is responsible for the overall management of the program, which works to improve and accelerate the drug development process by facilitating collaboration between the key players involved in health research. Previously, Dr Meulien was president and CEO of Genome Canada, where he raised money and oversaw the launch of novel projects and networks in the field of genomics-based technologies. Prior to that, he was chief scientific officer for Genome British Columbia and was the founding CEO of the Dublin Molecular Medicine Center. Dr Meulien also worked with the French biotechnology company Transgene and with Aventis Pasteur (now Sanofi Pasteur). He has a Ph.D. in molecular biology from the University of Edinburgh and carried out a postdoctoral fellowship at the Institut Pasteur in Paris.



Paola Zaratini
MULTI-ACT Project - White Paper for innovative routes for patient engagement – call to action

Paola Zaratini joined Italian MS Society on February 2010 where she currently holds the position of Director of Scientific Research. Paola has deep experience in Neuroscience research and in Drug Discovery and Development, acquired in Public, Private and Patients' Organizations and in the last 20 years in the area of Multiple Sclerosis. Coordinator (2018-2021) of the EU Responsible Research Innovation H2020 MULTI-ACT project (www.multiact.eu/) Paola led the development of a new participatory governance model and guidelines to engage patients as key stakeholder in multistakeholder research initiatives. Co-chair of the Scientific Steering Committee (2019) of the global Patient Reported Outcomes Initiative for Multiple Sclerosis (PROMS, www.aism.it/PROMS). Member of the Scientific Steering Committee (2012) and of the Industry Forum (2014) of Progressive Multiple Sclerosis Alliance (PMSA, <https://www.progressivemsaalliance.org>). Paola is author of more than 75 publications (1987-2021) and 9 patents (Linkedin https://bit.ly/in_zaratin ; Twitter @paolazaratin; Research Gate https://bit.ly/rg_zaratin).



Irene Norstedt

Director, People Directorate, DG Research and Innovation, European Commission

Irene Norstedt works at the European Commission where she is the acting Director responsible for the People Directorate within the DG for Research and Innovation. Irene is also Head of the Economic and Social Transitions Unit. Irene has been at the European Commission since 1996, and was instrumental in the creation of the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) in 2008.

From 16 December 2014 to 15 September 2015, Irene served as Acting Executive Director of the Innovative Medicines Initiative. Prior to joining the European Commission, she worked for the Swedish life science company Biacore AB and at the Swedish embassy in London.

Irene studied biotechnology and polymer science, and holds a Master of Science (MsC) in Chemical Engineering.



Donna Walsh

Executive Director, European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA)

Donna became the Executive Director of the European Federation of Neurological Associations [EFNA] in June 2012. Donna's training is in Journalism, but she has worked with patient organisations in the neurological sector – in various roles – since leaving university. This included work with the European Migraine and Headache Alliance [EMHA] and the Migraine Association of Ireland [MAI], as well as being a representative to the Neurological Alliance of Ireland. Donna oversees the strategic direction of EFNA and leads in the creation and implementation of its annual workplan, projects and activities. Since joining EFNA, Donna has led the development of some of EFNA's current keynote projects such as its ONeurology Initiative, MEP Interest Group on Brain, Mind and Pain and Training Initiatives for Neurology Advocates. She is also active in representing EFNA and the neurology patient community externally, including as a current Board Member of the European Brain Council.



Hilikka Kärkkäinen

President, Global Alliance of Mental Illness Advocacy Networks (GAMIAN - Europe)

Hilikka is a social worker by profession and she has retired from her job as Social Ombudsman in Sosiaalitalito in 2014. She is also a patient and an expert by experience having suffered reactive depression in 2002. She has worked both for the City of Helsinki and the City of Espoo in Child Welfare several years. Hilikka was a Senior Social Worker in Probation and After Care Association in Helsinki for seven years. As an office manager in Espoo Social Services in 1980's she was also in charge of a Horizon ECHO program for people with mental disorders. She was Executive Director of Finnish Central Association for Mental Health 1998-2002 and has been President and Vice President of Mieli Maasta, which is a patient association for those suffering from depression. She has worked for the City of Järvenpää as a Planner of Regional Mental Health Care. Hilikka was a Board Director of European Federation of Neurological Associations (EFNA) 2002-2004 and President of GAMIAN-Europe once before in 1999. She is a Board Director of European Brain Council (EBC), European Patient Forum (EPF) and European Psychiatric Association (EPA).