



THE FOUNDATION OF THE ASNR

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2027 ALDON MARK BERGER MENTAL HEALTH IMAGING RESEARCH GRANT

Funding amount: \$250,000

PROSPECTUS

With the generous support of the estate of Elaine D. Berger, an endowment dedicated to supporting research and education in mental health has been established for the ASNR. The Foundation of the ASNR now invites applications for neuroimaging research to better understand the pathophysiological underpinnings of behavioral health and mental health disorders with the goal of improving treatment and outcomes.

This grant mechanism supports innovative high-impact projects using neuroimaging in conjunction with other methodologies to investigate the neural mechanisms of psychiatric disorders, mental health conditions, and potential therapeutics and other interventions. Examples of topics include, but are not limited to anxiety disorders, ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, mood disorders, eating disorders, obsessive compulsive disorder, personality disorders, PTSD, schizophrenia, chronic pain, substance use, and alcohol use disorders. Applications investigating mechanistic frameworks for social determinants of mental health such as gun violence, isolation, bullying, socioeconomic inequities, social media, and loneliness will be considered responsive.

Pre-clinical studies integrating quantitative neuroimaging methodologies with cell signaling, molecular, and systems level mechanisms are invited. Projects leveraging large clinical imaging datasets are also invited provided the work will move the field toward understanding determinants and outcomes. Innovative proposals with multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary teams that leverage diverse expertise are strongly encouraged. Proposals aiming to uncover causal mechanisms and improve clinical outcomes will be viewed favorably.

ELIGIBILITY

- A. Candidates must be North American members of ASNR in good standing with an MD, PhD, DO, or equivalent degree.
 - a. MD or DO candidates must be board-certified or board-eligible in Radiology by either the American Board of Radiology (ABR) or the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada (RSPSC). Physician candidates must have completed a residency in Diagnostic Radiology and completed at least 1 year of an ACGME-approved or equivalent fellowship in Neuroradiology or Pediatric Neuroradiology by the beginning of the award period.

- b. All candidates should have an active or imminent academic appointment, such as faculty, instructor, research staff, or post-doctoral student, within a Radiology department.
- B. Applications from investigators at all career stages are welcome. An applicant can only submit one application as Primary Investigator (PI) per cycle but can be a Co-PI on more than one grant per cycle.
- C. More than one applicant from the same institution may submit a separate application within the same grant cycle.
- D. Applicants who have held any of the Foundation of the ASNR Grants, the RSNA Research Scholar, GERRAF, or ARRS Grant Award in the past must declare their previous grants on the application. The applicant is considered ineligible if they are or will concurrently be holding any of the previously mentioned grants, while applying to or holding a grant from the Foundation of the ASNR. Concurrent Seed grants and prior Trainee (resident and fellow) grants do not disqualify an applicant.

RESEARCH PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

The research proposal must have a clearly stated, testable hypothesis, or hypotheses, and well-developed aims. Background and scientific rationale should highlight knowledge gaps and explain how the application will fill such gaps.

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Application Schedule

- A. **The deadline for application receipt is 9:00 AM CT, Friday, October 30, 2026.**
Applications should be submitted via <https://asnr.smapply.io/>. Applicants will need to create an account and log in to select the award for which you would like to apply.
- B. **Grant recipients will be selected in early 2027, with subsequent notification of the recipient and institution.**

Formatting Requirements

- A. All application materials must use a minimum 11-point font (Arial or Times New Roman) and a minimum 0.5-inch margin. All sections must be single-spaced. No appendix materials will be accepted.
- B. **Applications that do not follow the page limits and formatting requirements below will be disqualified or truncated, at the discretion of ASNR and the Foundation of the ASNR.**

Application Components

All components must be combined into a single PDF document, in the order listed, and uploaded as one file via <https://asnr.smapply.io/>. Page limits are noted with each component and are enforced as described above.

Separately from this document, applicants will be required to fill out a research selection method form, upload a current CV and to respond to a set of demographic questions within the online application. These items are not counted toward the page limit.

1. Cover Page (*no page limit*)

Include the project title; applicant name, degrees, and academic rank; institution and

department; the award for which you are applying; and applicant contact information, including mailing address, telephone number, and email address. Date the page as of submission.

2. Table of Contents (*no page limit*)

List each component of the application in the order below, with the page number on which it begins.

3. Specific Aims (*1 page*)

State the specific aims of the proposed research and the hypothesis or hypotheses to be tested.

4. Research Strategy (*6 pages*)

Organize this section under the following headings:

- Significance
- Innovation
- Preliminary Studies
- Approach

5. References (*no page limit*)

References are not included in the page limit.

6. Human Subjects (if applicable) (*no page limit*)

Describe the involvement of human subjects and plans for their protection.

7. Animal Care and Approval (if applicable) (*no page limit*)

Describe the involvement of vertebrate animals and the status of institutional animal care and use approval.

8. Budget and Budget Justification (*1 page*)

An itemized budget is required as part of the grant proposal submission. List itemized expenses that will be incurred in this project, grouped into the main categories of Personnel, Equipment, and Other (including, for example, scanner time costs). Provide justification for all budget expenses. No indirect costs will be awarded.

9. Chair Letter of Support (*1 page*)

A letter from the Department Chair confirming that the application is endorsed by the department and that the department is committed to providing the resources for the proposed project.

10. Other Letters of Support/Collaboration (*no page limit*)

Please indicate the most important collaborator(s) or other mentors for this project, their role, and whether this is a new or previously established collaboration.

11. Proposed Next Steps (*½ page*)

If your project is successful, what next steps do you anticipate taking by year 1 and by year 2 following the grant, including specifics regarding sources of funding?

SELECTION METHOD

All those with interest in the award, or employees of an institution that may be involved in the award, shall recuse themselves from voting on such applications. If applications are received

from the institutions of the Foundation of the ASNR and Research Committee Co-Chair(s) will recuse themselves the responsibility of coordinating review of the applications from their home institution.

The ASNR Research Committee, or its delegate, reviews applications and provides recommendations to the Foundation of the ASNR for the grant recipients.

Grants will be designated and administered by the Foundation of the ASNR.

The Aldon Mark Berger Mental Health Imaging Research Grant Review Scoring Scale can be found at the end of this prospectus.

AWARD TERMS & CONDITIONS

Funding & Budget

- A. The total funding amount is up to \$250,000 over 2 years, which will be paid for in two equal installments on July 15, 2027, and July 15, 2028. **Any unused portion must be returned to the Foundation of the ASNR.** The proposed allocation of funds (salary support and other research costs) should be specified in a detailed line-item budget submitted with the full proposal.
- B. The funding will go directly to the Institution or the department of Radiology as direct costs only. **No overhead or indirect costs are provided.** An itemized budget is required as part of the award proposal submission. Funds (up to \$125,000 per year) may be allocated as the investigator sees fit but must be justified in the application. Examples of fund use might include:
 - Salary support for the investigator and/or associated staff (e.g., research assistants, clinical coordinator, statistical support, and/or MD or PhD collaborators)
 - Appropriate scanner time access
 - Processing software and other types of software
 - Cloud computing resources
 - Costs related to attending conferences, workshop courses or training courses (e.g., computer programming courses, specialized image analysis courses, or any other workshops)

Institutional Compliance

- A. Institutional IRB approval is not required at the time of proposal submission but either approval or a waiver **must be submitted to ASNR before fund disbursement and grant announcement can be made.**
- B. No grant will be made without prior confirmation from the Program Director or Department Chair that the applicant's proposal will be supported in full by the host institution.

Transfer, Duration & Extensions

- A. This grant may be transferred to another institution, following approval by The Foundation of the ASNR, for the designated individual, provided the new institution abides by the original agreement and the awardee can conduct the proposed work in the new setting. This request must be submitted in writing to The Foundation of the ASNR at least 30 days prior to the transfer. Each institution sponsoring the recipient

will receive a portion of the funding that is in proportion to the length of time that research was performed at their institution. If a decision is made by The Foundation of the ASNR not to allow transfer of the grant to another institution, the original institution sponsoring the recipient will receive only the funds that are proportionate to the length of time the research project was performed at that institution.

- B. **The grant is not transferable to another individual.**
- C. Grants will be approved for two years. A No Cost Extension of the terms of the grant may be requested to extend the research period to 12 months beyond the original ending date. Approval of an extension does not include the awarding of additional funds. To request an extension, the grantee must complete a request form to be reviewed by the Co-Chairs of the Foundation of the ASNR and Research Committee. Requests must be submitted at least 30 days prior to the original ending date. **Please note that only one No Cost Extension request will be considered per project.**

Recognition & Dissemination

- A. In May 2027, Aldon Mark Berger Mental Health Imaging Research Grant recipients will be announced at the Foundation Awards Session during the ASHNR/ASNR 2027 Joint Annual Meeting (May 14–19), on the Foundation's website, and via E-News to ASNR membership. Recipients will also receive an invitation to the 2027 President's Gala.
- B. The recipient will be invited to present their research at the 69th ASNR Annual Meeting in Las Vegas in May 2029.

Publication Expectations

The American Journal of Neuroradiology (AJNR) welcomes the best science and encourages authors to submit publications to AJNR before considering other journals.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

To ensure accountability and track the progress and outcomes of funded research, all recipients are required to submit three reports over the course of the grant: an impact statement, an interim progress report, and a final report. These reports allow the Foundation of the ASNR to monitor how funds are being used, understand the scientific and clinical impact of the research, and inform the continued development of the grant program. Recipients will be provided with a template for each report. Below is a list of the required reports and other reporting obligations, with their due dates:

- A. A brief impact statement on the research's broader impact and outcome is due approximately 6 months into the grant period (December 31, 2027).
- B. An interim progress summarizing progress against specific aims, expenditures to date, and any changes in direction is due approximately 12 months into the grant period (June 30, 2027).
- C. The final report building on the progress report with a summary of clinical impact, publications/patents, and program feedback will be due 90 days after project completion (September 30, 2028).
- D. Two return-on-investment surveys will be conducted 3 and 5 years after receiving the grant.

Aldon Mark Berger Mental Health Imaging Research Grant Review Scoring Scale

Reviewers will consider each of the criteria below in the determination of scientific merit and give a separate score for each. Individual reviewers will score each criterion below on a 9-point scale, where 1 indicates an exceptionally strong application with essentially no weaknesses and 9 indicates serious, substantive weaknesses with very few strengths (5 is average). Scores must be whole numbers only.

Significance (Score 1-9)

- *Is the project responsive to the goals of using neuroimaging to understand underlying factors and improve treatment and outcomes for mental and behavioral health?*
- *Does the proposal include a rigorous scientific background, and does it explain the knowledge gaps it intends to fill?*
- *If the aims are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved?*

Reviewer Comments:

Investigator(s) (Score 1-9)

- *Are the PI, collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project?*
- *If the project is collaborative, do the investigators have complementary expertise?*
- *Is the project multi-disciplinary?*

Reviewer Comments:

Innovation (Score 1-9)

- *Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions?*
- *Does it address social determinants of mental health which are less often addressed in neuroimaging research?*

Reviewer Comments:

Approach (Score 1-9)

- *Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned to accomplish the specific aims of the project?*
- *Are there clearly stated, testable hypotheses, or hypotheses, and well-developed aims?*
- *Have the investigators included plans to address weaknesses in the rigor of prior research?*
- *If the project uses large clinical imaging datasets, how will it move the field forward?*
- *Have the investigators presented adequate plans to address diversity in subject recruitment, as appropriate?*

Reviewer Comments:

Environment (Score 1-9)

- *Are the institutional support, equipment, and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed?*

Reviewer Comments:

Overall Impact Score (Score 1-9)

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the project to meet the goals of the Aldon Mark Berger Mental Health Imaging Research Grant and to exert a sustained influence on the research field. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact. For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to advance a field.

Reviewers will evaluate the following additional items while determining scientific and technical merit, and in providing an overall impact score, but will not give separate scores for these items.

Health Disparity Populations and Individuals Across the Lifespan

- *Does the proposed project involve human subjects and/or NIH-defined clinical research?*
- *Do the plans provide for the inclusion (or exclusion) of individuals from health disparity populations in the project as well as the inclusion (or exclusion) of individuals of all ages (including children and older adults) to determine if such inclusion (or exclusion) is justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed?*

Vertebrate Animals

Reviewers will evaluate the involvement of live vertebrate animals as part of the scientific assessment according to the following criteria:

- *Description of proposed procedures involving animals, including species, strains, ages, sex, and total number to be used*
- *Justifications for the use of animals versus alternative models and for the appropriateness of the species proposed*
- *Interventions to minimize discomfort, distress, pain and injury*
- *Justification for euthanasia method if NOT consistent with the AVMA Guidelines for the Euthanasia of Animals*

Final Comments:

ALDON MARK BERGER MENTAL HEALTH IMAGING RESEARCH GRANT SCORING RUBRIC

Impact	Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths & Weaknesses
High	1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
	2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
	3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
Medium	4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
	5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weaknesses
	6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
Low	7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
	8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
	9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses
Minor Weakness: An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen impact. Moderate Weakness: A weakness that lessens impact. Major Weakness: A weakness that severely limits impact.			