

Unleash the Power of Prizes to Stop Alzheimer's Disease

Support the Ensuring Useful Research Expenditures is Key for Alzheimer's (EUREKA) Act

EUREKA Act Overview

Alzheimer's disease and related dementias are threatening to destroy the nation's health and its finances. More than 5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease today, costing more than \$225 billion annually. About 70 percent—or nearly \$160 billion—of this cost is shouldered by Medicare and Medicaid and, ultimately, the U.S. taxpayer. In 2013, the RAND Corporation issued a study finding that direct costs of Alzheimer's disease exceed similar costs associated with both cancer and heart disease combined. In 2014, a team from Rush University in Chicago found that more than 500,000 American deaths each year are attributable to Alzheimer's disease.

Despite the enormity of the Alzheimer's disease challenge, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) will commit about \$586 million Alzheimer's research this year. While this has increased markedly over the past few years, it remains far below the \$2 billion in public research funding leading experts have stated is needed to maximize our likelihood of achieving the national goal of preventing and treating Alzheimer's by 2025. Given constrained public finances, other actions must be taken to supplement existing funds while we work to make Alzheimer's disease a greater research priority.

The Power of Prize-Based Challenges

A promising tool to leverage scarce public and private resource dollars to address significant challenges is the growing idea of prize-based competitions. Inspired by the success of the X Prize, in recent years, the United States has used prize tools to attract expert interest in addressing vexing research questions. **The Ensuring Useful Research Expenditures is Key for Alzheimer's or EUREKA Act** will authorize the use of prizes to accomplish the scientific breakthroughs necessary to achieve the 2025 goal. The EUREKA Act authorizes the Director of the NIH to work with other federal agencies to establish prize challenges informed by the research milestones contained in the National Plan to Address Alzheimer's Disease. Challenges could focus in a number of areas including:

- Identification and validation of Alzheimer's biomarkers;
- Development of non-invasive and cost-effective early detection and diagnostic tools;
- Repurposing of existing drugs to address Alzheimer's disease; and
- Development of new tools and approaches to care for persons with Alzheimer's disease.

An advisory council that would include experts in organizing and managing such challenges as well as patient advocates and industry representatives will be constituted to determine the competitions, while a separate judging panel will evaluate submissions and make recommendations for awards to the Director of NIH.

Pay for Success

Prize challenges enable government sponsors to pay only when a prize team achieves specified goals or milestones. While funds will be authorized and reserved for awards, prizes will only be granted when teams achieve clearly defined objectives, making the EUREKA Act a cost-effective tool to support the pursuit of the 2025 goal. Additionally, EUREKA would permit the receipt of donations from the private sector and from individuals to fund the competition and build the award fund.