

# The American Sleep Medicine Foundation: New Resources, New Structure, New Goals

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THE AMERICAN SLEEP MEDICINE FOUNDATION (ASMF) WAS CREATED BY THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF SLEEP MEDICINE (AASM) IN 1998, GROWING OUT OF THE AASM'S commitment to advancing the fields of sleep research and sleep medicine. The seeds for the foundation were planted, however, when the AASM was formed more than 30 years ago. When the AASM was established in 1975, its founders agreed that the organization should combine a sleep-center focus with an emphasis on clinical practice and research.<sup>1</sup> This fundamental commitment to sleep science led the AASM to partner with the Sleep Research Society in forming the Associated Professional Sleep Societies LLC (APSS), which publishes the journal *SLEEP* and organizes the SLEEP Annual Meeting of the APSS.

Now in its 31<sup>st</sup> volume, *SLEEP* is recognized as the leading scientific journal in the field with an impact factor of 5.126 that places it in the top six percent of more than 6,100 journals ranked in the Journal Citation Reports Science Edition 2006.<sup>2</sup> The SLEEP Annual Meeting is the premier gathering of sleep scientists in the world, with more than 1,100 scientific abstracts presented this past June at SLEEP 2007 in Minneapolis, Minn. At each annual meeting the AASM also presents the William C. Dement Academic Achievement Award, which recognizes members of the sleep field who have displayed exceptional initiative and progress in the area of academic sleep research, and the Young Investigator Award, which honors the outstanding contributions of young sleep scientists.

Recognizing the insufficient level of funding that was available to sleep scientists, the AASM board of directors, led by Dr. Wolfgang Schmidt-Nowara formed the ASMF to provide tangible support for the advancement of sleep research. Originally called the Sleep Medicine Education and Research Foundation (then known as SMERF), the goal of the ASMF was to support education as well as clinical and basic research. The ASMF awarded its first grants in 2000, and among the research supported by these inaugural grants were studies at the University of Pennsylvania and Stanford University that provided preliminary data for major studies subsequently funded by the National Institutes of Health.

Since its inception the ASMF has awarded nearly \$3 million to fund 37 projects ranging from computational modeling of the human pharyngeal airway to genomics of the zebrafish hypocretin/narcolepsy pathway. The results of these studies have been published in prestigious journals such as *SLEEP*,<sup>3</sup> *Journal of the American Medical Association*,<sup>4</sup> and the *American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine*.<sup>5</sup> Young investigators were able to work with mentors at the most respected educational institutions, including Harvard University (5 grants), the University of Pennsylvania (5 grants) and Stanford University (3 grants). In 2007 the ASMF awarded funding of "Portable Monitoring in the Diagnosis and Management of

Obstructive Sleep Apnea" to a consortium of researchers led by Case Western Reserve University. This large-scale, multi-center, randomized, head-to-head study comparing unattended portable monitoring and auto-titrating positive airway pressure with attended polysomnography will produce much-needed scientific evidence that will be of critical importance to the field.

The AASM provides the funding for all of the foundation's administrative costs and has funded most of the ASMF grants. A few projects have been funded by unrestricted industry grants, including an ongoing study of sleep in heart-failure patients. Individual donations and a portion of the proceeds from the annual Discovering the Secrets of Sleep fundraising dinner also have supported the ASMF. The AASM contributed \$500,000 to the ASMF in 2007 for the establishment of an endowment to support future research efforts. This is in addition to \$360,000 in grant support the AASM already committed to the foundation for 2007. The ASMF also received a recent donation of \$2 million from the American Board of Sleep Medicine for the creation of an endowment, separate from the AASM endowment, for future initiatives.

In August 2007 the ASMF Board of Directors met to assess the foundation's resources, adopt changes to its bylaws, and re-focus its goals. The Board created an Executive Board charged with development of application materials, grant review and management, budget development and fundraising. The members appointed to the Executive Board are:

- Richard Berry, MD, President of the ASMF
- David Bruce, DDS, MD, Treasurer of the ASMF
- Andrew Chesson Jr., MD, Chair, Academic Affairs Committee
- Nancy Collop, MD, AASM Director at Large
- Flavia Consens, MD, Chair, Fellowship Training Committee
- Jason Mateika, PhD, Chair, Research Committee
- Michael Sateia, MD, AASM Member at Large

The Executive Board will support the day-to-day operation of the ASMF and become a resource for strategies and ideas to advance the fields of sleep medicine and sleep research, while the Board of Directors will continue to provide oversight and direction for the ASMF.

At the August meeting the Board of Directors also adopted these new mission and vision statements that will provide direction for future initiatives of the ASMF:

## ASMF MISSION

The mission of the American Sleep Medicine Foundation (ASMF) is to enhance sleep health for all through research, education and humanitarian aid.

## ASMF VISION

The American Sleep Medicine Foundation (ASMF) will continue to be the leading foundation promoting sleep research and education by:

- Supporting the entry of young physicians and scientists into sleep research and academic sleep medicine
- Funding strategic research
- Providing humanitarian aid to sleep centers and sleep patients following natural disasters

The commitment to research that led to the formation of the ASMF nearly a decade ago remains at the heart of the new mission and vision statements. The ASMF aims to provide research scientists with significant funding opportunities for sleep-related investigations targeting critical areas of study that lack a sufficient body of evidence. The research funded by these grants will have a lasting impact on sleep science and clinical practice leading to improvements in sleep health care outcomes.

The ASMF is committed to support the education and training of sleep scientists. A new initiative, the AASM Physician Scientist Training Award, was established in 2007 with a \$1.875 million investment from the AASM, which is independent of the more than \$800,000 the AASM committed to the foundation for other grant opportunities. This program awards one-year grants in the amount of \$75,000 each to support sleep research by physician trainees who have completed or who, by virtue of completing appropriate residency training, are eligible for ACGME sleep medicine fellowships but do not have university faculty appointments. The ASMF has received commitment from the AASM to award up to five AASM Physician Scientist Training Awards annually for the next five years.

The mission and vision statements also emphasize that the ASMF is committed to offering assistance to sleep disorders centers and patients when natural disasters strike. In 2005 the ASMF united the sleep community to provide disaster relief to the Gulf Coast region in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. This critical assistance helped sleep-medicine providers repair damaged facilities and provided replacement equipment for sleep disorders patients who were in need. More than 100 AASM members, other concerned individuals and generous companies donated nearly \$47,000 and more than 1,300 pieces of therapeutic equipment in support of this effort.

By developing new programs and grant opportunities, the ASMF Board of Directors will expand ASMF investment in the future of sleep research and education. We encourage all interested parties to visit the new ASMF Web site at [www.discoverssleep.org](http://www.discoverssleep.org). The site contains details and updates about previous ASMF grants, along with requirements and applications for current opportunities. A secure online system also makes it easy for you to support the work of the ASMF by making a tax-deductible, financial contribution. Visit [www.discoverssleep.org](http://www.discoverssleep.org) today to learn more about the ASMF and how you can be involved in its initiatives.

The ASMF Board of Directors appreciates the support of AASM members and looks forward to expanding the role of the ASMF as the leading foundation promoting sleep research and education.

## REFERENCES

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