One Mind - IMHRO
Opening up discussions on brain health

Garen Staglin, Co-founder and Chairman of One Mind and Co-founder, President and Trustee of IMHRO/One Mind Institute, emails Research Features to tell the story of how his organisations are opening up discussion on brain health to combat stigma and provide support.

How would you describe your role and responsibilities at One Mind and IMHRO? Motivated by the psychotic break of our son, Brandon, my wife Shari and I co-founded the International Mental Health Research Organization 22 years ago. In 2011, with former Congresswoman Patrick Kennedy, we founded One Mind for Research to accelerate treatments and cures for all brain disorders. I serve as Chairman of both organisations, and I directly interact with scientists and leaders of research organisations as well as donors globally.

Your family has shared personal experiences in order to help others and raise awareness. How important do you feel it is to keep the mental health conversation flowing? As public advocates for brain health, we are constantly called on by parents and advocates to find available psychiatric care, and to support awareness programmes. We host an annual One Mind Summit to bring neuroscientists together to break down the “silos” of research, and foster collaborations. We also host an annual Music Festival for Brain Health which brings more than 500 people together to learn about the latest breakthroughs in neuroscience and celebrate and support research. We also co-founded Bring Change 2 Mind and produced a PSA (public service announcement) to reduce stigma. Our social media presence is another active way we promote dialogue and awareness.

Each year, IMHRO offers Rising Star Awards of up to $250,000 for research to improve understanding and find therapies for mental illness. Your finalists for this year have now been notified, are you able to tell us anything about them and their projects? IMHRO’s Scientific Advisory Board has chosen Drs Mazen Kheirbek, PhD, and Mary
The IMHRO Rising Star awards encourage the community of researchers to direct their efforts toward translational science while supporting the research of emerging leaders in the field. They also fill a critical gap of support as federal funds dedicated to research continue to decline. The 2016 Rising Star Award winners were selected with the assistance and recommendations of the IMHRO scientific advisory board, which includes ten of the leading brain scientists in the world, noted for their pioneering research in their respective fields. Each Rising Star recipient will receive $250,000 to fund research for his or her studies.

One of your recent projects, Partners for StrongMinds, has a mission ‘to transform the way that psychosis is detected, treated and understood in the United States’. What are their strategies for improving psychosis health care? Their strategies are demonstrated in two important education projects:

- Using youth in videos, blogs, and social media to explain what psychosis is, why early intervention can be helpful, and what the warning signs are.
- Partnering with the Northwell Health Early Treatment Program to produce a zip-code targeted social media campaign which serves up ads when “terms” suggesting psychosis are searched for so that treatment can then be provided. The goal is to dramatically reduce the time of untreated psychosis.

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What are IMHRO and One Mind’s future goals?

- Continue to push “open science” and eliminate the silos of research that retard progress in all aspects of neuroscience research.
- Continue to support public/private partnerships that bring researchers, pharma, and the FDA into large-scale studies that have scale and outcomes-based metrics for success.
- Continue to bring new sources of private philanthropy to brain disease research.
- Launch of global leadership initiative to bring “gold standards” of behavior to corporations, academic institutions, and governments for people with brain diseases – much like exists for cancer through the CEO Cancer Roundtable.
- Explore the possibility of a “social impact” bond to fund brain research on a global level issued by either the US Treasury or the World Bank.
- Within the field of mental health research, what do you hope to see achieved in your lifetime?

- Small molecule therapies directed to genetic mutations for all psychiatric disorders.
- Perfecting innovative therapies that capitalise on brain plasticity.
- Digital health advances and mobile monitoring that accurately predicts disease progression and therapeutic effectiveness.
- What are your proudest achievements to date for One Mind and IMHRO? Many accomplishments come to mind, for instance, raising more than $250 Million in direct and “leveraged” funds for research. Also, we have funded 24 Rising Stars who have gone on to greatness. One, Josh Gordon, was just named the new Director of NIMH. Another achievement would be One Mind’s Project Gemini, a global study for TBI and PTSD that has already discovered a biomarker which is under review for FDA approval in record time. I am also particularly proud of the hope and awareness that we have brought to the thousands of people who suffer from a brain disease, as well as the slow but steady reduction in stigma.

One Mind has partnered with a pioneering online patient community builder, PatientsLikeMe. What do you think this could help future clinicians? Digital health and mobile monitoring hold the promise of using data on sleep, social interaction, voice tones, blood pressure, and other signs, in order to give data on disease progression and therapeutic effectiveness. We expect to use these capabilities in a study involving 17 counties in CA, as well as the 100,000-person cohort being launched at UCLA for depression.

What is One Mind’s Project Gemini?

One Mind’s Project Gemini is a global study for traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) that has already discovered a biomarker which is under review for FDA approval in record time. I am also particularly proud of the hope and awareness that we have brought to the thousands of people who suffer from a brain disease, as well as the slow but steady reduction in stigma.