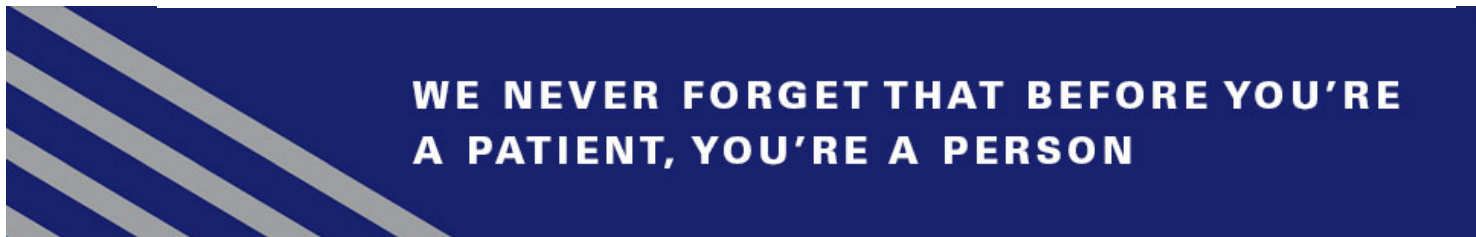




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## Keeping a Mission in Mind

### \$1.2 Million Foundation Grant Creates Unique Neuroscience Fellowship that Honors Founder's Legacy



Sidney R. Baer, Jr., lived a lifetime with major mental illness. Despite facing overwhelming challenges during a 64-year battle with schizophrenia, he found incredible financial success and chose to use that success to help others like him who struggled. In 1999, he established the Sidney R. Baer, Jr. Foundation, which supports mental health care programs, education for those with mental illness, and basic and clinical research in mental illness. "It's really important for people to understand that somebody, who could be as troubled as Sidney was, could also do something so fabulous as to help mankind," says George Handran, co-trustee of the foundation.

The Sidney R. Baer, Jr. Foundation is hoping to help change the way clinicians are trained to manage complex mental health cases so that patients like Baer, Jr. receive proper care. The foundation recently provided a five-year, \$1.2 million grant to create the Sidney R. Baer, Jr. Fellowship in Clinical Neurosciences at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center. The program is a joint effort between the neurology and psychiatry departments at BIDMC to ultimately integrate faculty across Harvard Medical School and train the next generation of research and clinical leaders in this new field. "This is the single most important application we have ever received," Handran says. "This fellowship is the first of its kind in the world. There is nothing more important that we can do than fund this idea to integrate psychiatry and neurology and help the bigger picture of treating mental illness."

A member of a well-known mid-western family who founded the Stix Baer & Fuller department store chain, Baer, Jr. suffered his first schizophrenic break in 1938 and battled the disease, stereotypes, and lack of appropriate health care until his death in 2002. During that time, he was dismissed from Yale University, discharged from the Army, and disowned by his family before living the rest of his life as a recluse in the Copley Plaza Hotel. "He was very bright and talented," Handran

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says. "He was clever in everything he did. If he had been supported and he had received medication earlier, I think he could have easily finished college and taken over the company."

The fellowship is based on the idea that symptoms of neurological and psychiatric diseases, while traditionally considered separate in modern medicine, both result from changes in brain networks and synapses, the connections between brain cells; and that successful care for patients demands a multidisciplinary approach that integrates these disciplines. "The more we learn about psychiatric and neurologic disorders, we realize that we are dealing with disorders of the same fundamental biology and we should be working closer together," says Alvaro Pascual-Leone, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Berenson-Allen Center for Noninvasive Brain Stimulation and author of the unique grant proposal to the foundation. "The bridge between psychiatry and neurology needs to be established and that requires training. The idea behind this fellowship is to empower people to gain that knowledge."

The grant supports a three-year fellowship for five post-doctoral fellows with neurology or psychiatry training, and will include both clinical and research mentoring and education. Also, each year an international leader in neurology and psychiatry will be invited to BIDMC as the Sidney R. Baer, Jr. Visiting Professor and share the latest advances in the field. "My hope is that these fellows can eventually go into practice and provide aid to somebody who is suffering the way Sidney was," Handran says.

Two fellows are already in place, and more than 40 candidates applied for the additional positions, which start in June. "I am very grateful that the Sidney R. Baer, Jr. Foundation, and specifically George Handran, saw the potential of this vision and understood the need to give these fellows enough time to develop," Pascual-Leone says. "With this grant, we are able to create a new way to bridge these fields and ultimately benefit all patients."

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