Neurology has a plan for lifelong brain health.

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Sales of cognitive health supplements in the United States reached $366 million last year\(^1\) and rose to $7.7 billion\(^2\) globally. Despite the questionable merits\(^3\) and potential harm\(^4,5,6\) of such products, these figures reflect a growing consumer interest in brain health, which most recently is thought to be fueled by the COVID-19 pandemic, concerns over long COVID, and public mistrust in traditional medicine. Accordingly, a need exists for unbiased scientific information shared with neurologic patients and the public in an organized, effective, and comprehensive manner.

While brain health is crucial to optimal individual health and well-being throughout life and key to societal advancement, it is a complex construct. Its intricacy calls for a unified, structured approach by highly trained professionals who have the experience and expertise to serve as stewards of brain health, as well as to educate, advocate, and provide care to ensure its deliberate application. Despite a growing number of local, national, and global brain health initiatives to promote disease prevention and advance research, no singular medical or allied profession has been able to curate “whole brain health.” We believe neurology is the ideal profession, coordinated through the American Academy of Neurology (AAN), to lead this effort.

Neurologists are uniquely positioned to address this mounting call to action to advance the newly evolving field of preventive neurology\(^7\) that identifies individuals at high risk for neurologic diseases; to offer management strategies to mitigate disease emergence or progression; and to present an evidence-based approach to maintaining optimal brain health.

Since it was established in 1948, the AAN demonstrated its commitment to brain health through its public outreach. Since 2006, *Brain & Life*\(^8\) magazine has provided neurologist-reviewed information to patients, caregivers, and the public about brain diseases and brain health and engaged nearly 100 celebrities, such as Michael J. Fox,\(^9\) Gloria Estefan,\(^10\) Sharon Stone,\(^11\) and Renee Zellweger,\(^12\) to share their personal stories about the effects of brain disease or how they support brain health. Along with its suite of products—the website *BrainandLife.org*,\(^13\) *Brain & Life*\(^8\) en Español,\(^14\) the *Brain & Life* Books series,\(^15\) and the *Brain & Life* Podcast\(^16\)—these resources will reach an estimated 2 million people worldwide in 2022.

In 2021, the AAN’s Committee on Public Engagement presented a strategic plan prioritizing brain health as a key aspect of public engagement and launched the AAN’s Brain Health Initiative. Because of widespread demand for an organized, comprehensive, and enduring strategy, the AAN developed a Brain Health Platform to share its vision, strategy, and action plan. The platform is organized into three pillars: science, patient care, and public engagement/policy. Its goals are to accelerate scientific discovery in brain health through cross-disciplinary collaboration; optimize brain health through integration of preventive care practices; and enhance public and patient engagement to advance brain health public policy.

To advance the initiative and validate the platform, the AAN Brain Health Summit on September 15, 2022, in Washington, DC, will convene leading multidisciplinary experts, key public and private sector stakeholders, and policymakers in the United States. This Summit will shape the future of care and develop a collaborative approach to ensure brain health as a key component of the overall health of...
individuals and communities. Participants will define brain health and its multiple determinants, review key elements of brain health over a lifespan (figure), and outline current and future needs for research, education, practice, and advocacy efforts to achieve the envisioned future of optimal brain health for all.

As a convener, the AAN will synchronize, organize, and formalize brain health communications for the benefit of the public and patients with neurologic disorders. Upon the Summit’s conclusion, an action plan will outline the AAN’s strategy, objectives, and tactics regarding brain health as a central doctrine and will become the road map for incorporating brain health into neurologic practice and developing an integrated alliance with brain health care providers in other fields.

Figure

Title: Brain Health Across a Lifetime— the AAN Action Plan

Legend: The American Academy of Neurology’s action plan to achieve the future of optimal brain health spans across a lifetime. The action is focused on individual life epochs, including fetal and childhood development, adolescence, youth, adulthood, and maturity/senescence. Each one is centered around a key overarching goal toward achieving lifelong optimal brain health. Each individual life epoch reflects broadly on the various types of potential brain insults, recurrent exposures, and gene-environment interactions, as well as unique prevention and intervention strategies necessary and possible to ensure optimal brain health. Abbreviations: QOL – quality of life.

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