

## The Mayday Fund Annual Report 2015



### Trustees Letter

#### *In Praise of Nimble*

From 2014 until May 2016, we engaged in a review of the mission and goals of The MAYDAY Fund from the perspective of a maturing pain field that is expanding its research and treatments into arenas inconceivable in the early 1990s. It has been a careful process, where we have balanced loyalty to our grant-making over the last 23 years with our intent to see pain be better understood and treated

We have emerged with a new set of grant-making targets that we believe will help us to focus MAYDAY initiatives and will open new opportunities to further both the science and the clinical care of pain. We continue to appreciate that pain is present from infancy to old age and so envision that our future grant-making will span the life cycle.

As our work with MAYDAY has evolved, we have been challenged to be nimble, to listen to new ideas and strategies, and to be willing to take risks as suggested by the common advice that “if everything you do succeeds, you are not taking enough risk.” We continually question our assumptions and recast our grant-making targets, which presently are as follows:

#### **Research Bench to Bedside**

The need to discover better ways to treat pain leads MAYDAY to seek projects that hold the promise of innovative clinical applications. We look to seed translational research to expand the scope and reach of pain treatments.

#### **Pain Thermometer**

The lack of objective measurements of pain continues to be a confounding issue for appropriate treatment interventions. Discovering and testing measurable and reliable scientific indicators for pain will likely lead the pain field toward a future of more effective therapies and more personalized medicine overall.

#### **Knowledge & Networks**

Education and professional learning are key to closing the gap between knowledge and practice. MAYDAY seeks collaborative and scalable projects that improve both professional practice and lay knowledge. These projects may range from curriculum development to advocacy training to convening thought leaders.

#### **Alternative Strategies & Therapies**

Non-opioid therapeutic research and models of clinical care have emerged in recent years as a target where MAYDAY’s scale of grant-making might make a meaningful contribution.

One of the reasons we added searching for a ‘pain thermometer’ is our realization that as long as a subjective self-report is the standard for how pain is identified and assessed, there may be many who are unable to rate their pain and so risk being undertreated, or not treated at all. At the same time, we learned from clinicians that many patients have a difficult time with the scales that are in

current use. Discovering some objective and reliable indicators of pain will likely address this dilemma.

Each of these targets addresses our mission to alleviate the incidence, degree and consequence of human physical pain.

The overview of 2015 grants that follows offers a snapshot of where our grant-making is and also indications of how the types of work the Fund supports fit into the new targets. From fMRI work to discover a complex pain signal, to pairing pharmacists with doctors to explain prescriptions at the time they are written, to the potential that Virtual Reality Therapy might offer as a new tool in clinical care – we have taken the challenge to be nimble seriously.

Perhaps the most nimble aspect of our work is a consistent focus on the importance of communication. The broad topic of communication has been a part of MAYDAY's work since the very beginning. From public opinion polls on how pain was seen by most Americans in the 1990s to sponsoring YouTube videos and films, the Fund has worked to call attention to the burden that pain imposes and to the challenges it poses in Medicine, Law, Ethics and culture more generally. The MAYDAY Pain & Society Fellows Program has trained 60 pain professionals to speak with the media, the public and policymakers. Their goal is to bring the evidence of their research, clinical skills, and advocacy into public and professional discussions about pain and what it is. We are currently recalibrating this program.

Finally, in 2015, we were excited by the promise of the National Pain Strategy, which was released in March 2016 by the Assistant U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services. This document offer a blueprint for how pain might be addressed more systematically across professions, clinical settings and in the public debate about how it is to be treated. There is currently a Federal Pain Research Agenda under development through the National Institutes of Health. Please join us in following how these initiatives are put into place.

The challenge to be nimble places MAYDAY in a position to offer proofs of concept that the effects of pain are real and adverse to the health of sufferers. We appreciate the care and creativity that our grantees bring to the field. We look forward to seeing where our new targets will take us.

Be Certain to Visit our NEW WEBSITE, [www.maydayfund.org](http://www.maydayfund.org)!

Trustees

Emma X P. Davidson  
Daniel L. Dolgin  
Robert D. C. Meeker  
Caroline N. Sidnam  
Pamela M. Thye

Advisors

Robert A. Cook  
William F. McCalpin

Executive Director

Christina M. Spellman

*May 25, 2016*