



Linda S. Brady, Ph.D.



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Interview with Linda Brady, Ph.D., Fellow Emeritus

Interviewed by Sheila Rauch, Ph.D., ABPP, Scientific Communications Committee Member

Linda Brady, Ph.D., is the Director of the Division of Neuroscience and Basic Behavioral Science at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) where she leads the scientific, programmatic, and administrative basic neuroscience portfolio focused on transforming the basic understanding and treatment of mental health issues. She has been actively involved in ACNP since 1998 when she became a member and was promoted to Fellow in 2008. She has served 50 times on nearly every committee and taskforce, some multiple times, as either a volunteer, member, or Council liaison over these 27 years and has been a key contributor to the many proactive strategic changes that have expanded diversity and equity in ACNP. She served as President-Elect in 2020 and President in 2021 leading ACNP through the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery. She is a regular presenter at the conference including providing several plenary addresses at the annual conference focused on translational neuroscience and key contributions to our growing understanding of mental illness and health, how treatment works and the development of novel biomarkers and treatments.

Dr. Brady completed her Ph.D. in pharmacology at Emory University School of Medicine. She joined the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences to complete her postdoctoral research in behavioral pharmacology and then the NIMH Intramural Research Program where she expanded her research skills to understand the neurobiological effects of opioids, stress, and acute and chronic antidepressant drugs on gene expression in brain in animals. She moved to the NIMH extramural research program in the mid-1990s to serve as a Program Officer directing research grant portfolios in neuropharmacology, drug discovery, biomarker discovery and development, and clinical therapeutics, and then as Director of the Division's scientific research

grant portfolio in basic neuroscience, genetics, drug discovery, technology development, and research training. She has over 70 peer-reviewed publications. For the duration of her career, Dr. Brady has led the field in advancing discovery science, biomarker discovery, and therapeutics discovery and development mental illnesses. She has received multiple NIMH and NIH Director's Awards in recognition of her activities in biomarker development and drug development for mental disorders. Dr. Brady prioritizes the principles of open science through her leadership of several initiatives that encourage the sharing of fundamental scientific developments to speed progress in the field. These efforts include serving as co-chair of the Neuroscience Steering Committee for the Biomarkers Consortium at the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health (FNIH) that focuses on discovery, development, and qualification of biological markers to support drug development, preventive medicine, and medical diagnostics. From 2004-2013, she co-led the Molecular Libraries and Imaging Program, a trans-National Institutes of Health (NIH) Common Fund initiative to provide biomedical researchers access to small organic molecules that can be used as chemical probes to study the functions of genes, cells, and biochemical pathways in health and disease. And since 2020, she has co-led the Accelerating Medicines Partnership® Schizophrenia program, a public-private partnership managed by the FNIH to generate biological and clinical tools to transform the development and testing of new treatments for individuals who are at risk for developing schizophrenia. She is dedicated to supporting foundational research and its translation to advance our understanding of mental illness and its treatment.

The following interview sheds light on Dr. Brady's unique insights and perspectives of ACNP:

What was your position when you joined ACNP and how has your career advanced to your current position?

I was a Program Officer at NIMH in the Division of Neuroscience and Basic Behavioral Science directing the Neuropharmacology and Drug Discovery Program when I became an ACNP member in 1998. As my scientific interests, expertise, and administrative skills grew, NIMH leadership recognized my potential, and I was able to competitively advance to higher level positions and responsibilities – first Branch Chief and then Division Director. During this time, I proactively volunteered for and took on large and complex initiatives, consortia, and public-private partnerships. The experience I gained with these projects enabled me to engage with multiple stakeholders across NIH, academia, industry, the FNIH, and the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and to take on larger roles with the ACNP.

When you joined ACNP, what was your main reason for becoming a member?

I have a neuropharmacology/neuroscience background and was overseeing a research portfolio that focused on neuropharmacology, biomarkers, model systems, and drug discovery – areas that align with the mission of ACNP. The meeting was, and continues to be, a venue to seek out and interact with scientists from academia, industry, and the FDA, and hear cutting edge basic, translational, and clinical science in psychiatric and substance use disorders. It has become my scientific home and one of my favorite meetings.

In your perspective, how has ACNP changed throughout the years?

The breadth of the ACNP science program has grown over the years as the science itself has evolved to become more interdisciplinary, incorporating new tools, technologies, and conceptual advances in understanding of genetic risk, developmental and biological mechanisms, and environment influences on the trajectory of mental illnesses.

The ACNP meeting has grown with a focus on inclusion of diverse trainees, junior and senior investigators from the US and other countries, with more inclusive networking sessions, and a hybrid option that offers flexibility for attendees, and at the same time keeping the meeting size manageable. New venues continue to be added to the program such as Meet the Expert, career development, and networking sessions.

Membership of the College is becoming more diverse with inclusion of under-represented groups across academia, industry, and FDA. And, the ACNP Council has strategically focused efforts on making the College more welcoming and inclusive.

Have you served in any ACNP leadership roles, and if so, what motivated you to do so?

Having the opportunity to deeply engage with the ACNP has been extremely rewarding. I wanted to contribute to the College scientifically and in leadership roles to better understand how to interface and promote the impact of ACNP. I have had the opportunity to serve as a member of nearly every committee and task force – Awards*, Education and Training, Ethics, Liaison*, Membership, Nominating*, Program*, Publications Committees, Annual Meeting, Strategic Planning, URM Mentoring,* and Women's* Task Forces (some multiple times, (*)indicates role as chair or co-chair in addition to member). I had the tremendous honor and privilege to serve as President of ACNP and twice as a member of Council. This was a great experience interacting with Sarah Timm and her team and with ACNP colleagues that have brought their collective expertise and problem-solving strategies to tackle complex issues such as diversity of the membership, size of the College, scientific meeting venues, and fostering the career development of trainees and junior investigators, facing the College in recent years.

What do you foresee to be the main challenges for the field going forward?

A continuing challenge is the translation of basic science findings into insights that transform our understanding of mental illnesses and substance use disorders for early identification and the development of new treatment strategies (pharmacologic, neuromodulation, cognitive behavioral, and their combination) that enable recovery and ultimately prevention of illness.

New ideas from investigators across disciplines (biomedical, bioengineering, information technology), new technologies, new ways of thinking, and ways to foster dialogue and sharing of findings and lessons learned across neuroscience disease areas that will cross-fertilize. As the scientific landscape continues to evolve, as a field, continued investment in the support and mentoring of our young scientists, will enable innovation and new strategies to address challenges that face our field.

Looking back, what have you valued the most about being an ACNP member? What memories stand out about your experiences or your colleagues?

I most value the opportunity to meet with colleagues and expand my network of interactions with junior and senior investigators at the meeting. I enjoy the networking events, and science presented at the plenary sessions, panels, study groups, and poster sessions. Memorable experiences include informal, serendipitous interactions with attendees and colleagues and attending scientific sessions and poster sessions with my husband, son, and daughter who themselves have contributed to have continued to biomedical science and the practice of medicine.

What recommendations would you have for junior members of ACNP?

Embrace opportunities! Volunteer for committees and task forces, participate in networking sessions, seek mentors, ask questions, maintain your passion for science, and talk to your Program Officers at NIH to help you learn about NIH institute research priorities and find NIH and other funding opportunities that align with your scientific ideas and research career development goals.