

## The Mayday Fund Annual Report 2016

### Trustees Letter

*New Website, New Directions, and a Reminder There Is Still A Need To 'Close The Gap Between Knowledge and Practice'*

2016 was a year to calibrate the direction of The MAYDAY Fund's grantmaking. During the process of creating a new website in 2015, we examined the trends in our grantmaking and the field of pain more generally. The grant making targets we agreed upon: Research Bench to Bedside, Pain Thermometer, Knowledge & Networks and Alternative Strategies & Therapies informed our decisions as we made new grants. MAYDAY makes multi-year grants, so a survey of the grants made in 2016 will show the transition from previous years, as well as the impact of the new targets.

Our goal with the website is to make The MAYDAY Fund more visible, accessible, and we believe, more credible to grantees, the philanthropic community and the public who visit. It conveys the seriousness with which we view this work.

This year has been one where we have learned how complex the decision-making process is when a field is in flux. 2016 saw the release of the Center for Disease Control's *Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain* and the National Institutes of Health, Interagency Pain Research Coordinating Committee's *National Pain Strategy*. Both documents placed the person with chronic pain in the center of a debate about the quality and risks of medically caring for pain. Pain, how to study it and how to treat it, thus came into focus as a critical issue in a national debate about how to balance the needs of those in pain with the dangers that opioid medications pose.

Our decisions to support research and the search for a pain thermometer seek to address the need for evidence about how pain affects a person and evidence for new ways to treat the pain. In the arena of knowledge and networks, our goals have been to move the science and best practices of what is known into the field more broadly, either through training or consensus statements. Alternative Strategies & Therapies is one arena of our grantmaking where we are just beginning to understand where a meaningful contribution might be made.

Among our multi-year grants, we have one ongoing project, regarding needle pain in children, which crosses almost all of our categories. And in sponsoring a meeting about the use of Virtual Reality applications to care for pain we entered a world where the promise of technology meets the challenge of grappling with how variable pain is at the level of the individual suffering.

As we pursue the work of the Fund, we continue to seek projects that address pain across the lifespan – pain in a child, adolescent, adult, or senior is worthy of study and consideration. MAYDAY has consistently been interested in the challenges posed by pain at all stages of the life span and this continues to be a goal. We also remain interested in understanding how to best serve the needs of those in pain who have difficulties communicating, or giving a report of their pain.

Among the challenges that MAYDAY has engaged is the need on the part of the general public to understand that caring for pain is both possible and an important part of medicine and health care. Towards the end of 2016, we began to think how about best to re-launch the Mayday Pain & Society Fellowship Program. The goal of this program is to equip researchers and clinicians,

whose work is evidence-based, with the skills needed to communicate effectively with the public. For a person seeking information about a painful condition or strategies to address it, the amount of information might easily become overwhelming and difficult to sort through. The Fellowship program will enable those researchers and clinicians who participate to become part of the public debate as they address issues that are often clouded by emotion and societal pressures.

On the new website, we explain one of the two principles that guide our decisions, “it is necessary to close the gap between knowledge and practice,” by saying that “excellent research has already led to a wealth of information about the treatment of pain, but existing knowledge still needs to be effectively used.” In 2016 we were reminded of how important this principle is. In the midst of heated cultural debates about pain and medications, we were aware of how critical it is that science inform decision-making.

In 2017 we continue to pursue grantmaking targets that we hope will contribute to the field. We look forward to learning more through the work of our grantees and to discover projects that will have an impact in both science and clinical care. And, as is true in most of the work of the Fund, we continue to seek nimble solutions to advancing the field of pain.

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