

# Fueling and Funding Equitable Mental Health Innovation: Pillar for Brain Capital Building

WEDNESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER, 2023, 15:00 - 16:30 CET



Brain  
Capital  
Alliance



**Co-organised** by the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association, the Brain Capital Alliance and the Baker Institute

**Date:** 11th October 2023

**Moderated by:** Prof. Rym Ayadi, President and Founder, EMEA

**Rapporteur:** Elena Stotts-Lee, Junior Researcher, EMEA

## Background

The effective and equitable provision of mental health care is imperative for fostering global prosperity and overall well-being. Adequate care has the potential to enhance individual quality of life, particularly in times of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The response to deteriorating mental health during the pandemic exposed the limitations of struggling healthcare systems, leaving a substantial portion of the global population without essential support. In many societies, a distressing disparity persists in terms of access to mental health care. This inequality has a spillover effect on the functionality of economies, given the increasing premium placed on brain health and cognitive skills. This phenomenon is encapsulated by the concept of [Brain Capital](#), whereby poor mental health and unequal access to mental health care deteriorate the Brain Capital of a population. Consequently, investing in equitable mental health care and fostering innovation in

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the mental health sector is vital in the pursuit of a healthier, more productive, and resilient society.

On October 11, 2023, the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA) alongside the Brain Capital Alliance and Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy hosted a webinar entitled, "Fueling and Funding Equitable Mental Health Innovation: Pillar for Brain Capital Building." The event brought together an international group of experts across many sectors to have an in-depth discussion on the topic. The webinar was motivated by the recent launch of the [Brain Capital Dashboard](#) at the [Science Summit of the United Nations General Assembly](#) and following the publication of '[The Global Brain Capital Dashboard](#)' from Brookings.

The moderator of the session, Professor Rym Ayadi, President and Founder of EMEA, opened the event by explaining how mental health is intrinsic to the concept of Brain Capital. Brain Capital represents, at an individual and collective level, a complex capital stock of brain health and brain skills. It accumulates and deteriorates across the lifespan, driven by policy and a wide range of environmental factors. The presence of mental health disorders, such as bipolar disorder, anxiety, and depression, has a large social, emotional, and economic cost for communities and is detrimental to Brain Capital. As a result, there must be fair opportunities for individuals to achieve their highest level of mental well-being. Eliminating barriers to mental health care access such as discrimination, stigma, high fees, and scarcity of services is paramount. There is a need for innovation in the mental health care space that is equitably distributed to preserve the Brain Capital of the population.

Professor Ayadi then introduced the speakers:

- Dr. Harris Eyre - Co-founder of Brain Capital Alliance, Fellow at Baker Institute, Senior Fellow at Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute
- Steve Carnevale - California Mental Health Commissioner
- Tina Hjortlund - Senior Director, Head of Global Public Affairs and D&I Officer, Lundbeck
- Dr. Fadi Maalouf - Professor and Chair of Psychiatry, American University of Beirut
- Dr. Facundo Manes - President of the Committee on Science, Innovation, and Technology of the Argentine Parliament

And the discussants:

- Dr. Marina Tolou-Shams - Kilroy Realty Professor of Psychiatry and Vice Chair for Community Engagement, Outreach and Advocacy, UCSF Psychiatry
- Marta Sanchez Bret - Cluster Manager, Cluster Salut Mental Catalunya
- Dr. Luz Garcini - Assistant Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences, Rice University
- Dan Mannix - Advisor & Investor, Brain Capital

## **Summary of the Discussion**

Dr. Harris Eyre built on the contribution of Prof. Ayadi discussing the scope of Brain Capital in the mental health sphere and offering policy recommendations on the subject. Dr Eyre emphasized that the global brain capital is under threat due to various challenges such as chronic stress, social isolation, and disinformation, leading to mental health and neurological issues. Solutions to mitigate these issues must extend beyond health policy into areas such as education, environmental management, and workplace policies. As it stands, there is a Brain Capital gap forming where some individuals are being left behind because of a lack of the requisite brain health and skills. This gap is exacerbated by a worldwide shortage of mental health clinicians and physical and digital health centers. A comprehensive approach to closing these gaps, including policy tools such as the Brain Capital concept, is therefore urgently necessary.

The next presentation was given by Steve Carnevale, who is seeking to enhance equity in care as an appointee to the Californian Mental Health Commission. In the United States and many other countries, there is a significant equity gap between the public and private sectors in mental health services. One way to address this disparity would be to bring the private and public sectors together to collaborate and innovate. As of now, Mr. Carnevale noted, that there is a separation between mental health care and healthcare that has contributed to inequities in treatment as mental health issues are often not treated with the same urgency as physical health issues. Modernizing mental health systems will require governments to recognize existing systemic issues and social determinants of health and to promote equity in the provision of care.

The following speaker, Tina Hjortlund from Lundbeck, placed further emphasis on the power of public-private partnerships for fueling and funding equitable mental health care. Ms. Hjortlund gave the example of a public-private partnership in Denmark called Lighthouse Life Sciences. It was established post-COVID-19 to aid in growth recovery for small and medium-sized companies to promote equity in health. The partnership brings together companies, start-ups, pension funds, research entities, regional and municipal governments, and other relevant stakeholders. Together they work towards fostering innovation that improves health and health equity while strengthening economic growth and positioning Denmark as an international leader in life sciences.

The barriers to creating equitable mental health care systems differ between contexts. Dr. Fadi Maalouf offered insight into some of the main mental health challenges in the Middle East. One of the key issues that Dr. Maalouf highlighted was the prevalence of “toxic stress,” which comes as a result of many ongoing conflicts in the region. Toxic stress has a profound effect on brain development, particularly in

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children. Unfortunately, it is difficult for many people in the Middle East to receive care for toxic stress and other mental health struggles due to the lack of availability and affordability of mental health services. Government funding for mental health care in the region is quite limited, with only 2% of health budgets allocated to mental health services. This creates a treatment gap. In Lebanon, for example, Dr. Maalouf shared that 94% of children and adolescents in need of mental health assistance do not receive the necessary care. Addressing these gaps requires further investment in mental health care infrastructure and more preventative interventions in schools and communities.

In the final speech, Dr. Facundo Manes discussed the critical connection between science, public policy, and human development. Using science-driven decision-making has great potential for shaping public policies, particularly in areas related to behavioral patterns, poverty, and cognitive development. The scientific community has shown that poverty consumes cognitive resources and leads to developmental delays in language and communication skills. Dr. Manes suggested that early childhood development intervention programs could be used to address the psychological and nutritional needs of children living in poverty. These programs could improve cognitive and social-emotional skills, and ultimately reduce inequality and improve long-term outcomes for children.

Following the round of presentations, Prof. Ayadi called on the discussants to share their insights and respond to the speeches given.

Marta Sánchez Bret presented the Mental Health Cluster in Catalonia which seeks to foster innovation in mental health, neuroscience, and aging. The cluster garners both public and private funding to support projects that benefit patients, society, and the economy while promoting equity and inclusivity. These projects aim to improve the overall bio-psycho-social factors for users and are conducted with a user-centric approach.

Dr. Marina Tolou-Shams highlighted four key pillars for equity in mental health: data tracking, workforce diversity, equity dashboards, and transparent AI. Building equity under this model involves “participatory co-design methods” where policy and innovation are co-designed from the ground up. Dr. Tolou-Shams shared an example of working with young people who have experienced the foster care system to create an app that provides mental health resources, navigator services, and clinical support. This kind of collaboration ensures that the community actively participates in the development of solutions, ultimately leading to more equitable and inclusive innovations.

Dr. Luz Garcini underscored the importance of making mental health services more equitable and accessible by addressing several different topics. Echoing the contribution of Steve Carnevale, Dr. Garcini stressed the necessity to treat mental

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health care as equally important as physical healthcare. This must be accompanied by an expansion of the mental health workforce. Additionally, research and treatment in the mental health space should enable community-engaged science, adapt interventions for diverse communities, and co-create knowledge equitably and inclusively. Dr. Garcini acknowledged that technology has the potential to improve mental health but cautioned against creating and widening existing gaps, particularly in communities without access to or trust in technology. Dr. Garcini concluded by stating that a key tenant of mental health equity is empowering marginalized communities to stand up against systems of marginalization that harm their mental health and advocating for their rights and well-being.

Dan Mannix opened by emphasizing the need for public-private partnerships in the brain health space. State-driven initiatives are overtasked in dealing with society's mental health challenges. More active involvement with asset managers will offer a greater supply of funds to craft innovative solutions. Mr. Mannix added that the Brain Capital concept transforms the discussion from mental health and mental illness into a socioeconomic concept. From a socioeconomic perspective, the current trajectory of mental health is unsustainable. There is a lot of work to be done to increase the efficacy of investments in mental health and to ensure solutions reach both developed and less wealthy nations.

The speakers and discussants of this event provided a wide range of perspectives on the challenges and potential innovations in the mental health care sphere. From public-private partnerships to technological advancements to community-led research and treatment, there were many suggestions for how to pursue a more equitable system. Implementing these strategies and inserting a narrative of the importance of equity in mental health is critical for boosting Brain Capital and promoting well-being in society.

## Speaker biographies



**Prof. Rym Ayadi**

President and Founder, Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association

Professor Rym Ayadi is the Founder and President of the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA). She is Founder and Director of the Euro-Mediterranean and African Network for Economic Studies (EMANES). She is Senior Advisor at the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS); Professor at the Bayes Business School, City University of London; and Member of the Centre for Banking Research (CBR); Academic member and Chair (2018-present) of the European Banking Authority – Banking Stakeholders Group (EBA- BSG). She is also Associated Scholar at the Centre for Relationship Banking and Economics (CERBE) at LUMSA University in Rome.



**Dr. Harris Eyre**

PhD, Fellow in Brain Health at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy and Senior Fellow for Brain Capital with the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

Originally from rural Australia, Harris Eyre MD PhD is a global physician-executive and neuroscientist focused on advancing the field of brain capital. He is lead of the Brain Capital Alliance and co-lead of the OECD Neuroscience-inspired Policy Initiative. He is Fellow with the Baker Institute for Public Policy and Senior Fellow with the Meadows Mental Health Policy Initiative. He has provided senior executive services to dozens of brain technology start-ups. He has published papers journals such as Neuron and Chief Finance International. He is an advisor the Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association and the Texas Medical Center Innovation Institute. Harris maintains adjunct roles with the Global Brain Health Institute, Baylor College of Medicine, Deakin University, the Latin American Brain Health Institute and the University of Texas Health Sciences Center at Houston.





**Steve Carnevale**  
California Mental Health Commissioner

Steve is a successful entrepreneur, founding businesses including the University of Michigan's Center for Entrepreneurship; the UCSF Dyslexia Center, and Point Cypress Ventures. He is a Commissioner of the California Mental Health Commission. His current focus on Brain Capital explores how biological neuroscience can unlock the potential of companies and countries.



**Tina Hjortlund**  
Senior Director, Head of Global Public Affairs and D&I Officer, Lundbeck

Tina Hjortlund is a communication professional with deep communication, business and leadership experience. She has a proven track record within reputation, public affairs, corporate branding, issues management, corporate and strategy communication. Today, she is the head of Global Public Affairs at Lundbeck, a global pharmaceutical company specialized in brain diseases.



**Dr. Fadi Maalouf**  
Professor and Chair of Psychiatry, American University of Beirut

Dr. Fadi Maalouf is a Professor of Clinical Psychiatry and Chairperson of the Department of Psychiatry at the American University of Beirut. Dr. Maalouf also holds an adjunct faculty appointment at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Maalouf's research interest is in the areas of epidemiology of childhood psychiatric disorders and specifically emotional disorders and in school-based youth mental health interventions that aim at bridging the treatment gap in this population.



**Dr. Facundo Manes**

President of the Committee on Science, Innovation and Technology of the Argentine Parliament

Dr. Facundo Manes is a globally renowned neurologist and neuroscientist with a broad academic and professional background. For the last two decades, he served as a consultant in Neurology and Neuropsychology at the University of Cambridge's Medical Research Council Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, and he is a current member of the Institute of Cognitive and Translational Neuroscience within the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET) of Argentina.



**Dr. Marina Tolou-Shams**

Kilroy Realty Professor of Psychiatry and Vice Chair for Community Engagement, Outreach and Advocacy, UCSF Psychiatry

Dr. Tolou-Shams is the Kilroy Realty Professor of Psychiatry and Vice Chair of Community Engagement, Outreach and Advocacy in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences (DPBS) at UCSF. She is also Deputy Vice Chair for Research in the DPBS at Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital (ZSFG). From 2015-2022, she served as Director of the UCSF Division of Infant, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (ICAP).



**Marta Sanchez Bret**

Cluster Manager, Cluster Salut Mental Catalunya

Marta has more than years of executive experience in multiple sectors of activity and over the last 10 years has worked in developing public & private initiatives in the Health Sector as in her role as Cluster Manager. The Mental Health Cluster is a non-profit organization based in Barcelona that works to generate an ecosystem that dynamises the sectors of mental health, neurosciences and ageing.



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### **Dr. Luz Garcini**

Assistant Professor, Department of Psychological Sciences, Rice University

Dr. Luz Maria Garcini, is a Baker Institute Rice faculty scholar and an assistant professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences at Rice University. Garcini's research, community, advocacy and policy work focus on identifying, understanding and addressing the health needs of historically marginalized immigrant communities from a biobehavioral and sociocultural perspective.



### **Dan Mannix**

Advisor & Investor, Brain Capital

Dan was formerly the CEO of \$25bn asset manager RWC Partners. He is now working as an advisor and investor in the Brain Capital sector supporting the development of a socio-economic and investment ecosystem that will drive innovation in relation to brain health. He is an experienced angel investor, Board Director and corporate leader with a passion for improving the health of our brains.