Brain health, in its bold era.

The science without the dissertation, the policy without the jargon, and the people turning both into action - starting with a send-off from a woman who never asked permission.



Blondie VIA 360 MAGAZINE

OUR VISION: A BRAIN CENTRIC APPROACH TO WOMEN'S HEALTH

> *"My obsession was actually to just do it and everything else was secondary." - Debbie Harry*

This is what doing it looks like. Women asking the necessary questions, funding and doing the groundbreaking research, demanding answers, and making sex-based differences a keystone of the conversation. We lead, and we bring our people with us: researchers, friends, partners, sons, and the men who know this matters to them too. We come at the system from the inside out.

Men make up about 72% of Congress. If we want the science funded, we need guys in the band too. We have some great ones at the helm, so we are also tackling the system from the outside in too.

What to walk away with

Women are ⅔ of Alzheimer's patients and get a sliver of the research money. This issue: the lunch that leveled us up, the study your donations just funded, a 40-0 step in Washington, and five habits to start tonight.

Brain Bite

If you read nothing else

CLICK THE ARROW TO TAKE ACTION

01 ↗ WE PASSED $50K
The campaign is heading toward $100K. Thank you. Support Now

02 ↗ A POLICY STEP FORWARD
The ASAP Act advanced in committee. Not law yet - the next funding opportunity.

03 ↗ LINKED TIPS + CENTER FOR BRAINHEALTH SIGN UP
Attached tips + a Center for BrainHealth cohort coming next week.

04 ↗ UNRAVELLED · OCT 23
Join me Friday at 7:30 PM at Miller Theatre, NYC.

05 ↗ JOIN THE BOOK CLUB
First read: Slow Dancing with a Stranger, the NYT bestseller by Meryl Comer, Emmy Award-winning reporter. Sign up.

Our promise to you

Welcome to The Big Bold Beautiful Brain a quarterly publication from The Beautiful Brain. This is where I bring you the brain-health stories worth your time: the science without the dissertation, the policy without the jargon, and the people turning both into action.

We'll talk about women's brain health as something that matters now, not only decades from now.

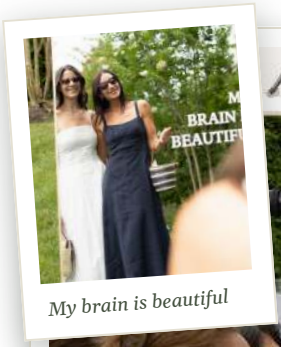
Expect a clear read on what researchers are asking, who is moving the work forward, what still needs funding, and the "so what" for your own life. There will be candid conversations, useful ideas, and ways to get involved, with a lot of joy along the way.

No junk. No miracle claims. Just smart company, honest questions, and a belief that together we can change what happens next.

The 1st Beautiful Brain Lunch

WATCH THE RECAP

We learned, laughed, cried, and left knowing it's time to level up the 3 percent of funding that goes to women's brain health



My brain is beautiful

Meredith with Patricia Reed, Matriark & Claudia Romo Edelman, Sotol Romo

Applause for the need to find out why ⅔ of Alzheimer's patients are women

BEAUTIFUL BRAIN BABES AROUND THE TABLE
BY HAMPTONS GIFTS AND EVENTS







LAUGHTER AND JOY FROM BEING TOGETHER · A FEW BEAUTIFUL BRAINIACS

Catherine Patterson, **UsAgainstAlzheimer's**, Jenna Bussman Weiss, **Tesser Capital**, Adriana Biasi, **Braga Biasi Design**, Carla Rae Prober, **Carlarae Designs**, Christina Galesi, **Sotheby's International Realty**, Julia Zingaro, Meredith Burns, **The Beautiful Brain**, Katherine Forse, Dr. Claire Clelland, **UCSF**, Tracy Delorio, Valerie Estess, **Project ALS**, Andrea Grover, **Guild Hall**, Sabrina Mallick, **Sunset Ventures**, Katy Brodsky Falco, **Foundation for Women's Health** - Names not in photo order

Beautiful Brain Luncheon photos courtesy of Ana Gambuto

You helped move the science forward



$85K raised

OF $100K · **$15K TO GO**

FULLY FUNDS THE STUDY · THEN: THE POLICY GOALS

Dr. Clelland's Delivery Mapping Study



Dr. Claire Clelland AT THE BEAUTIFUL BRAIN LUNCH



George Vradenburg AT THE BEAUTIFUL BRAIN LUNCH

Here's why Dr. Clelland's study matters: CRISPR is the tool that could let us edit out the genetic causes of ALS, FTD, and Alzheimer's - and her lab is doing exactly that in patient cells. What stands between the lab and your doctor's office is delivery: reaching the brain and spinal cord safely. Her study maps the way. **This brief explains the goals**

BRAIN SCIENCE IN THE NEWS - AND HOW IT MATTERS

Three studies worth your attention - what they found, and what they mean for you.

01 ↗ **Biomarkers Count in Midlife**

Some Alzheimer's-related changes may begin decades before symptoms. The study - JAMA Neurology, 2015. **SO WHAT?** Midlife is a window to pay attention to brain health. The five tips from Dr. Chapman's Center for BrainHealth - a few pages on - are for now, not someday. No marker predicts your future.

02 ↗ **Menopause can make us vulnerable**

In 43 cognitively normal women ages 40-60, brain glucose metabolism was lower in Alzheimer's-vulnerable regions during and after the menopause transition. The study - PLOS One. **SO WHAT?** Women's midlife health is brain health. We need research designed around women, not one-size-fits-all assumptions. This small study cannot predict your future.

03 ↗ **The power of proteins**

Thank you to the Ann S. Bowers Women's Brain Health Initiative (@bowers_wbhi) for sharing this study: menopause-related blood-protein patterns were linked to less favorable cognitive outcomes later in life. The study - Nature Medicine, 2026. **SO WHAT?** These blood signals give researchers clues that could one day help flag risk sooner. For now, they are associations, not a test for you or proof of cause.

Sources: Clelland Lab · Midlife biomarkers · Mosconi study · Nature Medicine study

A step forward in Washington

40-0 THE HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE VOTE TO ADVANCE A REVISED ASAP ACT (H.R. 6130), SEPTEMBER 16

A big week for Alzheimer's early detection. The CHANGE Act alongside the ASAP Act (H.R. 6130) - early detection from both ends: **1)** cognitive screening in every Medicare annual wellness visit, and **2)** Medicare coverage for blood-based dementia screening tests. At **UsAgainstAlzheimer's** World Alzheimer's Month reception in DC, families made the case for early detection and care - and the committee listened. Momentum for patients and families. ASAP Act: committee vote | House one-pager

REALITY CHECK

Not law yet. The ASAP Act advanced out of committee; Medicare coverage has not changed. The CHANGE Act is moving on its own in Congress - and its screening goal now rides inside the revised ASAP Act too. If earlier detection becomes available and is right for your family, it can mean more time to plan, get answers, and find support.



Washington / Momentum



Washington / Together

George Vradenburg pictured with Valery Maya (**NHHRI**), Jo Lim (GM, **KNEU Health**), and Emily Tisch Sussman (**She Pivots**). Names not in photo order.



Washington / The Reception

MEREDITH BURNS, VALERY MAYA (**NATIONAL HISPANIC HEALTH INSTITUTE**), JO LIM (**KNEU HEALTH**), ANABELLE TAPIERO (**NORTHGATE GROUP**)



George Vradenburg with Rep. Darin LaHood

IN NYC / UNGA81

The lunch I wish you all could have joined with UsAgainstAlzheimer's and the Center for BrainHealth.



New York / The Group

IN THE PHOTO, LEFT TO RIGHT

Valeria Talve, The Fitizens
Neha Ruch, The Power Pause
Dr. Chapman, Center for BrainHealth
Meryl Comer, Co-Founder of UsAgainstAlzheimer's
Claudia Romo Edelman, We Are All Human
George Vradenburg, Co-Founder of UsAgainstAlzheimer's
Meredith Burns, Beautiful Brain
Lauren Berson Sugarman, Conceive
Rachel Baker, Georgetown Gap Fund
Jean Ann Brock, Highland Homes
Lauren Bush Lauren, FEED
Leah Wiseman Fink, Spark Society



The Whitby / in science we trust



New York / A couple of movement makers

UsAgainstAlzheimer's brought George Vradenburg, Meryl Comer, and Dr. Sandra Bond Chapman of the **Center for BrainHealth** to a small Beautiful Brain lunch in New York. Dr. Chapman was in town to speak on the Brain Health Blueprint panel at Brain Days during UNGA81. We talked science, policy, and how interested women can help move both. I loved how specific it got.

FROM DR. CHAPMAN'S CENTER FOR BRAINHEALTH

What you can do now

The science says the changes behind Alzheimer's start in midlife - and **Dr. Sandra Chapman**'s team at the **Center for BrainHealth** distills protection into five daily habits. They are for now, not someday.

01 ↗ **Guard your sleep**
Aim for at least 7 hours.

02 ↗ **Take brain breaks**
Step away regularly for five minutes.

03 ↗ **Single-task**
Give one priority your full focus.

04 ↗ **Think in new ways**
Try new solutions to a familiar problem.

05 ↗ **Stay connected**
Make time for meaningful connection.

Adapted from the Center for BrainHealth five-tip handout.

"I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept."

- ANGELA DAVIS

Join the cohort

A Beautiful Brain cohort with the Center for BrainHealth and Dr. Sandra Chapman is coming - **sign up here** and we will be in touch with dates and details.

WORTH YOUR TIME

New and Noteworthy

Strategic plans and releases worth your time - the upshot on each, so you don't have to dig.

01 ↗ The women's brain-health session, on demand

The archived Advancing Women's Brain Health session from the 2026 National Alzheimer's Summit. Two-thirds of people living with Alzheimer's are women - this panel (Emily Jacobs, Judy Pa, and more, moderated by HealthyWomen's Beth Battaglino) digs into why risk differs across a lifetime and what research has to do next. WATCH THE SESSION >

02 ↗ A $20B National Strategy to Close the Women's Health Gap

SWHR, ACOG, and the Women First Research Coalition built a shared framework for a $20 billion, 10-year federal investment in women's health - launched on Capitol Hill July 15, already backed by 67+ endorsing organizations. Bipartisan, needs-based, and the biggest coordinated ask women's health has seen. READ THE STRATEGY >

03 ↗ The Coverage and Reimbursement Roadmap

From the **Milken Institute**: why promising women's-health innovations stall not for lack of science but for lack of a path to payment. Nine structural barriers, and a plain guide to the three coverage pathways - self-pay, commercial payer, and public programs - with when to choose which. EXPLORE THE ROADMAP >

04 ↗ The Sex & Gender in Neurodegeneration Consortium

The field identified the gap; **S|GN** is the ecosystem to close it - a global effort wiring sex and gender differences into Alzheimer's research through shared data, standard measures, and cross-cohort analysis at a scale no single lab can reach. Overview in Nature Aging. READ THE NATURE AGING PAPER · THE CONSORTIUM

PEOPLE DOING AND SUPPORTING THE WORK

Beautiful Brain Baddies

01 **George Vradenburg** is NACD's 2026 Nonprofit Director of the Year. It's men like George that make this work a force to be reckoned with. Read the announcement.

02 **Emily Tisch Sussman** featured The *Beautiful Brain* in her *She Pivots* newsletter, with a kind note on why Meredith started it. Read Emily's note.

03 **Jessica Soffer** wrote about Meredith and The *Beautiful Brain Campaign*, and what grief and anger can move us to do. Read Jessica's post.

EVENTS COMING UP

A **The Beautiful Brain Book Club.** Our first Book Club read is one I want to talk about with you. We're starting with **Meryl Comer**'s *Slow Dancing with a Stranger*. Sign up for the Book Club and order the book.

B **The Beautiful Brain Cohort, with the Center for BrainHealth.** A Beautiful Brain cohort, in partnership with the **Center for BrainHealth** and **Dr. Sandra Chapman**. Sign up for the Cohort and we'll be in touch with dates and details.

C **UnRavelled at Miller Theatre, Oct 23-24.** And maybe I'll see you at the theatre? UnRavelled, the play I'm co-producing about creativity and frontotemporal dementia, is at Miller Theatre at Columbia on October 23 and 24. I'll be at Friday's 7:30 PM show. Tickets: unravelledplay.com.



UnRavelled, a new play

D **NIH menopause research discussion, Oct 6 - 11:00 AM-12:30 PM.** NIH Office of Research on Women's Health: common data elements for menopause research. Register for the discussion.

I know that's a lot. But these are real steps, and I'm glad we're taking them together.

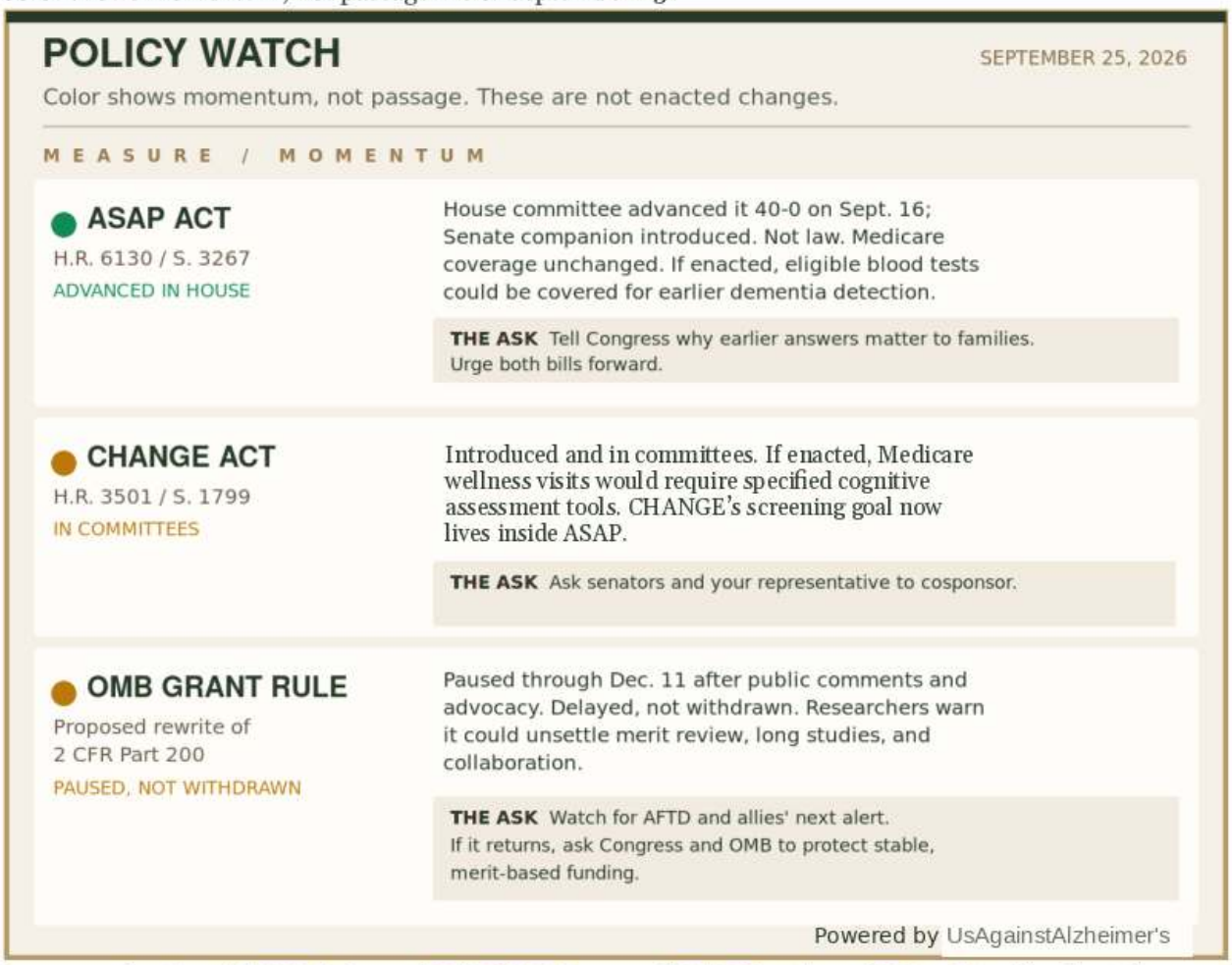
Best, Meredith

P.S. keep scrolling for our policy scorecard and more details on everyone who contributed to launching the beautiful brain

Policy watch

Your snapshot of how brain health related policy is moving

Color shows momentum, not passage. As of September 25:



Sources and action: ASAP H.R. 6130 · CHANGE H.R. 3501 · CHANGE action · OMB update. The chart shows each measure's status and ask; none is law.

The **Beautiful Brain** is not a medical practice and does not provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. This newsletter shares research and policy information for general education, not personal medical guidance. For questions about your health or a medical condition, talk with a qualified healthcare professional.

The Beautiful Brains Behind the Work

The women (and George) making women's brain health impossible to ignore - one-line origin stories, yearbook edition.



MEREDITH BURNS

Founder, The Beautiful Brain. Chief rabble-rouser: turned 15 years of caregiving, the loss of 3 parents, and a career in public policy into a movement.



DR. SANDRA CHAPMAN

Chief Director, Center for BrainHealth. The brain trainer: proving your brain can get stronger, faster, and last longer.



DR. CLAIRE CLELLAND

UCSF neurologist-scientist. The decoder: CRISPR-mapping how to deliver treatments safely to the brain.



MERYL COMER

Co-Founder, UsAgainstAlzheimer's and WomenAgainstAlzheimer's. The force: put women's brain health and caregiving on the national agenda.



VALERIE ESTESS

Co-Founder & Director of Research, Project ALS. The research engine: funding answers for ALS since day one.



ERIN FLEMING

Co-Founder & COO, ProJenX. The builder: turning ALS research operations into a biotech launch.



EMILY RHODES LOWRY, PHD

Columbia professor; Scientific Co-Director, Project ALS Therapeutics Core. The drug developer: leading ALS drug efforts since 2012.



ELEANORA TORNATORE

CEO, CaringKind; 100 Women of Impact. The care champion: making sure families are never alone in this.



GEORGE VRADENBURG

Chairman, UsAgainstAlzheimer's; NACD Nonprofit Director of the Year. The policy powerhouse: the guy in the band.

TWO WAYS IN

Come build this with us.

Every ask in this issue has exactly one obvious place to click. These are the two that matter most.

Join the book club

First read: **Meryl Comer**'s *Slow Dancing with a Stranger* - the NYT bestseller by the Emmy Award-winning reporter. **Sign up here** and **order the book**.

Fund the moonshot

We passed $50K and we're $15K from $100K - the number that fully funds Dr. Clelland's delivery mapping study. Give to **The Beautiful Brain Campaign** and move the science with us. When the study is funded, the campaign turns to its policy goals - the ASAP Act and the CHANGE Act - so earlier detection is there for every family.

Thanks for reading our first issue - and for being the kind of people who show up.

THE BIG BOLD BEAUTIFUL BRAIN / NO. 1