



www.sontagfoundation.org

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

THE SONTAG FOUNDATION



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A Letter from Our President

2025 was another successful year for The Sontag Foundation. We funded three additional scientists through our Distinguished Scientist Award for more than \$2 million bringing the total to 76 DSA grants funded and over \$85 million awarded since 2003. We invested in 4 new brain tumor treatment technologies through The Sontag Innovation Fund for a total of over \$1.4 million for the year. And we supported numerous seminars, scientific meetings and programs including the American Association for Cancer Research and the American Society of Clinical Oncology.

In fact, over the 22 years since our founding, we have grown so much that I decided to consult a totally objective source - the Google Gemini AI tool - to ask how our Foundation has performed during that time. According to Gemini:

“The Sontag Foundation is highly regarded as one of the largest and most prestigious private funders of brain cancer research in North America. Its reputation is primarily built on: 1) The DSA Grant, 2) Venture Philanthropy through The Sontag Innovation Fund, and 3) Community and Collaboration”

We couldn't be more proud.



The 2025 DSA Scientific Retreat

The Sontag Foundation hosted its 22nd Annual DSA Retreat in February 2025 at the Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island, Florida. This event was our largest scientific retreat to date, with more than 100 attendees, including grantees, alumni, advisors, board members, and representatives from the Brain Tumor Network.

The keynote speaker, Dr. Edith Widder, a former senior scientist at Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institution and co-founder of the Ocean Research and Conservation Association, inspired attendees as she shared her insights on diving deep into the unknown.

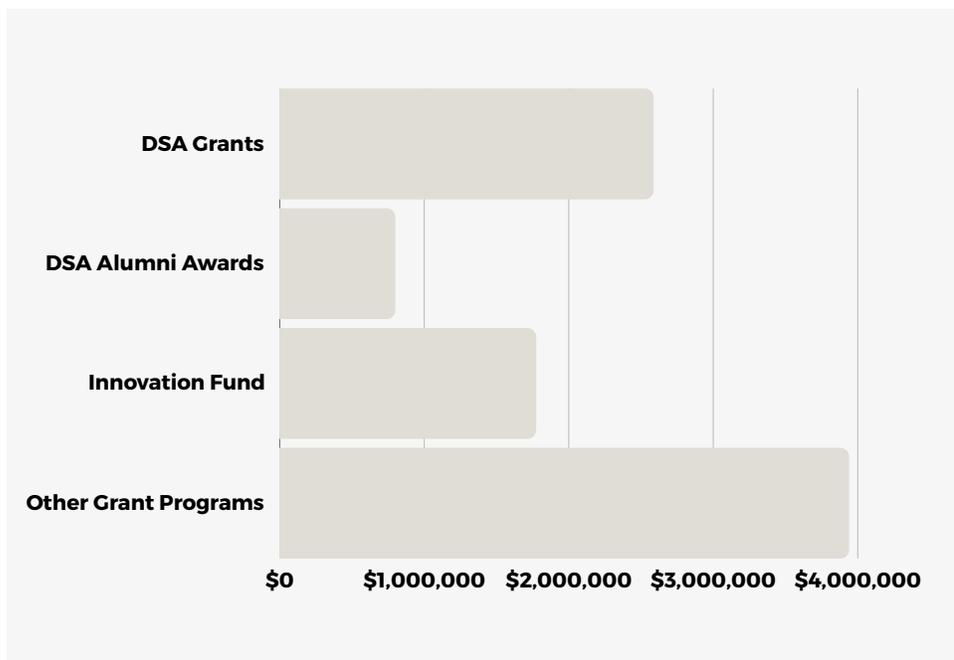
Another highlight was hearing from DSA grantees and alumni, who shared compelling updates on their research. Each presentation showcased meaningful progress in the fight against brain cancer. These sessions are the heart of the Retreat, reinforcing how the Foundation's investment fuels discovery and accelerates the translation of research into meaningful change.

We are grateful for this inspiring community and look forward to continuing the journey toward improved treatments and outcomes.





Grant Snapshot



In 2025, The Sontag Foundation granted

\$9,102,398

including over \$1.8M in programming related investments through The Sontag Innovation Fund.

OVER 97%

of the funds support brain tumor related programs.

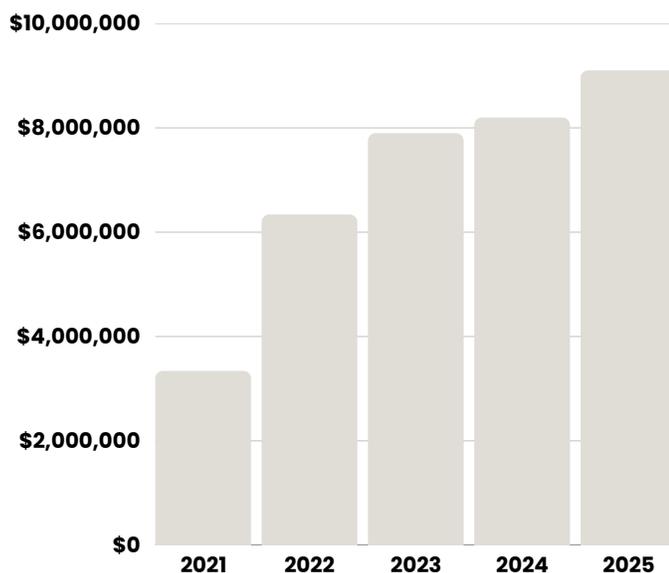


2021-2025 Annual Giving

Since 2021, The Sontag Foundation has awarded over

\$34 Million

to support brain cancer research and organizations providing brain tumor patient resources.





Measuring the Impact of Sontag-Supported Researchers

These metrics reflect the scientific, translational, and commercial impact of Sontag-supported researchers.

Clinical Impact of Our Grantees

28

Clinical Trial Leads

302

Clinical Trial Papers

1,510

Patents as an Inventor

Impact on the Field

73

DSA Awards Given
(Through 2024 Cohort)

1,086

Patents Since Award
(Filed and Issued)

505

Published Sontag
Papers

Since 2003, the Foundation has invested over \$85 million

in advancing the scientific careers of promising young investigators undertaking high-risk research at pivotal moments in their work. In 2025, the Foundation committed \$2.25 million through three five-year awards of \$750,000 each. Chosen for their potential to drive meaningful progress in brain cancer research, the 2025 award recipients join the distinguished network of Sontag Foundation scholars.

To learn more about the Distinguished Scientist Award, visit sontagfoundation.org/explore

Distinguished Scientist Award



John Liu, M.D., Ph.D.

Dr. Liu is an assistant professor of UCSF Radiation Oncology and Neurological Surgery. The title of his funded project is: Defining mechanisms of GBM treatment resistance using spatially-resolved CRISPR perturbations.



Tyler Miller, M.D., Ph.D.

Dr. Miller is an assistant professor in the Department of Pathology at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine. The title of his funded project is: Overcoming myeloid-mediated immunosuppression to improve glioblastoma immunotherapy.



Christina Tringides, Ph.D.

Dr. Tringides is an assistant professor of Rice University in the Department of Materials Science and NanoEngineering. The title of her funded project is: Personalized multifunctional electrocorticograms for glioblastoma treatment.

MAR
18

2026 Grant Application Deadline

Have a question? Shandra Koler manages the portfolio of grants and contracts for The Foundation and assists grant applicants interested in applying. Connect with Shandra via email at skoler@sontagfoundation.org.

\$1.9M

in funding for 2025

3

NEW Portfolio
Companies

\$5.3M

invested since inception

“

Brain cancer care and drug development benefit from clearer, more repeatable insight into disease biology over time. FYR Bio is expanding non-invasive approaches designed to generate that insight and support precision medicine. The Sontag Innovation Fund shares that ambition with a mission-first thesis and deep commitment to progress for patients. Their support is helping FYR Bio advance and scale our brain cancer programs, and we're proud to be part of the community they're building.

Chris Booth, Ph.D., CEO, FYR, Inc.

SONTAG INNOVATION FUND

2025 was a pivotal year for The Sontag Innovation Fund (SIF), as we continued to invest in high-potential companies and research initiatives that align with our mission to accelerate the diagnosis and treatment of brain cancer including:

- **5 total investments and 1 grant** in 2025
- **3 new** portfolio companies added
- **1 strategic preclinical research investment** with C-Path supporting Dr. Jim Olson's lab
- Continued focus on technologies spanning biomarkers, device innovation, and novel therapeutic modalities

Building on this momentum and focus, SIF welcomes their four new programs to its portfolio, all of which are advancing innovative solutions with the potential to meaningfully improve outcomes for patients with brain cancer:

- **FYR Bio** closed an \$8M financing round with participation from the SIF to advance blood-based precision diagnostics that non-invasively detect and monitor brain tumors, addressing a critical unmet need in neuro-oncology.
- **Cordance Medical** completed an \$8M seed round, including investment from the SIF, to advance a focused ultrasound platform designed to safely open the blood-brain barrier and improve therapeutic delivery, supported by FDA Breakthrough Device Designation and NIH funding.
- **Alpheus Medical** raised a \$52M Series B round with participation from the SIF to advance sonodynamic therapy, a non-invasive treatment approach now moving into a Phase 2B randomized controlled trial for newly diagnosed glioblastoma.
- **C-Path Translational Therapeutics Accelerator Grant:** in partnership with C-Path, SIF provided targeted funding to support a PD-L1-CD3 T cell engager in Dr. Olson's lab. This grant advances early toxicology and drug development studies, pairing funding with regulatory and translational expertise to help bridge the "valley of death" toward clinical readiness.

SONTAG INNOVATION FUND



Scott Davis, Ph.D.
Managing Director



Justin Siemann, Ph.D.
Associate, Life Sciences

Across the Sontag Innovation Fund (SIF) portfolio, companies and programs are reaching key milestones, including clinical trials, translational advances, and strategic grants or regulatory designations. Our 2025 investments span diagnostics, devices, and therapeutics, accelerating the translation of scientific insights into clinical impact.

- **[AiM Medical Robotics](#)** closed an \$8.1M Series A round with SIF participation to advance its MRI-compatible robotic neurosurgery platform. Funding will support first-in-human studies, regulatory progress, and platform development to improve precision and safety in neurosurgery and therapeutic delivery.
- **[Myosin Therapeutics'](#)** NMII inhibitor (MT-125) showed strong tumor responses in aggressive glioblastoma models and received FDA clearance for first-in-human studies, highlighting innovative approaches to brain cancer treatment.
- **[MimiVax](#)** reported positive interim data in its Phase 2b SURVIVE trial of SurVaxM immunotherapy for newly diagnosed glioblastoma patients, making meaningful clinical progress in development of their novel brain cancer therapy.

Looking into 2026, the SIF remains steadfast in its mission to:

- Identify and support breakthrough science early
- Catalyze downstream capital and partnerships
- Advance solutions with real potential to improve outcomes for people affected by brain cancer

A full list of [Sontag Innovation Fund](#) portfolio companies is available on our website.

Portfolio Companies



THE SONTAG FOUNDATION

New Team Member

Bryan Boehling, CFA, CAIA joined our team as the new Chief Financial Officer and Chief Investment Officer of The Sontag Foundation, The Spring Bay Companies, and The Brain Tumor Network. He is responsible for managing the financial and investment activities of the Foundation and the Sontag family-affiliated organizations.

Bryan is a seasoned financial and investment professional with extensive experience operating within non-profit entities and institutional investment firms. His background spans asset management and direct investing, with expertise in both traditional and alternative strategies including equity, debt, and real assets across public and private markets worldwide.



Brian Boehling, CFA, CAIA

Chief Financial Officer & Chief Investment Officer

OTHER INITIATIVES WE SUPPORT

ASCO Conquer Cancer 2025 Sontag Foundation Young Investigator Award

The Sontag Foundation is a proud, long-standing sponsor of the ASCO Conquer Cancer Young Investigator Award. In 2025, the Foundation was honored to sponsor this award in recognition of the 10th anniversary of The Brain Tumor Network (BTN).

This one-year, \$50,000 award supports a physician conducting brain tumor research during the critical transition from fellowship training to a faculty appointment.

ASCO Young Investigator 2025 Award Winner



Hila Shaim, M.D.

The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

“Combining IL-12-Expressing Oncolytic HSV1 with TGF- β and Corticosteroid Resistant Natural Killer Cells to Target Glioblastoma”

Mentored by: Katy Rezvani, M.D., Ph.D., Frederick Lang, M.D.

AACR-Sontag Foundation Brain Cancer Research Fellowship

The AACR-Sontag Foundation Brain Cancer Research Fellowship is a collaborative effort to support postdoctoral or clinical research fellows conducting impactful brain cancer research and to help establish successful long-term careers in this field. Projects may be basic, clinical, translational, or epidemiological in nature, but must have direct relevance to brain cancer.

Published Paper Supported by This Award:

*ZFTA-RELA ependymomas make itaconate to epigenetically drive fusion expression — Nature (2026):
Nature article on itaconate in ZFTA-RELA ependymomas*



**Brain Cancer Research 2025 Fellow
Siva Kumar Natarajan, Ph.D.**

University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

“Elucidating the Oncogenic Role of Itaconate in Aggressive, ZFTA-RELA Fusion-Driven Ependymomas”

Mentored by: Sriram Veneti, M.D., Ph.D.

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP UPDATES



The Sontag Foundation is investing \$250,000 alongside other partners in a collaborative pilot study coordinated through BLOODPAC to advance liquid biopsy as a clinical tool for brain tumor care. The total study cost is approximately \$3 million, with additional in-kind contributions from industry partners.



The Challenge

Brain tumor tissue acquisition is highly invasive, limiting the ability to perform repeat biopsies. Current non-invasive tools, such as MRI, often cannot reliably distinguish true tumor progression from pseudoprogression, **creating uncertainty in clinical decision-making.**



The Goal

This pilot study, using focused ultrasound technology, **aims to demonstrate the feasibility of liquid biopsy tests as minimally invasive tools to evaluate brain tumors** and potentially guide treatment decisions over time.



Expected Outcomes

The study will compare biomarkers across matrices, assess assay reproducibility across sites, and evaluate whether liquid biopsy can predict recurrence and distinguish true progression from pseudoprogression earlier than MRI—**helping move the field toward more precise, less invasive monitoring for patients.**

EXTERNAL PARTNERSHIP UPDATES



In 2024, the Sontag Foundation issued a challenge grant to support the Brain Tumor Funders Collaborative (BTFC) in raising funds for a \$1 million RFP to advance liquid biopsy research, resulting in the funding of two \$500,000 projects. We are enthusiastic about the innovative projects funded through this effort and their potential to advance the field.



Project Title: Global Alliance to Establish a CSF-based Liquid Biopsy Platform for Brain Tumors
Project Leader: Ching Lau, M.D., Ph.D.
Lead Institution: Connecticut Children's Medical Center



Project Title: Maximizing Detection of Childhood Brain Tumors in Biofluids
Project Leader: Paul Northcott, Ph.D. (DSA 2016)
Lead Institution: St. Jude Children's Research Hospital



As a result of the Sontag-Mark Foundation GBM Symposium in 2024, the partnering organizations awarded \$4 million in funding:

- **\$3 million Endeavor Award:** Rameen Beroukhim (PI), Bill Kaelin, Keith Ligon, Daniel Schramek, Jason Moffat
- **Four \$250,000 Awards:** Peter Sorger/Christine Brown, Nino Chiocca/Marco Mineo, Daniel Schramek/Dan Wahl, and Justin Lathia



2025 EVENTS

4th Annual Brain Tumor Organizations Leadership Fly-In

On July 8th and 9th, 2025, The Sontag Foundation hosted the 4th Annual Brain Tumor Organization Leadership Fly-In, convening nearly 40 leaders from 17 organizations across the United States and Canada. This annual convening brings together stakeholders across research, advocacy, philanthropy, and patient navigation to drive collaborative strategies that ensure brain tumor patients have access to optimal, personalized care.

Building on the 2024 Fly-In, which focused on the importance of molecular profiling in informing brain tumor treatment, the 2025 event advanced this dialogue by exploring both the research and patient-centered challenges that continue to hinder progress.

As organizations continue to work together, the collective goal is clear: to bridge the gaps in access, inform patient-centered decision-making, and ensure that every brain tumor patient is given the best possible opportunity for care.



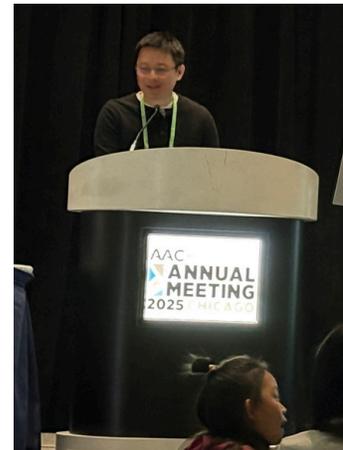
2025 EVENTS

AACR Annual Meeting

APRIL 25-30 | CHICAGO, IL

The Sontag Foundation team attended the 2025 American Association for Cancer Research Annual Meeting in April. We're especially proud of our Program Officer, Georgia Pinner, for her outstanding work with her AACR Scientist↔Survivor Group and her impactful poster presentation.

It was also a pleasure to hear from our 2018 DSA grantee, Xi Huang, Ph.D., and reconnect with Mariella Filbin, M.D., Ph.D., and Capucine Van Rechem, Ph.D., following their session presentations.



SNO PEDS



SNO Peds

MAY 15-17 | SAN DIEGO, CA

In May, Scott Davis, Ph.D., and Justin Siemann, Ph.D., attended the 2025 Society for Neuro-Oncology Pediatric Conference. They had the opportunity to hear from familiar presenters from The Brain Tumor Network, Xi Huang, Ph.D. (DSA '18), and Zulekha Qadeer, Ph.D., 2023 AACR-Sontag Foundation Fellow.

2025 EVENTS



ASCO Annual Meeting

MAY 30-JUNE 3 | CHICAGO, IL

Scott Davis, Ph.D., Justin Siemann, Ph.D., and Laura Hynes, Executive Director, Brain Tumor Network, attended the 2025 American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting. It was a powerful showcase of innovation and progress in cancer research and treatment. We're also proud to have supported the RANO meeting as part of this important gathering.

BioCentury Inc 2nd Grand Rounds - US

JUNE 4-6 | CHICAGO, IL

In June, Hilary Keeley participated as a panelist at the BioCentury Inc. 2nd Grand Rounds - U.S. R&D Conference in Chicago. She joined a breakfast workshop titled "Venture Philanthropy: More Important Than Ever for Early-Stage Funding," which explored how mission-driven funding can accelerate early-stage biotech development. Panelists discussed how venture philanthropy can provide critical early support, both financially and strategically, to help move promising research toward clinical impact.



2025 EVENTS

Florida Society of Clinical Oncology

AUG 8-9 | ORLANDO, FL

The Sontag Foundation was honored to host a dinner for the exceptional speakers at the Florida Society of Clinical Oncology event last August. These leaders in the field of neuro-oncology are driving meaningful advancements, and it was a pleasure to connect and share the evening with them.



2025 Society for Neuro-Oncology Annual Meeting

NOV 19-23 | HONOLULU, HI

Multiple team members attended the 2025 Society for Neuro-Oncology Annual Meeting in November. During the event, the 2025 Sontag Abstract Award was presented to Dr. David Tran and Dr. Mario Suva gave the 2025 Sontag Distinguished Lecture. Our team also enjoyed networking at our Cocktails and Conversations event, and hearing presentations from our current and alumni DSA award winners.



THE SONTAG FOUNDATION

2026 DSA Annual Retreat

Location:

The Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island
4750 Amelia Island Pkwy,
Amelia Island, FL 32034

Date:

February 24-27, 2026

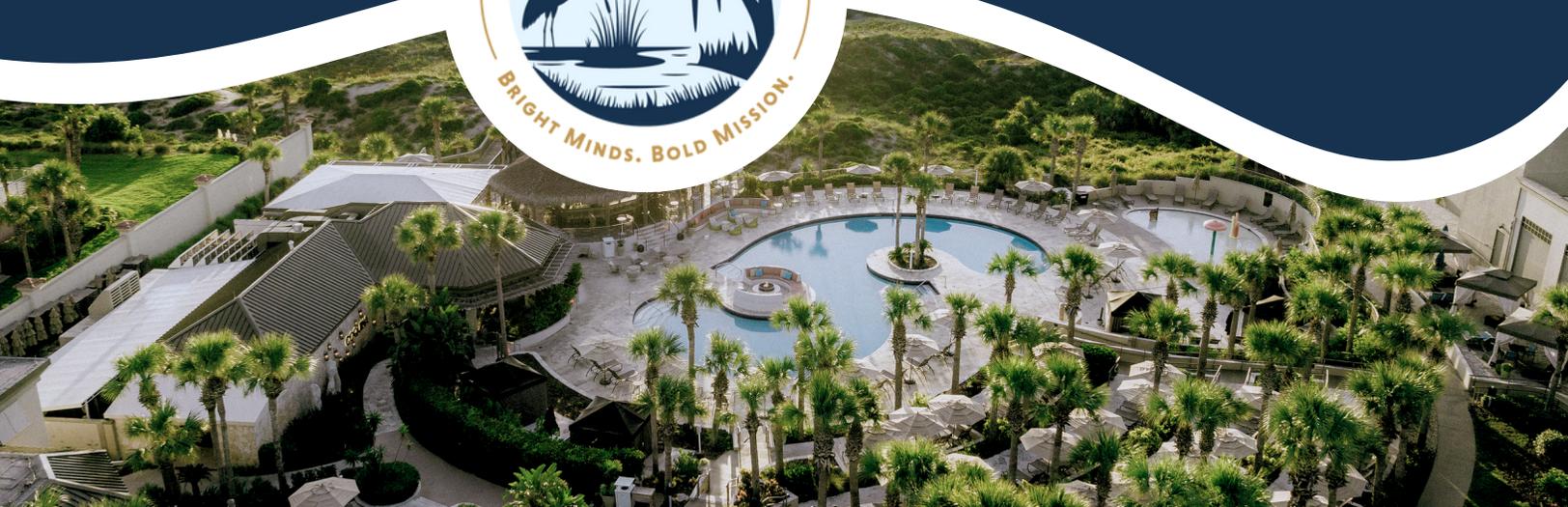
Guest Speaker:

Mac Stone



MAC STONE

National Geographic
Photographer & Explorer



Our 2025 Impact

We navigate the gap between patient care and specialized support

1,400+



Patients and families served last year



50

Nationwide patient support spanning all 50 states

28%

Of patients who requested a clinical trial search were enrolled into a trial



Brain Tumor Network and the American Cancer Society: *Expanding Navigation Through Collaboration*

The American Cancer Society (ACS) approached Brain Tumor Network to create a direct referral pathway for their patients with primary brain tumors.

Through the ACS 24/7 Helpline, patients are now directly connected to BTN for neuro-oncology navigation across their cancer journey.



“At the American Cancer Society, we’re committed to breaking down barriers to care. Through our collaboration with BTN, we’re helping connect patients and caregivers facing a primary brain tumor diagnosis to free, expert navigation services—so they can overcome treatment challenges and access the quality care they deserve.”

Dr. Arif Kamal, Chief Patient Officer, ACS