

Constance E. Lieber, Theodore R. Stanley, and the Enduring Impact of Philanthropy on Psychiatry Research

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Neuropsychiatric disorders constitute the single greatest source of the global burden of disease, but it seems that philanthropy and advocacy aimed at supporting research to alleviate the burden of these disorders often are overshadowed by corresponding efforts in many other areas of medicine. For example, the United States public donates five times more money to cancer than to mental health research (1), and for the United Kingdom public, the equivalent figure is a staggering 900 times more (2). In this context, it is particularly sobering that we recently lost two towering mental health advocates and philanthropists, Constance E. Lieber and Theodore R. Stanley (Figures 1 and 2). These two individuals made an enormous and enduring impact through the initiatives that they created and sustained, through their personal contributions, and through their ability to mobilize others. For the editors, editorial board members, and editorial committee members of *Biological Psychiatry* who constitute the authors of this commentary, the losses are personal. Each of us has received research support made possible through the actions of these unique individuals. In acknowledging our gratitude, we hope that our collective efforts to advance the understanding of mental illness and its treatment are a lasting testament to their impact.

Constance Lieber died on January 15, 2016. With her husband Stephen, Constance led the National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression (NARSAD), now known as the Brain and Behavior Research Foundation (BBRF), from 1989 through 2007. Through the Liebers' generosity and their vigorous advocacy, NARSAD/BBRF has had an enormous impact. Since 1987, BBRF has awarded more than \$346 million in the form of more than 5000 grants to more than 4000 scientists from more than 500 universities based in 34

countries. Critically, 80% of these grants have been small grants to young investigators that have given them resources that often played critical roles in launching careers like ours. The NARSAD Young Investigator Award is a distinction that recognizes scientific promise, and it remains a model funding mechanism for advancing scientific careers. After establishing and leading BBRF, Constance and Stephen created other initiatives, such as the Lieber Center for Schizophrenia Research and the Lieber Clinic for Comprehensive Care at Columbia University and New York State Psychiatric Institute,



Figure 1. Constance Lieber.



Figure 2. Ted and Vada Stanley.

and more recently, the Lieber Institute for Brain Development on the medical campus of Johns Hopkins University. Constance was very much at the center of psychiatry research advocacy. For us, she was “Connie,” our friend and supporter. She knew us, appreciated the challenges of research, was excited by our findings, and worked to advance our field. The impact of her philanthropy lives on, but her absence is sorely felt.

Theodore R. Stanley, known as “Ted,” died on January 3, 2016. A cofounder of the Danbury Mint, which became MBI, Inc., Ted Stanley amassed a fortune valued at more than \$1 billion. After their son was diagnosed with bipolar disorder, Ted and Vada Stanley created the Stanley Medical Research Institute (SMRI) in 1989 to develop new treatments for bipolar disorder and related conditions. Since its inception, SMRI has provided more than \$550 million in research support across 30 countries. Its mission includes funding clinical trials; the Stanley Brain Collection; the Stanley Neurovirology Laboratory at Johns Hopkins University; the Stanley Program for Epidemiology, Prevention, and Treatment of Schizophrenia; and the Treatment Advocacy Center. In 2007, the Stanleys gave \$100 million over 10 years to create the Stanley Center for Psychiatric Research at the Broad Institute, a joint venture of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University. They donated \$50 million in 2011, and in 2014, they committed an additional \$650 million, a record in psychiatric philanthropy (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IH6cEk74De8>). In the *New York Times* obituary for Mr. Stanley, his son Jonathan is quoted as saying, “A good chunk of this huge amount of money that’s going to Broad would’ve ended up in my bank account All I can say is my family got it right.”

The legacies of Connie Lieber and Ted Stanley are models for what can be accomplished through philanthropy. As a result of their efforts, NARSAD/BBRF and SMRI have often funded investigators who were too young or projects from established investigators that were too preliminary to draw support from traditional funding sources. The Stanley Brain Collection is a major resource for the analysis of human postmortem tissue. Both the Lieber Institute for Brain

Development and the Stanley Center at the Broad are large-scale investments in investigating the causes and mechanisms of mental illness at a scale that could not be achieved through other funding mechanisms.

The need for philanthropy in translational neuroscience and experimental therapeutics is greater than ever before, commensurate with the enormous potential for impact arising from technologic advances in genetics and neuroscience research. The gap between what we know and what we need to know to develop effective preventions and cures for mental illness may be greater than for other areas of medicine, because the brain is the most complicated and least well-understood organ in the body. The BBRF and SMRI are joined by other initiatives attempting to raise research funds, such as the Simons Foundation, the Avielle Foundation, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the William K. Warren Foundation, and the International Mental Health Research Organization/One Mind Institute. We hope that the examples of Connie Lieber and Ted Stanley will serve to invigorate the philanthropic organizations that they founded and stimulate new charitable efforts in translational neuroscience and experimental therapeutics around the world.

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Except for the first author position identifying the corresponding author, all authors are named in alphabetical order.

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