

EDITORIALS

Healthier Lives Through Better Sleep: A New Vision for the AASM Foundation

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INTRODUCTION

Background and History of the AASM Foundation

The landscape of sleep medicine has changed considerably over the past two decades. Sleep science has celebrated seminal discoveries and public awareness of the importance of sleep has increased substantially, and there are more evidence-based treatment options for our patients with sleep disorders; nevertheless, the field is also at a critical crossroads. Despite an epidemic of insufficient sleep and sleep disorders, federal funding to support sleep science remains insufficient to address critical gaps in knowledge, and challenges remain in how to attract and train the next generation of clinician-scientists. This challenging landscape is the *raison d'être* that research foundations seek to transform science and medicine through visionary, innovative, and bold initiatives.

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) Foundation, formerly the American Sleep Medicine Foundation, is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) charitable and scientific organization that was established by the AASM in 1998 with the goal of supporting education, as well as clinical and basic research. Over the past 20 years, the AASM Foundation has embarked on a number of initiatives,¹ including supporting strategic research, assisting with career development, offering small pilot grant awards and supporting educational, humanitarian, and disaster relief efforts. The changing landscape of clinical sleep medicine and the evolution of sleep science led the AASM Foundation to undertake a comprehensive strategic planning effort, with the goal of addressing currently unaddressed needs and identifying goals that will advance sleep health.

STRATEGIC PLAN, MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

Development of the 2019–2023 AASM Foundation Strategic Plan

The AASM Foundation embarked on a formal strategic planning process in 2018. This included engagement of a wide variety of stakeholders including AASM leaders, members of the AASM staff, and non-AASM members across the scientific community. We also sought input from similar organizations to understand the challenges being faced and

opportunities present to similar nonprofit entities. The process began with a SWOT analysis (identifying Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats), which informed the subsequent steps. Through this process, we identified our strong focus on patient-oriented research, sound financial footing, and a climate at the AASM Foundation that supports innovation and new ideas as key strengths. We also identified opportunities to increase communicating the AASM Foundation's work to stakeholders, diversifying our financial contributors, and establishing strategic partnerships with other organizations and entities. Inspired by what we learned, the AASM Foundation Board of Directors and staff convened a 2-day retreat to evaluate these domains, consider the AASM Foundation's mission and vision, and develop strategic goals.

The 2019–2023 AASM Foundation Strategic Plan seeks to sharpen our focus on critical issues that align with improving patient care and sleep health. This included developing updated mission and vision statements along with three strategic goals, aligned to meet current challenges and opportunities within the field of sleep medicine.

AASM Foundation Mission

The new mission statement of the AASM Foundation is, "Promote discoveries that advance the understanding of sleep for healthier lives." This reflects the growing consideration of sleep as an important health behavior, necessary to achieve optimal well-being and prevent increasing risk for other common diseases.

AASM Foundation Vision

The AASM Foundation's new vision for society and the field of sleep medicine is, "Healthier lives through better sleep." This is further explicated with the following six domains, which describe important components of achieving that vision:

1. All patients have access to evidence-based care for sleep disorders.
2. A growing number of institutions are recognized for outstanding sleep research.
3. Expansion of the field of sleep medicine with highly-qualified researchers and clinicians.
4. America's students and workforce are better rested, more engaged and more productive.

5. Decline in deaths, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, obesity, depression, and other conditions linked to lack of sleep.
6. Universal awareness of the importance of sleep; fast and accurate diagnosis of sleep disorders.

AASM Foundation Strategic Goals

Goal 1: Improve Patient-Centered Sleep Care Through High-Impact Research

The field of sleep medicine has made tremendous progress in recent decades; however, significant gaps in knowledge still affect the ability to provide optimal, cost-effective care for all patients. The AASM Foundation will target these knowledge gaps by funding high-impact research projects with the goal of improving patient-centered care for all patients with sleep disorders.

One new effort in this area focuses on the process for identifying targeted research questions that are likely to affect practice and, therefore, would be suitable for AASM Foundation support. This process will include engagement of AASM committees and task forces who are already evaluating the scientific literature and have a deep understanding of areas where new science will improve care for patients with sleep disorders.

Goal 2: Develop the Careers of Sleep and Circadian Investigators

Scientific discovery is the lifeblood of sleep medicine and patient-centered care. However, there are too few researchers, well-established research programs, and research grant dollars focused on solving America's pandemic of poor sleep and related debilitating conditions. The AASM Foundation seeks to support the pipeline of sleep scientists by investing in early-career investigators, not only through funding their research but also providing opportunities for mentorship and methodological education. The AASM Foundation will also seek to strategically invest in midcareer investigators and emerging research institutions to sustain the field into the future.

Building on the success of our existing Career Development Award programs, the Foundation will explore creative new programs that facilitate clinician-scientist early career development, including expanding research mentoring activities and evaluating opportunities for new funding mechanisms.

Goal 3: Increase the Engagement of Current and Potential Stakeholders

As a research funding institution, the AASM Foundation's strategic priorities are set and managed internally but supported and executed externally. Our success is dependent on strong lines of communication with an extended network of stakeholders. The AASM Foundation will expand its reach and impact by increasing the interest, awareness, and participation of a wide variety of stakeholders, including AASM members, accredited sleep disorders centers, current and potential award recipients, donors, industry partners, and the general public.

New avenues for increasing engagement of all stakeholders are being developed and implemented. This includes increased presence on social media, including Twitter (<https://twitter.com/aasmfoundation>), Facebook

(<https://www.facebook.com/AASMFoundation>), Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/aasmfoundation>), and LinkedIn (<http://linkedin.com/company/aasm-foundation>); "live events" at AASM conferences; recognition of our generous donors and award recipients at multiple points during the year; and publication of our annual report in printed form and on our website (<https://foundation.aasm.org>), which is a central hub for information and opportunities related to the AASM Foundation.

Reporting Cycle

Importantly, the strategic plan will be viewed as a living document that will evolve as new needs, challenges, and opportunities arise. Progress on each of the three goals is reviewed by the AASM Foundation Executive Committee monthly, and by the Board of Directors each quarter. Each year, the workgroups will review, develop, and implement new programs and evaluate existing ones, providing opportunities to shift resources and efforts when needed. Key performance indicators have also been identified for each of the three strategic goals to measure the effect of new and existing programs.

CONCLUSIONS

The AASM Foundation's strategic plan will facilitate accomplishing the organization's vision of achieving healthier lives through better sleep. With the dedication and support of the AASM Foundation staff and leadership, the 2019–2023 strategic plan will lead the AASM Foundation to increasing its impact, capitalizing on existing programs and creating new opportunities to address the ever-changing needs of the field. The AASM Foundation's goal is not only to survey the landscape and target visible obstacles, but to change the landscape of the future. We hope to achieve this by directing resources toward high-impact research, supporting the career development of the next generation of sleep scientists, and engaging all of the voices in the sleep health conversation.

CITATION

Martin JL. Healthier lives through better sleep: a new vision for the AASM Foundation. *J Clin Sleep Med*. 2019;15(5):679–681.

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DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Jennifer L. Martin, PhD is the 2018–2019 AASM Foundation President. The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Department of Veterans Affairs or the United States government.