

TEACHING & LEARNING

# Charting the Future of Neuroscience: First Brain Bank in Taiwan

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The inauguration ceremony of the Taiwan Brain Bank. In contrast to numerous government-driven brain bank initiatives in other nations, the Taiwan Brain Bank is founded on the altruism of patients, adding a profoundly human dimension to its mission.

After six long years of dedicated preparatory work since 2017, NTU has finally established Taiwan Brain Bank, an initiative aimed at building a comprehensive database of tissue samples to advance domestic medical research. This landmark project, the first of its kind in Taiwan, not only complies with rigorous government regulations but also meets the highest global standards, thus joining the ranks of the 150 brain banks worldwide.

The endeavor to set up a brain bank in Taiwan is unprecedented, considering that numerous such attempts fell short during the past three decades. Inspired by the generosity of patients willing to donate their brains posthumously and the appeals of patient organizations, Prof. Sung-Tsang Hsieh of the NTU College of Medicine led a dedicated working group. Through active communication and coordination with the relevant authorities, the team navigated challenges posed by outdated domestic laws and regulations, coupled with institutional shortcomings.



From left to right: NTU College of Medicine Prof. Sung-Tsang Hsieh, Taiwan Spinocerebellar Ataxia Association Director Suei-Ping Jhu, NTU College of Medicine Dean Yen-Hsua Ni, Minister of Health and Welfare Jui-Yuan Hsueh, Premier Chien-Jen Chen, NTU Executive Vice President Shan-Chwen Chang, NTU Hospital Vice Superintendent Yi-Ru Lai, and National Health Research Institutes President Huey-Kang Sytwu.

Ultimately, they secured approval from the Ministry of Health and Welfare to establish Taiwan's first Brain Bank in 2023, adhering to governmental regulations and meeting the high standards set by advanced countries.

In the preparatory phase, NTU engaged foreign brain bank experts to ensure that the brain bank's hardware and engineering truly met international standards. The establishment of the brain bank ensures that neuroscience research teams will have access to vital neural tissues, facilitating exploration into disease mechanisms and aiding in the research and development of new drugs. The bank will gather neural tissues from individuals with rare diseases, neurodegenerative diseases, as well as healthy individuals.

Vice President Shan-Chwen Chang, who actively supported the Brain Bank's establishment since beginning his tenure as the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, lauded Prof. Hsieh's dedication. Expressing utmost respect and gratitude, he emphasized that the Brain Bank's establishment signifies a great leap forward for brain science research in Taiwan. He called for the continued support of all sectors of the community to ensure the Brain Bank's smooth operation and fruitful outcomes.

To repay the kindness of its many donors, Taiwan Brain Bank is determined to be a crucial player in furthering research on brain diseases specific to Asia, as well as developing more efficient therapeutic drugs. Taiwan Brain Bank stands not only as a crucial academic research organization but also as a substantial contribution to the maintenance of human health.



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