

# Opening Remarks: Ronald W. Davis, PhD

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kRVngD7iSjQ&index=5&list=PLI4AfLZNZEQPxiqF4ojAO3wdCFMeriNBK&t=0s>

Ronald Davis: Thank you very much, Ashley.

A little story about Ashley and that is when, I think, basically she decided that my son had to be the poster child. She told him, "Well, you have to be the poster child."

And he said, "No, no, no. No way." He's very shy. He doesn't like to be in the spotlight.

And she said, "Suck it up."

(All laugh)

He kept saying no and she says yes, you will.

She always describes her brother as her best friend. He eventually knew that he had to give in (laughs).

Because it was obvious at that time that one of the biggest problem was the fact that no one knew about this disease, so how do you get people to support it? Someone had to step up and tell the world that they're sick and then other people will come forward. We see that over and over again, when one person comes forward and tells the truth many other people will follow, because no one wants to be the one to break the news. I give Ashley a great deal of credit for actually initiating that.

Being a nerd I have to focus on the science. We've had three, I think, amazing days of really great scientific presentations and, more importantly, discussions. Often at scientific meetings you see people getting up and they present their recent results and then people clap and then they go sit down and then the next person gets up. Virtually no discussion.

That wasn't the case here. Raeka had to exert her authority as leading it to make people stop talking so we can get the next person up.

(All laugh)

She did a fabulous job of orchestrating this. Also this year in the Symposium, we call it the Working Group, because I don't want to call it a collaboration because there's rules at NIH if you collaborate then you can't review each other's grants. Since we have some of the best scientists in the world working on this disease that would be a disaster, so we call it a Working Group and we're allowed to get together and talk.

I decided to bring in some new people that did not work on the disease, but I knew were really good scientists and open-minded and they always have good ideas. We

increased it about 50% and it was amazing how engaged those people got. They made all sorts of new ideas and commitments to now work on it.

I also brought in a bunch of engineers and that's because I know that they're very focused on problem solving and they seem to be very engaged as well. I'll talk a little bit about some of them.

I'm really glad that the person who led this Symposium last year, Raeka, she got recruited away from us to New York and that was just because she's so good. But she agreed to come back and run the scientific meeting as well as the Symposium, so it was really, really wonderful that she did agree to do that, 'cause she's the best.

I'd like to introduce Raeka.

(Applause)

*Thank you to our wonderful volunteer transcribers for transcribing the Symposium.*