

## FEATURE ARTICLE IN *SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN MIND* HIGHLIGHTS ALLEN HUMAN BRAIN ATLAS

**SEATTLE, Wash.—September 2, 2010**—Allan R. Jones, Ph.D., chief executive officer, and Caroline C. Overly, Ph.D., associate director of communications, at the Allen Institute for Brain Science have published a feature article titled “Mapping the Mind” in the September/October 2010 issue of *Scientific American MIND*. The article takes a broad look at the making of the Allen Institute’s groundbreaking Allen Human Brain Atlas and its promise for advancing understanding of human brain in health and disease.

A unique online public resource, the Allen Human Brain Atlas is “a high-tech bridge between brain anatomy and genetics”. It is an interactive, detailed map of the activity of human genes—more than 20,000—throughout the adult human brain. This new addition to the neuroscience toolkit enables scientists worldwide to probe the inner workings of the human brain in ways that were not possible before.

Using the Atlas, scientists can quickly determine where in the human brain a gene encoding a specific protein—for example, the target of a medication—is active, thereby gaining critical clues about its biological function and insights that can help predict the therapeutic benefits and side effects of drugs.

Researchers can also use the Atlas to zoom in on brain structures implicated in disorders such as schizophrenia or autism to identify which genes are active in those areas. Understanding what is happening inside the cells of affected brain structures is critical to uncovering the root causes of altered brain activity associated with neurological and mental disorders.

In the article, Jones and Overly explain that the idea for a brain atlas grew out of a series of brainstorming meetings convened by philanthropist Paul G. Allen, the Institute’s founder, beginning in 2001. Allen was drawn to the mystery of how the brain works, and assembled some of the world’s top scientists to consider the question: what can be done to propel neuroscience to the next level?

The Allen Human Brain Atlas was launched with an initial data set in May 2010. In the coming years, it will be expanded with additional data and sophisticated search, analysis and visualization tools to help researchers sift through the immense stores of information. Accessible via the Allen Brain Atlas portal at [www.brain-map.org](http://www.brain-map.org), it joins the Allen Institute’s growing collection of open online resources, which include the Allen Mouse Brain Atlas, the Allen Developing Mouse Brain Atlas and the Allen Spinal Cord Atlas.

### **About the Allen Institute for Brain Science**

Launched in 2003, the Seattle-based Allen Institute for Brain Science is an independent, 501(c)(3) nonprofit medical research organization dedicated to advancing brain research. Started with \$100 million in seed money from philanthropist Paul G. Allen, the Institute takes on projects at the leading edge of science—far-reaching projects at the intersection of biology and technology. The resulting data create publicly available resources that fuel discovery for countless other researchers worldwide. The Institute’s data and tools are available on the Web at [www.alleninstitute.org](http://www.alleninstitute.org).

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