

From Molecules to Meaningful Recovery: Dr. Mohammed Sbai's Path to Global Impacts in Neurorehabilitation

Mohammed “Mo” Sbai, PhD, is a clinical neuroscientist, educator, and international neurorehabilitation leader whose work bridges basic neuroscience, translational research, neurorehabilitation, and humanitarian service. Trained originally as a molecular and cellular neurobiologist, Dr. Sbai built his scientific foundation in the study of nervous system structure and function, with a deep interest in how injury alters neural pathways and how biological mechanisms can be harnessed to restore function.



Born in Morocco, Dr. Sbai received his master's degree in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology and his PhD degree in Biochemistry & Neurobiology from the University of Paris - Saclay. He later moved to New Jersey, where he conducted postdoctoral research in neurogenetics at the Roche Institute for Molecular Biology. His interests in the molecular and cellular foundations of neurological disease continued during his time as research faculty at Rutgers University, where he studied molecular genetics in yeast. In 2000, Dr. Sbai joined the faculty at the University of Utah.

Over time, Dr. Sbai's scientific training evolved into a broader clinical and human mission: advancing neurorehabilitation as a life-changing force for individuals living with neurological disability. He currently serves as a Clinical Research Assistant Professor in the College of Health at the University of Utah.

A defining turning point in Dr. Sbai's life and career came through the care of his late brother, who sustained a severe traumatic brain injury in 2001. That personal experience exposed him not only to the devastating consequences of neurological trauma, but also to the extraordinary power of appropriate neurorehabilitation. Inspired by his brother's injury and recovery journey, Dr. Sbai made the significant decision to return to medical school and pursue specialized training in comprehensive neurorehabilitation, including vestibular and locomotor rehabilitation. This experience profoundly reshaped his professional path and deepened his conviction that neurorehabilitation is not simply supportive care delivered after injury; it is an active, science-based process capable of helping the injured nervous system reorganize, recover function, and create meaningful second chances for patients and families.

Dr. Sbai has since become a strong advocate for bringing evidence-based neurorehabilitation to underserved communities. At the University of Utah, he is an active member of the College of Health and a leader in global neurorehabilitation initiatives. He founded the [Moroccan-American Institute for Rehabilitation](#) (MAIR) in Marrakech, Morocco, a not-for-profit neurorehabilitation clinic established to expand access to specialized care for patients with stroke, cerebral palsy,

spinal cord injury, traumatic brain injury, and other disabling neurological conditions. Services considered essential in the United States for individuals with these conditions are often not readily available in Morocco or many other regions of the world. MAIR functions as both a treatment center and a platform for international clinical education, where U.S. students and therapists gain hands-on exposure to neurorehabilitation in a cross-cultural setting.

His work has also extended to innovation and institutional capacity building. With support from the University of Utah Technology Licensing Office, Dr. Sbai has been developing neurorehabilitation technologies and brain-plasticity-informed solutions aimed at improving recovery after neurological injury. His translational work reflects his commitment to transforming scientific knowledge into practical tools that can improve patient care, expand rehabilitation access, and strengthen recovery pathways for individuals living with neurological disability. At the same time, he has played a major role in building international educational partnerships, including efforts to strengthen neurorehabilitation training in Morocco through structured clinical and academic initiatives. Dr. Sbai is a leader in the Rotary-supported vocational and educational projects connected to MAIR, reinforcing his unique position at the intersection of neuroscience, neurorehabilitation, and global service.

Across his research, teaching, innovation, and humanitarian initiatives, Dr. Sbai's career reflects a unifying mission: to connect rigorous neuroscience with compassionate, functional, and globally accessible neurorehabilitation to bring meaningful recovery for patients and families. Dr. Sbai's work is rooted in the belief that, when delivered properly, neurorehabilitation does more than improve function; it restores hope, preserves human potential, and changes lives.