

FOUNDATION OF HOPE GIVES NEARLY HALF A MILLION DOLLARS TO MENTAL ILLNESS RESEARCH

Raleigh, NC —Continuing its efforts to curb the debilitating effects of mental illness, the Foundation of Hope for Research and Treatment of Mental Illness (FOH) will award almost \$475,000 for ten research grants to thirteen investigators from the Department of Psychiatry at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The recipients were Dr. Jessica Baker, Dr. Crystal Schiller, Dr. Gabriel Dichter, Dr. Serena Fiacco, Dr. Jessica Girault, Dr. Hiroyuki Kato, Dr. Mary Kimmel, Dr. Zoe McElligott, Dr. A. Leslie Morrow, Dr. Eliza Park, Dr. Anthony Zannas, and Dr. Jose Rodriguez-Romaguera. Their projects encompass a wide range of mental and behavioral conditions, including autism, bulimia, schizophrenia, anxiety and depression, and women’s mood disorders.

One study in particular stems from the expectation of long-term stress effects due to the global coronavirus pandemic. Drs. Zannas & Rodriguez-Romaguera will explore COVID-19-related stress disorders in healthcare workers on the frontline of the crisis by measuring social avoidance cues during stress tasks to assess stress responses and recovery. This research forms the foundation of the Carolina Stress Initiative, a translational clinical care and research program to help reduce the worldwide burden of stress-related diseases emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), mood disorders like depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and PTSD affect 1 in 5 adults and 1 in 6 children each year. Even minor manifestations of a mental illness can cripple a person’s ability to function and have lasting consequences; the damage is often exacerbated by rampant social stigma and alienation.

In the new reality of COVID-19, conversations around mental health needs, clinical services, and care access have become more urgent. The research funded by the FOH could lead to breakthroughs in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses, improving the lives and livelihoods of those who suffer.

“Our mission doesn’t stop for COVID-19 – funding innovative mental illness research studies continues to be critically important, now more than ever,” says Shelley Belk, Executive Director of the FOH. “We are so grateful for the tremendous efforts of our loyal sponsors, walkers, and participants in all of our events. Their contributions help keep this incredible science moving forward.”

For grant details: <https://walkforhope.com/what-we-fund/#news>

The Foundation of Hope for Research and Treatment of Mental Illness is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Raleigh, North Carolina.