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Foundation of Hope Announces \$1.5M in Research Grants and Launches “Hope in Action” Campaign During Mental Health Awareness Month

Raleigh, NC – May 01, 2026 — The Foundation of Hope for Research and Treatment of Mental Illness launched Hope in Action today, a campaign taking place throughout May for Mental Health Awareness Month, inviting the community to turn awareness into action by supporting urgently needed research.

Hope in Action encourages individuals to take part in a simple but powerful way, by giving \$31 for the 31 days of May. 100% of every dollar raised will directly support scientific research aimed at improving the understanding, diagnosis, and treatment of mental illness.

“Awareness is critical, but action is what drives lasting change,” said Jennifer Gibson, Executive Director of the Foundation of Hope. “Hope in Action gives people a clear and immediate way to directly support research in our community that can lead to new mental health care solutions.”

In conjunction with the Hope in Action campaign, the Foundation announces more than \$1.5 million in new research grants awarded to investigators within the Department of Psychiatry in the School of Medicine at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. These projects address a broad range of mental illness challenges, from substance abuse to depression and suicide, while advancing innovative approaches through artificial intelligence, data modeling, and emerging therapeutic pathways.

The 2026 grant recipients include:

Drs. Andrea Pelletier-Baldelli and Adam Miller - Child and Adolescent Anxiety and Mood Program (CHAAMP)

Dr. Benjamin Buck – Child and Adolescent Anxiety and Mood Program (CHAAMP)

Dr. Tingting Dan – Alcohol and Substance Use Disorders

Drs. Gabriel Dichter and Melissa Walsh – Autism

Dr. Hiroyuki Kato – Autism

Drs. Flavio Frohlich and Athena Stein – Depression

Dr. Camden Matherne – Eating Disorders

Drs. Roza Vlasova and Guorong Wu – Schizophrenia

Dr. Erin Bondy – Women’s Mood Disorders

Drs. Eric Hurwitz and Danielle Lowe – Women’s Mood Disorders

Drs. Zev Nakamura, Hyman Muss, Kyrsten Nyrop, and Brent Small – Other Research
Drs. Rebecca Stephens and Marissa DiPiero – Other Research

Since its founding in 1984, the Foundation of Hope has awarded more than \$12.1 million in research funding, helping generate over \$298 million in additional public and private support for further studies. This model of early-stage “seed” funding enables researchers to pursue bold ideas that can lead to larger-scale breakthroughs.

“Many of the most important advances in mental illness research begin as novel ideas that need initial support to move forward,” Gibson added. “By investing at this early stage, we help unlock discoveries that might not otherwise happen.”

Through the 31 days of Hope in Action, the Foundation aims to connect community support directly to the research pipeline, demonstrating how individual contributions at any level can drive meaningful progress.

The campaign will run throughout the month of May, with opportunities for individuals, families, and organizations to participate and contribute.

The Foundation of Hope is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in Raleigh, North Carolina. It is dedicated to funding mental illness research and improving the lives of those affected by mental illness.

For more information or to participate in Hope in Action, visit www.walkforhope.com/hopeinaction

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