

2025 INTERNATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM VIRTUAL & IN-PERSON

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Friday, October 24, 2025
9:30am–12:30pm EDT

Kaufman Music Center
New York, NY

Welcome to the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation's annual International Mental Health Research Symposium.

Today we will hear presentations from BBRF's 2025 Outstanding Achievement Prizewinners on topics that include: new treatment and remediation approaches for cognitive impairment in schizophrenia; a non-invasive brain stimulation approach to potentially enhance emotion recognition in schizophrenia; genome research shedding light on biological mechanisms in bipolar disorder; the late-onset trajectory and predictability of adult ADHD; and a reflection on the subjective mental qualities of brain and behavior disorders. We are also pleased to offer a presentation from Nur Yanayirah, Founder of MotherHope Indonesia, the winner of the 2025 Pardes Humanitarian Prize in Mental Health.

The Outstanding Achievement Prizewinners are selected by special committees of the BBRF Scientific Council, a volunteer group of 194 mental health experts across disciplines in brain and behavior research. Committees of the Scientific Council review all Foundation grant applications and recommend the most promising ideas to fund.

Since 1987, the Foundation has awarded \$475 million to fund more than 6,800 grants to more than 5,700 scientists around the world. These awards are specifically made to fund innovative research that may not be supported elsewhere but is vital for advancement in the fields of neuroscience and psychiatry. **100% of every dollar donated for research is invested in our research grants.** Our operating expenses are covered by separate foundation grants.

We hope the BBRF Symposium will inspire you. Thank you for joining us in our commitment to dramatically improve the lives of those with mental illness and ultimately enable more people to live full, happy, and productive lives.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Borenstein, M.D.

President & CEO

Brain & Behavior Research Foundation

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Welcome



Jeffrey Borenstein, M.D.

President & CEO, BBRF

Jeffrey Borenstein, M.D., serves as the President & CEO of the Brain & Behavior Research Foundation, the largest private funder of mental health research grants. Dr. Borenstein developed the Emmy-nominated public television program “Healthy Minds,” and serves as host and executive producer of the series. The program, broadcast nationwide, is available online, and focuses on topics in psychiatry in order to educate the public, reduce stigma and offer a message of hope. Dr. Borenstein served as Editor-in-Chief of Psychiatric News, the newspaper of the American Psychiatric Association from 2012–2023.

Dr. Borenstein is a Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine and serves as the Chair of the Section of Psychiatry at the Academy. He also has served as the President of the New York State Psychiatric Association. Dr. Borenstein earned his undergraduate degree at Harvard and his medical degree at New York University.

Introduction



Carol A. Tamminga, M.D.

*Stanton Sharp Distinguished Chair in Psychiatry
and Chair of Psychiatry*

*Chief, Translational Neuroscience Research in Schizophrenia
University of Texas Southwestern Medical School*

BBRF Scientific Council

2011 BBRF Lieber Prize for Outstanding Achievement in
Schizophrenia Research

2010, 1988 BBRF Distinguished Investigator

Dr. Tamminga is a Professor, Chairman of Psychiatry, and Chief of Translational Neuroscience Research in Schizophrenia at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical School. She holds the Stanton Sharp Distinguished Chair in Psychiatry. She directs clinical and preclinical research in schizophrenia focused on identifying disease mechanisms and on improving psychosis treatments.

The goal of Dr. Tamminga’s research is to examine and understand the mechanisms underlying schizophrenia, especially its most prominent symptoms, psychosis and memory dysfunction, in order to build rational treatments for the illness. She evaluates the function of the living human brain in individuals with and without schizophrenia using brain imaging and tissue techniques. Building on this knowledge, she uses human postmortem brain tissue to translate functional alterations from the living human patient into molecular observations of the illness. She is using case-specific neuronal cultures to address molecular and cellular questions. She leads a five-site Biomarker Consortium (BSNIP) studying psychosis. Her ultimate goal is to use the alterations in in vivo imaging, postmortem molecular changes, and cultured neuronal characteristics as biomarkers and targets for identifying animal models of disease and novel active pharmaceuticals for psychosis.

Listening To Schizophrenia: How Modern Neuroscience Explains the Subjective Experience of Schizophrenia and Points to New Treatment and Remediation Approaches



Daniel C. Javitt, M.D., Ph.D.

Columbia University Medical Center

Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric
Research

BBRF Scientific Council Member

1995 BBRF Independent Investigator

1990 BBRF Young Investigator

Early in his career, **Dr. Javitt** demonstrated that PCP induces its clinical effects by blocking neurotransmission at the N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) receptor. In 1991, he proposed a neurochemical model of schizophrenia based on the effects of PCP on NMDA receptors. This theory has since been extensively supported in pharmacological, immunological, and genetic research.

Dr. Javitt's recent research focuses on the role of basic auditory and visual processing deficits as drivers of cognitive impairment in schizophrenia and targets for treatment development. He calls attention to how EEG- and fMRI-based imaging measures can be used to isolate the source of cognitive deficits on an individual level, and seeks to show how targeted cognitive remediation, combined with non-invasive neuromodulatory approaches, can be developed to develop personalized intervention strategies targeting key bottlenecks to functional recovery.

In his presentation Dr. Javitt will focus on the brain mechanisms that underlie persistent cognitive deficits and clinical symptoms in schizophrenia with a particular emphasis on low-level auditory and visual deficits that undermine basic aspects of instrumental and social function. Specific examples include impairments in tone-matching ability that contribute to impairments in processes such as auditory verbal learning, auditory emotion recognition and phonological processing; and deficits in visual integration and motion processing that lead to impairments in rapid stimulus detection, face emotion recognition and reading.

"The Lieber Prize is the most prestigious recognition possible in the field of schizophrenia research. I am honored to be a recipient. We have come far in schizophrenia research, but still have a long way to go."

Targeting Brain Circuits to Improve Emotion Recognition in Schizophrenia



Antigona Martinez, Ph.D.

Columbia University Medical Center
Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric
Research
2005 BBRF Young Investigator

Dr. Martinez is a cognitive neuroscientist with a background in the neural basis of visual processing in humans. Recently, her research has focused on identifying the neural mechanisms that contribute to social cognitive impairments in schizophrenia, a major driver of long-term disability that currently lacks targeted treatments. She uses advanced brain imaging tools, including EEG and MRI, alongside non-invasive brain stimulation techniques such as transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS), to examine how deficits in early visual processing cascade into higher-order social cognitive dysfunction and poor functional outcomes. A central goal of this work is to develop neuroscience-based, personalized interventions to improve social functioning and quality of life for individuals living with schizophrenia.

People with schizophrenia often struggle to recognize facial emotions, making social interactions more difficult and isolating. Dr. Martinez' presentation will explore how non-invasive brain stimulation, specifically, transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS), may enhance the brain's ability to process facial emotions. By combining tDCS with brain imaging tools such as EEG and MRI, she will explain how her team examined how specific neural circuits contribute to emotion recognition and how they can be individually targeted to improve social functioning. This work lays the foundation for future interventions that go beyond symptom management and aim to enhance real-world social engagement and quality of life.

"Receiving the Maltz Prize is a tremendous honor. It not only recognizes the importance of addressing social cognitive dysfunction in schizophrenia, but also affirms the value of translational neuroscience aimed at improving real-world outcomes. This support strengthens my commitment to developing targeted, evidence-based interventions that can make a meaningful difference for people living with schizophrenia."

Genetic Analyses Yield Biological Insights into Bipolar Disorder with Potential Clinical Relevance



Ole A. Andreassen, M.D., Ph.D.

*University of Oslo and Oslo University
Hospital*

Centre for Precision Psychiatry

Research performed by **Dr. Andreassen** is translational, combining clinical, neurocognitive, and brain imaging methods with molecular genetics to identify causes and underlying pathophysiology of bipolar disorder and related mental and somatic disorders. He has initiated large, longitudinal cohorts in mental disorders building on Nordic populations and biobanks, and developed new analytical tools for big data to translate findings to the clinical setting to implement precision medicine tools.

Heritable factors are involved in the development of bipolar disorder, but the specific mechanisms remain mainly unknown. In his talk, Dr. Andreassen will explain that in a series of genetic studies of bipolar disorder, most recently including more than 2.9 million participants, he and colleagues increased genetic discovery to nearly 300 genetic variants in bipolar disorder. These genetic findings improved their understanding of the underlying biological mechanisms in the illness. Applying advanced analytical tools, the team showed that the genetic signal of bipolar disorders was related to specific brain cell types and molecular biological mechanisms. They identified differences in the genetic signal of bipolar disorder based on recruitment from hospital wards, or from the community. They also found different genetic signals between bipolar subtypes I and II. Dr. Andreassen says that this suggests differences in molecular biology, and can form the basis of future opportunities for new treatment development, and more precise and personalized treatment options.

"The Colvin Prize is a great honor for me personally, as well as my research group and collaborators, and highly inspirational for further work in this important research field."

What Can a Research Center in Brazil Tell Us About ADHD?



**Luis Augusto Paim Rohde,
M.D., Ph.D.**

*Hospital de Clínicas de Porto Alegre
Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul,
Brazil*

Dr. Rhode has participated in the working group to define the diagnostic criteria for ADHD and Disruptive Behavior Disorders in the DSM-5 manual for the American Psychiatric Association and has been president of the World Federation of ADHD. He has published more than 500 scientific articles, 50 book chapters or editorials, and is the organizer or editor of nine books on the mental health of children and adolescents in Brazil, England, Germany and the USA. Between 2020 and 2023, he was among the researchers most influential in the fields of psychology and psychiatry (top 1%) for the last decade, according to Clarivate (Web of Science). Among various awards, he has received the ADHD Lifetime Achievement from the World Federation of ADHD.

In this presentation, Dr. Rhode will discuss some relevant contributions from work at his research center to improve the understanding of ADHD, pertaining to epidemiology, a possible late-onset trajectory, and the predictability of adult ADHD, based on data from childhood, new non-pharmacological treatments, and scientific data that have had an impact upon national policies in Brazil. Through this journey, he will underline some key concepts learned on how to build a research center in a developing country, making it part of the international research effort in child and adolescent mental health.

“Receiving the Ruane Prize validates that it is possible to conduct culturally tuned and clinically interconnected high-quality research in low/middle-income countries comparable to the best performed in the most developed nations.”

What Happened to the “Mental” in “Mental Disorders”?



Joseph LeDoux, Ph.D.
New York University
NYU Langone Medical School

Dr. LeDoux has focused on the topics of emotion, memory, and consciousness, and their interaction in the brain. He is the author of several books, including *The Emotional Brain*, *Synaptic Self*, *Anxious*, *The Deep History of Ourselves*, and *The Four Realms of Existence*. Forthcoming is his memoir, *Starting Over: Tales from an Accidental Neuroscientist*. He is also a renowned musician. Dr. LeDoux's research has shed light on how the brain detects and responds to threats, and how memories about such experiences are formed and stored through cellular, synaptic, and molecular changes in the amygdala.

In his presentation, Dr. LeDoux will observe that while people often seek help for mental problems because they are suffering subjectively, for decades the subjective experience of patients has been marginalized. He will suggest that this is in part due to the dominant medical model of mental illness, which has tended to treat subjective experience as a relic of a scientifically less enlightened time. To the extent that subjective symptoms are related to the underlying problem, it is often assumed that they will be taken care of if the more objective symptoms, such as behavioral and physiological responses, are treated. Given that 'mental' disorders are named for, and defined by, their subjective mental qualities, Dr. LeDoux will suggest that it is perhaps not surprising, in retrospect, that treatments that have sidelined mental qualities have been disappointing at best. Negative views about subjective experience took root in psychiatry and allied fields decades ago when there were few avenues for rigorously studying subjective experience. It is his view that today, however, research on consciousness is thriving, and offers a viable scientific approach that could help achieve a deeper understanding of mental disorders and their treatment.

"I am deeply honored to be the recipient of the 2025 Goldman-Rakic Award. Pat was a prolific researcher and a pioneer in understanding the neural basis of high-order thought. I admired her work and achievements and will forever cherish this connection to her."

Empowering Maternal Voices Through Peer Support and Advocacy



Nur Yanayirah, Founder,
on behalf of 2025 Pardes prizewinner
MotherHope Indonesia

Founded in 2015, **MotherHope Indonesia** aims to promote perinatal mental health and enable support for mothers and families affected by perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. MotherHope Indonesia acts in various ways, face-to-face and digital, in an environment where there is otherwise limited support for the mental health and wellbeing of women and families in adversity. The founder of MotherHope Indonesia, **Nur Yanayirah**, has lived through postpartum depression and gathered others like herself to partner with dedicated professionals and community members to forge an evolving program of support that continues to extend its reach.

Nur Yanayirah (Yana) is a nutritionist, maternal mental health advocate, and women's rights activist. She will share her personal journey of hope and resilience, which began when she gave birth to a stillborn baby in 2011 and experienced postpartum depression (PPD) with her second child. Yana overcame these challenges and recovered from PPD. In 2015, she was trained by Postpartum Support International (PSI) and founded MotherHope Indonesia. She dedicates herself to providing support for women and families with similar experiences. She will explain how she and her team advocate for influencing policy changes in the medical system as well as seek to raise awareness of maternal mental health and women's rights. Currently, Yana serves on the Steering Group Committee for NIHR Global Health Research Group on Sustainable Care for Depression and Anxiety with STAND Indonesia and Indonesia University and works at Stillbirth Advocacy Working Group from International Stillbirth Alliance.

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*In recognition of Dr. Herbert Pardes, Constance and Stephen Lieber
for their remarkable dedication and collaboration in the advancement
of mental health research and Brain and Behavior Research Foundation.*



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