

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is the lead federal agency for research on mental illnesses. In fiscal year (FY) 2020, the Institute published the new NIMH Strategic Plan for Research, which serves as a broad roadmap for the Institute’s research priorities, spanning fundamental science to public health impact. Each spotlight in this report showcases the progress toward accomplishing the goals of this plan. NIMH continues to build on these and other scientific advances to achieve our mission to transform the understanding and treatment of mental illnesses through basic and clinical research, paving the way for prevention, recovery, and cure.

To read the Strategic Plan in full, please visit www.nimh.nih.gov/strategicplan.



GOAL 1

Define the Brain Mechanisms Underlying Complex Behavior



GOAL 2

Examine Mental Illness Trajectories Across the Lifespan



GOAL 3

Strive for Prevention and Cures



GOAL 4

Strengthen the Public Health Impact of NIMH-Supported Research

SPOTLIGHTS

Researchers Shed Light on Abnormal Neural Function in Rare Genetic Disorder

22q11.2 deletion syndrome is caused by the deletion of a piece of genetic material at location q11.2 on chromosome 22. Mental illnesses are common in individuals with this syndrome. NIMH-funded **researchers identified abnormal neuronal activity** in cells derived from people with 22q11.2 deletion syndrome. The researchers also found that altering specific gene expression and exposure to certain antipsychotic drugs could restore cellular functioning. These findings shed light on factors that may contribute to the development of mental illnesses in 22q11.2 deletion syndrome and may help identify possible targets for treatment development.

Aligns with Goal 1

Public-Private Partnership Aims to Develop Early Interventions for Schizophrenia

In collaboration with the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the European Medicines Agency, and multiple public and private partners, NIMH launched the **Accelerating Medicines Partnership®—Schizophrenia (AMP® SCZ) initiative**. AMP SCZ is part of the broader AMP program, which aims to identify and validate promising biological targets for therapeutics. The overall aims of AMP SCZ are to generate tools to predict individual outcomes and develop targeted interventions for individuals who are at risk for developing schizophrenia.

Aligns with Goal 2 and Challenges and Opportunities

Supporting the Development of Early Autism Screening Tools

Developing and validating early screening and detection methods for risk of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), particularly for children under one year of age, is vital for providing early intervention services and optimizing developmental outcomes. NIMH is partnering with other NIH Institutes to support seven research projects aimed at developing and validating **screening tools to detect signs of ASD** before the age of one. These projects seek to translate findings related to early-emerging signs of autism into practical ASD screening tools that can be implemented across various settings.

Aligns with Goal 3

Examining Practices for Reducing Incarceration of Individuals With Mental Illnesses

Many people involved with the criminal justice system have mental and/or substance use disorders. Addressing these disorders in an incarceration setting can be costly and time consuming. NIMH-supported researchers are examining the efficacy of the Stepping Up Initiative, a national effort to **reduce the number of people with mental illnesses in jails** by establishing systems to redirect justice-involved people into appropriate treatment and services. Findings from this study may inform other criminal justice and mental health quality improvement initiatives.

Aligns with Goal 4 and Cross-Cutting Research Themes



NIMH's Response to COVID-19

NIMH is committed to conducting and supporting research to address the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic poses to our nation's health. For example, NIMH is supporting research to examine community and digital health interventions to address new or worsening mental health problems, understand the impact of SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19-associated mitigation measures on the developing brain, and learn how the shift to telehealth might impact mental health care. NIMH is also participating in several NIH-wide initiatives, including **Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx)**, **Pregnant and Lactating Women and Children**, **Researching COVID to Enhance Recovery (RECOVER)**, and **Social, Behavioral, and Economic Health Impacts**. Several of these initiatives, such as **RADxSM Underserved Populations (RADx-UP)**, are focused on high-risk or vulnerable individuals disproportionately affected by COVID-19.

NIMH: FY 2020 at a Glance

BUDGET (APPROPRIATION)

 **\$2.038 B**

TOTAL PROJECTS

 **3,800+** Funded

NEW AND RENEWAL RESEARCH PROJECT GRANTS

 **2,694** Applications Received

607

Grants Awarded

Success Rate **23%**



NIMH FUNDS RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN:

49 States + D.C. and P.R.

 **17** Countries

NEXT GENERATION RESEARCHERS

99 New and Early-Stage Investigators (ESIs)

183 Early Established Investigators (EIs)



NIMH-CONDUCTED (INTRAMURAL) RESEARCH

40 Research Groups



10 Core Facilities/Resources

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND INITIATIVES

 **70** NIMH-Led

121 NIMH-Participated

DIGITAL OUTREACH

 **5** Social Media Events

200+ K Email Subscribers



20 M Page Views on the NIMH Website



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