About the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

What is NIMH?
The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) is the lead federal agency for research on mental disorders. NIMH is one of the 27 Institutes and Centers that make up the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the nation’s medical research agency. NIH is part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

What is the mission of NIMH?
The mission of NIMH is to transform the understanding and treatment of mental illnesses through basic and clinical research, paving the way for prevention, recovery, and cure.

How does NIMH fulfill its mission?
To fulfill its mission, NIMH:
- Supports and conducts research on mental illnesses and the underlying basic science of brain and behavior.
- Supports the training of scientists to carry out basic and clinical mental health research.
- Communicates with scientists, patients, providers, and the public about the science of mental illnesses.
- Strives for prevention and cures.
- Strengthens the public health impact of NIMH-supported research.

The NIMH Strategic Plan for Research guides the research the Institute supports and includes four Strategic Objectives:
- Define the mechanisms of complex behaviors.
- Chart mental illness trajectories to determine when, where, and how to intervene.
- Strive for prevention and cures.
- Strengthen the public health impact of NIMH-supported research.

What areas of research does NIMH support?
NIMH has four extramural research divisions that fund research programs at hospitals, universities, and other organizations:
- The Division of Neuroscience and Basic Behavioral Science (DNBBS) provides support for research programs in the areas of basic neuroscience, genetics, basic behavioral science, research training, resource development, and drug discovery. In cooperation with other NIMH programs and the wider research community, DNBBS ensures that relevant basic scientific knowledge is generated and used in pursuit of improved methods that, in the long term, could be used to diagnose, treat, and prevent mental illnesses.
- The Division of Translational Research (DTR) supports integrative, multidisciplinary research and training programs that translate findings from basic science to discover the causes, mechanisms, and trajectories of mental illnesses, and that develop effective interventions for individuals across the life span. DTR supports research on the characteristics of, and risk factors for, mental illnesses; the neurobehavioral mechanisms that underlie mental illnesses; the interactive influences of genetics, brain development, environment, and experience on risk and resilience; and
the design and testing of innovative treatments and interventions. DTR-supported research efforts may have medium-term impact and pave the way toward effective ways to treat and prevent mental illness.

- The **Division of Services and Intervention Research** (DSIR) supports research that evaluates the effectiveness of psychosocial, pharmacological, biological, rehabilitative, and combined interventions to prevent or treat mental illnesses. DSIR refines and evaluates treatment and preventive interventions for children, adolescents, and adults, focusing on acute and long-term symptom reduction, remission, and improved community functioning. DSIR also supports mental health services research, including interventions to improve the quality and outcomes of care; organization- and system-level interventions to enhance service delivery; and strategies for widespread dissemination and implementation of evidence-based treatments into routine care settings. DSIR-supported research is designed to have near-term impact, focused on improving care for individuals currently suffering from mental illnesses.

- The **Division of AIDS Research** (DAR) supports behavioral and social science studies aimed at reducing HIV/AIDS incidence through the development, testing, and implementation of new and improved prevention strategies; improving health outcomes of those living with HIV through improved linkage to care; and adherence to effective treatments. Behavioral and social science research is critical to understanding individual and community acceptance and uptake of prevention and treatment strategies. Such research informs efforts to fully optimize, widely disseminate, and successfully implement interventions. DAR research places special emphasis on key populations, health disparities, and mental illnesses that may increase the risk for contracting HIV or negatively impact the health outcomes of those living with HIV.

The **Division of Extramural Activities** (DEA) supports NIMH-funded research by providing leadership and advice for extramural programs and policies; providing guidelines for grant applications; and reviewing applications for grants, contracts, and cooperative agreements.

The **Division of Intramural Research Programs** (IRP) is the internal research component of NIMH, complementing the Institute’s extramural grant funding program. IRP scientists investigate basic, translational, and clinical aspects of brain function and behavior, conducting state-of-the-art research using unique NIH resources. In addition, IRP provides an excellent environment for training the next generation of clinical and basic scientists.

The **Office of the NIMH Director** includes a center and several offices that support Institute-wide research, policy, evaluation, and communications activities:

- The **Center for Global Mental Health Research** coordinates NIMH’s efforts to generate knowledge that will improve the lives of people living with mental illnesses in low-resource settings worldwide.

- The **Office on AIDS** plans, directs, coordinates, and supports biomedical and behavioral research designed to develop a better understanding of the biological and behavioral causes of HIV (AIDS virus) infection and more effective mechanisms for the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of AIDS.

- The **Office of Autism Research Coordination** manages the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee (IACC) and related cross-agency autism spectrum disorder (ASD) activities, programs, and policies. IACC is a federal advisory committee mandated by Congress to coordinate ASD-related activities across HHS.

- The **Office of Clinical Research** coordinates and oversees NIMH-funded clinical research studies and provides strategic guidance and recommendations to NIMH leadership about clinical research initiatives.
The Office of Disparities Research and Workforce Diversity coordinates NIMH-funded research activities aimed at reducing mental health disparities, promoting equity both within and outside of the United States, and diversifying the mental health research workforce.

The Office of Genomics Research Coordination facilitates and promotes research to elucidate genomic risk factors that underlie mental disorders.

The Office of Management directs and coordinates the Institute’s resource allocation and management improvement processes.

The Office of Rural Mental Health Research coordinates HHS research activities related to the mental health of residents of rural areas and coordinates and synergizes HHS activities with critical related activities of public and nonprofit entities.

The Office of Science Policy, Planning, and Communications plans and directs a comprehensive strategic agenda for national mental health policy and develops communications about NIMH priorities, policies, and scientific contributions.

The Office of Technology Development and Coordination supports basic and applied research related to the development of scientific tools, technologies, and approaches related to brain and behavioral research, including software, hardware, and wetware (e.g., novel genetic methods or bioactive and molecular imaging agents).

Where can I find more information about NIMH?
For more information, visit the NIMH website (www.nimh.nih.gov).

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