NIMH
STRATEGIC PLAN FOR RESEARCH

2023 Strategic Plan Progress Report

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 in FY 2023. 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**.

Spotlights

Celebrating NIMH's 75th Anniversary Year

On September 13, 2023, **NIMH kicked off its year-long 75th Anniversary celebration with a symposium titled "The Evolution of Mental Health Research."** Hosted on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) main campus, the event included remarks from NIH and NIMH leadership, presentations from scientific experts highlighting challenges and breakthroughs in mental health research, messages of support from members of Congress, and a poster session featuring work from NIMH's Division of Intramural Research Programs. By promoting collaboration across research fields and innovative research methodologies, NIMH shined a spotlight on how advances in mental health research and initiatives have profoundly impacted individuals, communities, and society.

Aligns with Cross-Cutting Research Themes

Aiming to Improve Early Autism Screening

Autism screening in the first 2 years of life is an essential tool for ensuring that children and families have access to appropriate supports and services as early as possible. In a project supported by NIMH, researchers examined whether incorporating a range of health and behavior measures from infants' health records **into a predictive model could help identify infants who are likely to later receive an autism diagnosis**. Using data from the first 360 days of life, the model correctly identified about 60% of children diagnosed with autism, while correctly identifying about 82% of the infants who did not receive a diagnosis. The researchers are continuing to refine these early detection models, with the long-term goal of developing an objective way to alert health care providers about patients who have a higher likelihood of receiving an autism diagnosis.

Aligns with Goal 2: Examine Mental Illness Trajectories Across the Lifespan |
Goal 4: Advance Mental Health Services to Strengthen Public Health

Using Long-acting Antiretroviral Therapy to Improve Outcomes in Underserved Populations

Daily oral antiretroviral therapy (ART) is an effective treatment option for people with HIV, but many people face barriers that make daily pill taking difficult. NIMH-supported research suggests that long-acting injectable medications, given every 4 or 8 weeks, could make treatment more accessible. In two separate studies, researchers found that long-acting ART **suppressed HIV in people who were previously not virologically suppressed**, and **conferred beneficial outcomes among people who faced challenges taking daily ART**. These findings indicate that long-acting treatments can benefit people who have historically had less access to ART, including people experiencing housing insecurity, mental illnesses, and substance use disorders.

Aligns with Goal 3: Strive for Prevention and Cures | Challenges and Opportunities

NIMH: FY 2023 AT A GLANCE

BUDGET (APPROPRIATION)
$2.338 billion

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES AND INITIATIVES
81 NIMH-led
106 NIMH-participated

TOTAL PROJECTS
4,000+ funded

NEW AND RENEWAL RESEARCH PROJECT GRANTS
2,674 applications received
579 grants awarded
22% success rate

NIMH FUNDS RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS IN:
47 states + D.C. and Puerto Rico
20 countries

Spotlights

Reducing Adult Suicide Risk With an Emergency Department Intervention

Suicide is a leading cause of death in the United States, but there are opportunities to intervene and save lives. Many people who die by suicide visit an emergency department in the weeks or months before their death, which can make these health care settings critical for helping people at risk. In the NIMH-supported **Emergency Department Safety Assessment and Follow-Up Evaluation 2 (ED-SAFE 2) study**, researchers conducted a randomized clinical trial to test a package of suicide prevention efforts in eight emergency departments. The package included staff training on implementing best practices for suicide prevention, such as universal screening and collaborative safety planning, and an ongoing evaluation process for these practices. The intervention package significantly reduced suicide risk, with a decrease in suicide-related deaths and emergency department visits in the 6 months after patients were discharged. These findings show how incorporating brief suicide interventions into routine emergency care can enhance clinical care, decrease suicide risk, and save lives.

Aligns with Goal 4: Advance Mental Health Services to Strengthen Public Health

Mapping the Genetic Landscape of Schizophrenia in the Brain

Genes play a key, yet complex, role in the risk for schizophrenia. Understanding the genetic factors that contribute to schizophrenia may lead to improved treatments for the disorder. In a project supported by NIMH, **researchers analyzed genomic data from over 24,000 people with schizophrenia and 97,000 people without schizophrenia**. The researchers identified 10 genes with ultra-rare coding variants that were significantly associated with schizophrenia. These genes are expressed in the brain and are known to play a role in regulating the function, movement, and growth of neurons. This research sheds light on biological pathways that may lead to altered neuronal function and contribute to the development of schizophrenia. Identifying specific genetic variations that are associated with schizophrenia is critical for developing treatments that target both genes and pathways that increase risk for disease.

Aligns with Goal 1: Define the Brain Mechanisms Underlying Complex Behaviors

NIMH: FY 2023 AT A GLANCE

NEXT GENERATION RESEARCHERS

99 new and early-stage investigators (ESIs)

180 early established investigators (EEIs)

NIMH-CONDUCTED (INTRAMURAL) RESEARCH

39 research groups

9 core facilities/resources

PUBLICATIONS

Nearly **9,000** papers published in peer-reviewed journals

DIGITAL OUTREACH

3 social media events

435,000+ email subscribers

28 million page views on the NIMH website

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