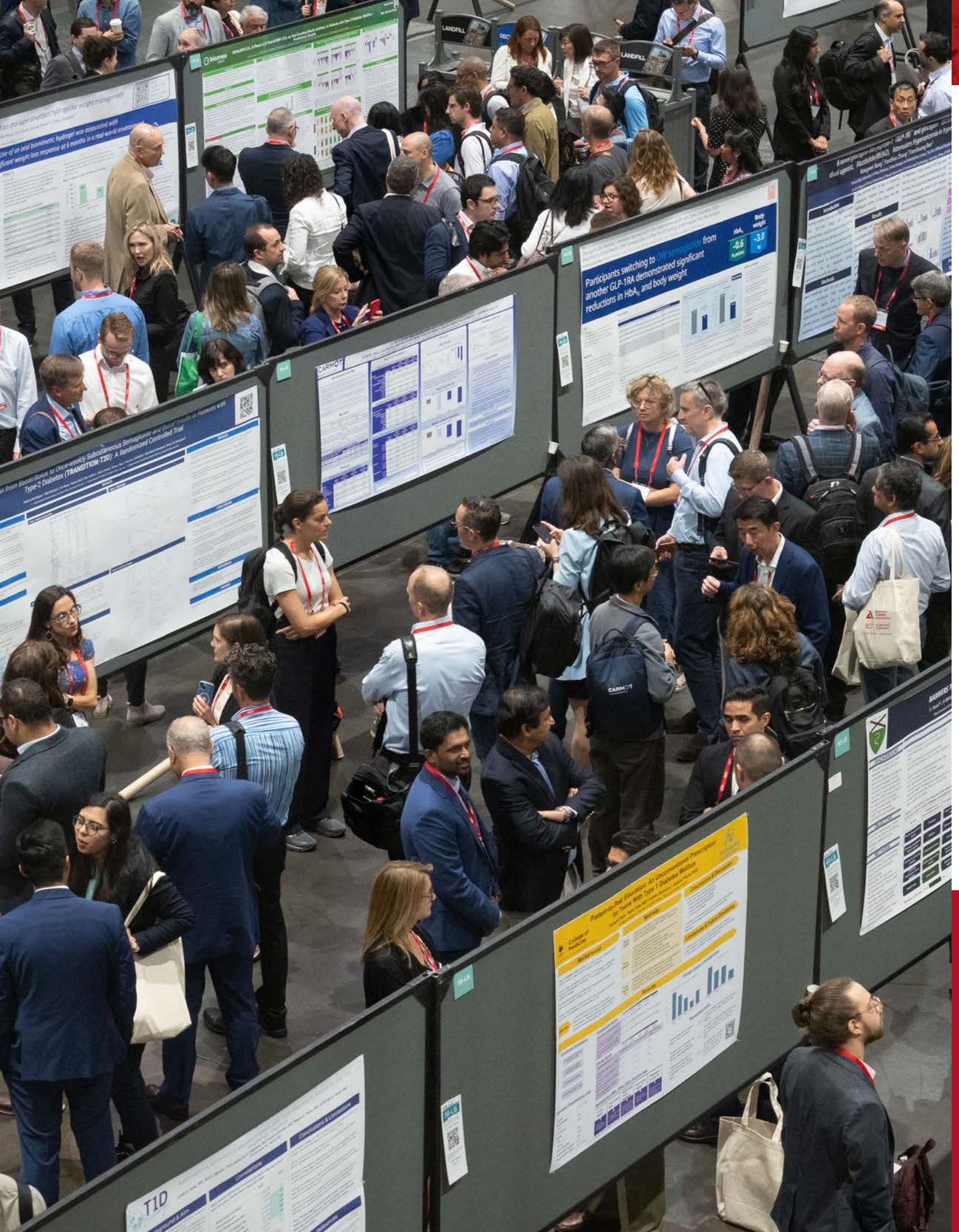
2024

Research Report

American Diabetes Association®



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About the American Diabetes Association

The mission of the American Diabetes Association® (ADA), founded in 1940, is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. This chronic disease is one of the fastest growing in the world, with 136 million Americans living with diabetes or prediabetes and a new diagnosis occurring every 26 seconds.

In the face of this epidemic, our mission has never been clearer, and our vision of a life free of diabetes and all its burdens is more critical than ever before. Through advocacy, program development, and education, we aim to improve the quality of life for everyone affected by diabetes.

The moving force behind the work of the ADA is a network of more than 565,000 volunteers, their families and caregivers, a professional society of nearly 12,000 health care professionals, as well as nearly 350 staff members.

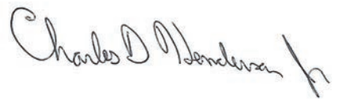
A Message from ADA Leadership

Research is the cornerstone of advancing the mission of the American Diabetes Association® (ADA) to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. By leading innovative studies and funding cutting-edge science, we aim to prevent, treat, and ultimately cure diabetes on a global scale, fostering hope and delivering transformative breakthroughs.

Since the ADA started its Research Program in 1952, we have invested more than $963 million in innovative studies. While we have made significant progress towards our mission, there is much left to discover about diabetes. By supporting the key aspects of research, including funding for early career investigators, fostering the next generation of leaders, and support for investigator-initiated research, we hope to uncover discoveries that will advance care and treatment for people living with diabetes.

One of the foundations of the ADA's research strategy is our Pathway to Stop Diabetes® (Pathway) program. The program seeks to identify a new generation of innovative scientists, physicians, and researchers and provide them with the financial support and professional mentorship they need to advance their diabetes research. In 2024, we provided Pathway grants to four new researchers, which you can read more about in this report. Since the inception of the program, we have provided grants to 43 extraordinary individuals who are dedicated to diabetes prevention and helping people with diabetes thrive.

We're thrilled to highlight the accomplishments of our brilliant researchers in our 2024 Research Report. Thank you for your ongoing support in our shared fight to someday end diabetes.



Charles Henderson
Chief Executive Officer

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Research Overview

The ADA has a long reputation of engagement and support of landmark studies aimed at improving the treatment and prevention of diabetes.

While we have learned a lot, there is much left to discover about diabetes. The ADA remains committed to providing critical funding to support innovative scientific discovery that translates to better treatment, healthier lives, and eventual cures.

Today, our research strategy is more targeted than ever before. This approach is helping us make meaningful, actionable changes in specific areas that are highly relevant to those affected by diabetes. As research advancements provide fresh insights into the ever-changing diabetes landscape, we are prepared to respond with targeted research to address the needs within our communities and to improve the lives of those living with diabetes.

While we have a targeted approach to funding, we are also continuing to invest in our many career and training awards. Investing in early career researchers is crucial for addressing the rising prevalence of diabetes and reducing the number of individuals afflicted with the condition. By supporting these researchers at the outset of their careers, we empower them to delve into innovative studies, explore novel treatment approaches, and uncover preventive measures. The complex nature of diabetes demands fresh perspectives and innovative insights, which early career researchers are uniquely poised to provide. Their enthusiasm can pave the way for breakthroughs that not only enhance our understanding of diabetes, but also yield transformative strategies for its prevention and management. Investing in these emerging talents is an investment in a healthier future for generations to come.

Currently, the ADA Research Programs team manages a portfolio of

193
ACTIVE AWARDS

51
NEW PROJECTS
that were funded in 2024

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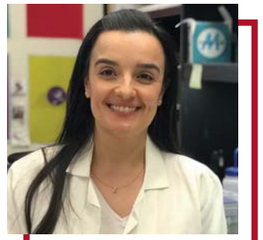
A Fresh Narrative in Type 2 Diabetes Research

Similar to reading a book in a language we have only just begun to understand, the world of genetics continually unfurls new paths of knowledge for us to discover. For complex diseases with strong genetic components like type 2 diabetes, understanding the way genetic variations function and impact an individual's risk may help turn the page in diabetes management and improve the treatment and prevention of diabetes.



Debora Rodrigues Sobreira, PhD

For Debora Rodrigues Sobreira, PhD, witnessing friends and family struggle with diabetes sparked a life-long curiosity about the genetic factors behind the disease. "Since early on in my career, I have been interested in the non-coding regions in the genome," she says. Genome-Wide Association Studies (GWAS) are research studies that scan the entire genome to find genetic variations linked to specific diseases or traits. This approach has identified over 700 independent genetic associations linked to type 2 diabetes, but it's still unclear what signals trigger these genes to activate. Dr. Sobreira is piecing together genetic signals and the development of type 2 diabetes to uncover novel genes, cellular pathways, and signaling mechanisms associated with the disease. By challenging conventional paradigms in GWAS and metabolic trait research, she is developing a platform to understand the underlying mechanisms behind these genetic variations.

Dr. Sobreira won her Pathway grant last year, allowing her to build a diverse team and pursue research rooted in creative thinking and novel experimental design. "I've used many different approaches, and both a computational approach and a functional assets approach are important in my research." She and her colleagues execute this multifaceted approach through the use of cutting-edge technologies like data science, single-cell analysis, disease modeling, induced pluripotent stem cells, and genetic screening. By integrating advanced methodologies, she hopes to translate discoveries into meaningful biological knowledge that can lead to innovative strategies in prevention and treatment.

The Pathway award has provided collaboration and mentoring opportunities that have enriched Dr. Sobreira's professional life. She is hopeful that her work will inspire others not only within diabetes, but across all fields of complex disease research. "Impact in research is a brick in a wall. I see myself putting in a brick that others can then build on to complete the whole picture." She implements this sentiment within her own lab through recruiting students from diverse backgrounds, educating them on scientific research and all its facets, helping them cultivate the skills needed to become future leaders in the field. Ultimately, Dr. Sobreira aspires to lay the groundwork for others to continue the story of genetics in diabetes and significantly impact type 2 diabetes clinical management for better outcomes, improved quality of life, and more personalized care.

> **With [the ADA's] encouragement, I am able to consider more innovative research. A high-risk idea has the potential for a high reward.**
>
> **— Debora Rodrigues Sobreira, PhD**

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These recently funded studies in our priority research areas aim to solve critical problems facing people with and at risk for diabetes.

Targeting Precision Medicine for Improved Outcomes

Aaron Leong, MD, MSc
Massachusetts General Hospital

While clinical guidelines recommend a tailored approach for type 2 diabetes pharmacological treatments, limitations exist in their ability to provide precise positive results for all patients. Dr. Aaron Leong realized early in his career as an endocrinologist that he wanted to explore a molecular explanation for the disparities in results being reported by clinics. Specifically, by understanding the underlying heterogeneity of molecular responses in treatments, this would allow for the development of more targeted strategies and improve patient care.

Dr. Leong aims to determine whether people's genetic profiles influence their response to sodium-glucose cotransporter-2 inhibitors (SGLT2i) that are typically prescribed for type 2 diabetes by looking at variants within the SLC5A2 gene. He is currently recruiting individuals with varied genetic predispositions for developing type 2 diabetes to allow for a wide range of responses and data. Another goal of his research is to use biobanks to assess whether the benefits of SGLT2i on glucose management, cardiovascular outcomes, and renal outcomes differ by people's genetic risk for developing diabetes-related complications.

Dr. Leong hopes these answers can help advance personalized patient care. "In terms of potential, we are at the beginning of how genetic information can be woven into clinical guidelines. We can get closer to helping a person who doesn't fall into the average. The sooner we can deliver the right treatment for a patient, the more engaged that patient will be in their care." With his ADA grant, he aspires to lay a foundation for trials across health care systems to identify patients most likely to benefit from SGLT2i therapy.

Language as a Tool for Better Care

Kevin Joiner, PhD, APRN, ANP-BC
University of Michigan

Words make a difference when managing diabetes. People with diabetes who experience, or even perceive stigmas around their disease are at an increased risk for distress, anxiety, and depression. Language can play a crucial role in either preventing or perpetuating these beliefs, affecting health-related outcomes for people living with diabetes.

The influence of the doctor-patient relationship on health outcomes has led Dr. Kevin Joiner to begin addressing the issues in language around type 2 diabetes through primary care professionals. His research aims to help primary care professionals minimize the use of diabetes-stigmatizing language in patient communication. He has developed a training module that models both strengths-based and stigmatizing language use in a video based on the ADA's language guidance. It aims to help practitioners evaluate their own interactions with patients.

Having recently finished recruitment and data collection, Dr. Joiner and his team have found promising preliminary results of the training module to change attitudes and increase perceived control in using non-stigmatizing language. Ultimately, Dr. Joiner hopes this data will support a future full-scaled randomized control trial of the training module in federally qualified health centers. "We talk about therapeutic inertia, and part of that is on health care providers to carefully consider the words they use. The way we talk to patients can be as important as the medication we are recommending."

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Empowering Change in Eating Disorder Care

Rachel Goode, PhD, MPH, MSW
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Having begun her career in a treatment setting for adults who were navigating eating disorders, Dr. Rachel Goode recognized a lack of tools for developing a healthy long-term plan for engaging with food. According to a recent study, Black adults living with diabetes face up to six times higher risk of experiencing binge eating behaviors compared to other ethnic groups, so Dr. Goode has set out to explore and address this disparity.

Upon receiving an ADA grant, Dr. Goode described the first phase of her research as pulling up a chair, grabbing a cup of coffee, and really listening to the experiences of Black adults with diabetes. She aimed to better understand the socioecological pathways of type 2 diabetes, including restriction, binge, and emotional eating. The second phase is developing a solution within diabetes self-management education (DSME) that is both individually tailored and accessible.

Using her previous experience with appetite awareness training, she has partnered with Nourishly and Black Women's Health Imperative to create an app that helps participants learn to eat within their hunger signals and achieve their nutritional goals with a plated approach. Not only will the app provide access to dietician feedback to those living with type 2 diabetes, it will include sessions with coaches for diabetes self-management education.

Currently, Dr. Goode and her team are finalizing the app and plan to begin recruitment for testing in early 2025. "Historically, DSME has been a one-size-fits-all approach, but we are as different as we can be. I think we are moving into a nutrition precision approach in medicine, tailoring to what works for a specific person for improved glycemic targets."

Trusted Spaces as Gateways to Diabetes Prevention

Kelly Palmer, PhD, MHS
University of Arizona

Women often go to the salon as part of a scheduled routine to feel good about themselves and maintain their appearance. While in the stylist's chair, they tend to divulge details about the events, successes, and struggles in their lives. These forthright, organic conversations with trusted community members may be one key to unlocking more participation in diabetes prevention programs.

Despite Black women bearing a disproportionate burden of type 2 diabetes, screening and referral rates remain low. Dr. Kelly Palmer hopes to show how salon stylists are well positioned to facilitate diabetes risk screening and encourage Black women to enroll in diabetes prevention programs. In the first phase of the project, Dr. Palmer and her team evaluated both hairstylists and women who frequent salons to assess the perception of and readiness for a salon-based diabetes prevention referral program.

After the team completes concept mapping of salon readiness and receives feedback from hair salons about the intervention plan, they hope to pilot the program in a few salons in 2025. Dr. Palmer says, "People often look at communities that are struggling or have suboptimal outcomes from a very deficit-focused lens. I like to look at those communities and ask what is working in them." Through her research, she hopes to understand how to leverage those assets in the community to engage in health behavior and promotion while mitigating disparate rates of diabetes and diabetes-related complications for Black women.

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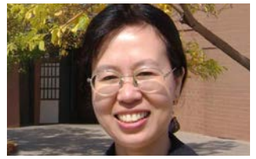
2024 New Grant Recipients

Improving the Lives of Women with Diabetes Across the Lifespan

These researchers aim to better understand clinically significant sex differences to better inform diabetes prevention, diagnosis, and treatment strategies for women across the lifespan.

Jacqueline Maya, MD
Massachusetts General Hospital

Tracey McLaughlin, MD
Stanford University



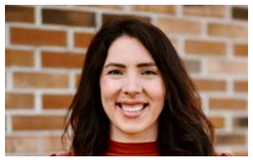
Guoying Wang, MD, PhD
Johns Hopkins University

Mingyu Zhang, PhD
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Supporting the Psychological and Emotional Needs of People with Diabetes

These researchers aim to deepen understanding of how to enhance all aspects of integrating mental health care into clinical settings for people with diabetes, with a particular focus on under-resourced families.

Lily C. Chao, MD
Childrens Hospital Los Angeles



Amanda M. Ziegler, PhD
University at Buffalo

Tackling the Epidemic of Youth-Onset Type 2 Diabetes

These researchers aim to address key knowledge gaps in youth-onset type 2 diabetes to enhance understanding, advance prevention, improve treatment, and ultimately achieve remission for the rising number affected by this serious public health concern.

Ryan Brady, MD
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

Emma Edmondson, MD
University of Pennsylvania

Shylaja Srinivasan, MD
University of California, San Francisco

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Centers for Diabetes Translation Research

The ADA proudly partners with the Centers for Diabetes Translation Research (CDTR), a program funded by the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). The CDTR's aim is to improve the translation of research findings related to diabetes prevention, treatment, and health outcomes by supporting research across the translational spectrum. The ADA has supported the following researchers to advance discoveries in health disparities through highly specialized technical expertise, as well as support research resources to established and early-stage investigators. For more information about the CDTR program, please visit **diabetes-translation.org**.

Cherie Conley, PhD, MSN, MIS, MHS
University of Michigan

Johanna Daily, MD, MS
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Jennie Davis, PhD, RDN
University of California, Davis

Wenjun Fan, MD, PhD, MS
University of California, Irvine

Erin Ferranti, PhD, MPH, RN, FAHA
Emory University

Reagan L. Miller, PhD, MS
Colorado State University

Ha Ngan Vu, PhD, MA
Northwestern University

Impact of Diabetes Camps

In 2024, the ADA launched the Priority Research Agreement (PRA), a targeted funding mechanism that allows the Research Program team to directly invite investigators to address critical gaps in diabetes research. This mechanism aligns with the ADA's strategic priorities while focusing on research questions outside the scope of existing requests for applications (RFAs). This year, the PRA mechanism was used to support research aimed at better understanding the impact of diabetes camps on youth with type 1 diabetes and their caregivers.

Kelsey Howard, PhD
Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

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Funding the Next Generation of Leaders in Diabetes Research

Investing in postdoctoral fellowship awards is crucial for addressing the rising prevalence of diabetes and reducing the number of individuals afflicted by the condition. By supporting these researchers at the outset of their careers, we empower them to delve into innovative studies, explore novel treatment approaches, and uncover preventive measures. The complex nature of diabetes demands fresh perspectives and insights, which early career researchers are uniquely poised to provide. Their enthusiasm can pave the way for breakthroughs that not only enhance our understanding of diabetes, but also yield transformative strategies for its prevention and management. Investing in these emerging talents is an investment in a healthier future for generations to come.

In 2024, the ADA welcomed a record number of postdoctoral fellowship applications spanning a wider spectrum of diabetes research aiming to invigorate and diversify the pool of talent dedicated to advancing our understanding of diabetes. To review this pool of postdoctoral fellowship award applications, we solicited a group of 77 new and seasoned reviewers, many of them past ADA grantees themselves. All applicants who advanced to the review stage were provided with expert feedback on their submissions, regardless of whether they were chosen for an award, to encourage them to continue their pursuits.

We're thrilled with the results, which have added 29 postdoctoral fellows to the ADA's research portfolio. It's all part of the ADA's commitment to nurturing a pipeline of leaders in diabetes research and supporting them at every stage along the way.

2024 Postdoctoral Fellowship Awardees

Sungho Bea, PhD
Partners Healthcare System

Jasmine Burrell, PhD
Morehouse School of Medicine

Zhe Cao, PhD
Harvard University

Srikanta Chowdhury, PhD
Columbia University

Karima Drareni, PhD
University of Pennsylvania

Xue Feng, PhD
University of California, La Jolla

Haipeng Fu, PhD
University of California, La Jolla

Ji Seul Han, PhD
Harvard Medical School

Qoua Her, PharmD
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Lara Hernandez, PhD
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas

Injae Hwang, PhD
University of Pennsylvania

Fahmida Jahan, PhD
Joslin Diabetes Center

Ioannis Lempesis, MD, PhD
Brigham and Women's Hospital

Jin Li, PhD
University of Michigan

Ignacio Norambuena-Soto, PhD
Beckman Research Institute of City of Hope

Ana Pinto, PhD
University of Colorado School of Medicine

Kellen Rodrigues, MD, PhD
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Adam Salon, PhD
Augusta University

Heidi Schmidt, PhD
David Geffen School of Medicine at University of California, Los Angeles

Harshraj Shinde, PhD
University of Kansas Medical Center

Omprakash Singh, PhD
University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas

Seunghwan Son, PhD
University of California, La Jolla

Jie Sun, PhD
The Scripps Research Institute

Wenxin Tong, PhD
Duke University

Amritha Trikkur Madom Seetharaman, PhD
University of Tennessee

Shirong Wang, PhD
Joslin Diabetes Center

Yijun Yang, MD, PhD
University of Pennsylvania

Giorgia Zanetti, PhD
Columbia University

Qiantao Zheng, PhD
University of Michigan

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2024 Active Grant Awardees

ARIZONA

Daniel Nuyujukian, PhD
Phoenix VA Health Care System

Kelly Palmer, PhD
University of Arizona

CALIFORNIA

Lauren Au, PhD, RD
University of California, Davis

Lily Chao, MD
Childrens Hospital Los Angeles

Jennie Davis, PhD
University of California, Davis

Ilia Droujinine, PhD
The Scripps Research Institute

Jennifer Falbe, PhD
University of California, Davis

Xue Feng, PhD
University of California, La Jolla

Haipeng Fu, PhD
University of California, La Jolla

Lisa Gilliam, MD, PhD
Kaiser Permanente Northern California

Anjali Gopalan, MD
Kaiser Permanente Northern California

Sarah Haynes, PhD
University of California, Davis

Mark Huising, PhD
University of California, Davis

Sunhee Jung, PhD
University of California, Irvine

Daniel Seung Kim, MD, PhD
Stanford University

James Landay, PhD
Stanford University

Ikjun Lee, PhD
University of California, Berkeley

Tracey McLaughlin, MD
Stanford University

Maxence Nachury, PhD
University of California, San Francisco

Ignacio Norambuena-Soto, PhD
Beckman Research Institute
of City of Hope

Julia Panzer, PhD
Beckman Research Institute
of City of Hope

Heidi Schmidt ,PhD
David Geffen School of Medicine at
University of California, Los Angeles

Waghata Semere ,MD
University of California, San Francisco

Debora Rodrigues Sobreira, PhD
David Geffen School of Medicine at
University of California, Los Angeles

Seunghwan Son, PhD
University of California, La Jolla

Shylaja Srinivasan, MD
University of California, San Francisco

Jie Sun, PhD
The Scripps Research Institute

Alaina Vidmar, MD
Childrens Hospital Los Angeles

Lauren Wisk, PhD
University of California, Los Angeles

Jessie Wong, PhD
Stanford University

Yue Wu, PhD
Stanford University

Pengfei Zhang, PhD
Beckman Research Institute
of City of Hope

COLORADO

Richard Benninger, PhD
University of Colorado, Anschutz
Medical Campus

Angela Brega, PhD
University of Colorado, Denver

Howard Davidson, PhD
University of Colorado, Denver

Wenjun Fan, MD, PhD
University of Colorado, Denver

Nikki Farnsworth, PhD
Colorado School of Mines

Lauren Gulley, PhD, MA
University of Colorado, Anschutz
Medical Campus

Chao Li, PhD
University of Colorado, Denver

Susanna Lopez, PhD
University of Colorado, Denver

Reagan Miller, PhD
University of Colorado, Denver

Sungho Park, PhD
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Rocio Pereira, MD
Denver Health and Hospital Authority

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Elizabeth Thomas, MD
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Megan Baker, MD
Yale University

William Chang, MD, PhD
Yale University School of Medicine

Magdalena Perez-Cardelo, PhD
Yale University School of Medicine

Louise Reagan, PhD
University of Connecticut

Stephanie Samuels, MD
Yale University School of Medicine

Melissa Santos, PhD
Connecticut Children's Foundation

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Ramin Asgary, MD
George Washington University

Jody Grundman, MD
Children's Research Institute

Wanda Nicholson, MD
George Washington University

FLORIDA

Ivan Jozic, PhD
University of Miami

Leeana Peters, PhD
University of Florida

Anu Sharma, MD
University of Florida School of
Medicine

Yue Wang, PhD
Florida State University

GEORGIA

Rosa Arriaga, PhD
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Morehouse School of Medicine

Erin Ferranti, PhD
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Jacob Kariuki, PhD
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Britt Marshall, MD
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Adam Salon, PhD
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Hannah Guak, PhD
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Hyun CheolRoh, PhD
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College of Medicine

Bhagirath Chaurasia, PhD
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University of Kansas Medical Center

Felicia Steger, PhD
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Guoying Wang, MD, PhD
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Zhe Cao, PhD
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Ji Seul Han, PhD
Harvard Medical School

Soren Harnois-Leblanc, PhD
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Jacqueline Maya, MD
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Josep Mercader, PhD
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HealthPartners Institute

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Center for Nutrition & Health Impact

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Lu Hu, PhD
New York University School of
Medicine

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Mount Sinai Hospital

Yi Wang, PhD
Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Dongxiang Xue, PhD
Joan & Sanford I. Weill Medical College
of Cornell University

Giorgia Zanetti, PhD
Columbia University

Amanda Ziegler, PhD
University at Buffalo

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Qoua Her, PharmD
University of North Carolina
at Chapel Hill

Anna Kahkoska, MD, PhD
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at Chapel Hill

Katherine Sauder, PhD
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Wenxin Tong, PhD
Duke University

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Catherine McManus, PhD
Case Western Reserve University

Laureen Smith, PhD
Ohio State University

Yuqing Zhang, PhD
University of Cincinnati

OKLAHOMA

Cassie Mitchell, PhD
University of Oklahoma

PENNSYLVANIA

Isin Cakir, PhD
University of Pittsburgh

Karima Drareni, PhD
University of Pennsylvania

Emma Edmondson, MD
Children's Hospital of Philadelphia

Injae Hwang, PhD
University of Pennsylvania

David Merrick, MD, PhD
University of Pennsylvania

Rachel Miller, PhD
University of Pittsburgh

Dan Shan, MD, PhD
Temple University

Siddharth Sunilkumar, PhD
Pennsylvania State University
School of Medicine

Sarah Tishkoff, PhD
University of Pennsylvania

Yijun Yang, MD, PhD
University of Pennsylvania

SOUTH CAROLINA

Windsor Sherrill, PhD
Clemson University

TENNESSEE

Julie Bejoy, PhD
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

Samantha Ehrlich, PhD
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Shelagh Mulvaney, PhD
Vanderbilt University

**Amritha Trikkur Madom
Seetharaman, PhD**
University of Tennessee

MD Imam Uddin, PhD
Vanderbilt University Medical Center

TEXAS

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Baylor College of Medicine

Bethany Cartwright, MD, PhD
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Feng Gao, PhD
Baylor College of Medicine

Megan Gray, MD
University of Texas at Austin

Lara Hernandez, PhD
University of Texas Southwestern
Medical Center at Dallas

Kathryn Kanzler, PsyD, ABPP
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Yongxiang Li, PhD
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University of Texas Southwestern
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Omprakash Singh, PhD
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Fenfen Wang, PhD
University of Texas Health Science
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Marcus Pezzolesi, PhD
University of Utah

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University of Virginia

Xinxin Chen, PhD
University of Virginia

Anas El Fathi, PhD
University of Virginia

Uta Erdbruegger, MD
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Henri Parson, PhD
Eastern Virginia Medical School

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Kimberly Alonge, PhD
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Benaroya Research Institute
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Nicole Ehrhardt, MD
University of Washington

Jenny Kanter, PhD
University of Washington

Kalie Tommerdahl, MD
Seattle Children's Hospital

WISCONSIN

Aprill Dawson, PhD
Medical College of Wisconsin

Christopher Emfinger, PhD
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Eva Vivian, PharmD, PhD
University of Wisconsin, Madison

WYOMING

Grace Shearrer, PhD
University of Wyoming

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Pathway to Stop Diabetes® 2024 Awardees

The ADA's Pathway program was founded with a singular vision: To introduce a new generation of brilliant scientists to diabetes research. The ADA supports Pathway scientists for five to seven years, giving them the freedom to explore new ideas without the constraints of traditional project-based funding. Pathway awardees are selected by the ADA's Mentor Advisory Group - an esteemed group of eminent scientists from diabetes research and other fields who personify the core elements needed for exceptional science: rigorous thought processes, keen intellect, and the capacity for innovation, creativity, and productivity. In addition to the selection process, the mentors provide ongoing scientific and career advice to Pathway researchers throughout the duration of the awards, creating a challenging and collaborative environment in which transformative science can thrive.

Over the past decade, this initiative has successfully propelled 43 scientists into independent faculty positions, resulting in numerous inventions, patents, startups, and published manuscripts, showcasing its transformative impact on diabetes care.

Decoding and Validating Interorgan Communication Proteins as New Therapeutic Targets in Diabetes

Ilia Droujinine, PhD
The Scripps Research Institute

Secreted proteins play a vital role in how organs communicate and work together. When not working properly, these messengers may contribute to the development of diabetes and obesity. Dr. Ilia Droujinine plans to examine the largely unexplored role that proteins produced by the intestine play in interorgan communication. While intestine-secreted proteins have been historically difficult to identify, the Droujinine lab has established an inducible biotin-ligase (BirA*G3) system to identify proteins that traffic and signal to distal organs.

Dr. Droujinine aims to demonstrate how imbalances in intestine-secreted proteins associated with type 2 diabetes affect fat formation, breakdown, and storage throughout the body - influencing metabolism, blood sugar levels, and inflammation. Better understanding of interorgan communication proteins can help develop the next generation of therapeutics to combat type 2 diabetes and its complications.

Preventing Type 2 Diabetes in Black Adult Women At Risk for Binge Eating Disorder

Rachel Goode, PhD
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hil

To build upon her research related to eating disorders in Black adults, Dr. Rachel Goode, was awarded a Pathway grant to focus some of her research specifically on Black women. With Black women having significantly higher rates of reported emotional eating in adolescence and the highest rates of obesity in the nation, Dr. Goode is exploring a new approach to lower type 2 diabetes risk for this population.

Dr. Goode is focused on adapting and translating an Appetite Awareness Diabetes Prevention Program (ATT + DPP) for Black adult women at risk for binge eating disorder and type 2 diabetes. After formative research to understand type 2 diabetes prevention needs among emergent adults, she hopes to develop a individualized approach that can be used to conduct a pilot feasibility study. By reducing binge eating, improving emotion regulation, and preventing weight gain in Black adult women, Dr. Goode hopes to establish a new pathway in diabetes prevention.

Optogenetic Stimulation of Thermogenic Adipose as a Novel Cell Therapy for Obesity and Metabolic Disease

David Merrick, MD, PhD
University of Pennsylvania

Obesity and related conditions like diabetes are major health challenges. Current medications that promote satiety, like GLP-1 receptor agonists, are effective for initial weight loss but often cause side effects that reduce their effectiveness. Additionally, they don't address the challenge of keeping the weight off long term. Since there are no approved drugs to help the body burn more energy, sustained weight loss remains difficult.

Dr. David Merrick aims to ultimately develop an innovative treatment to help people maintain weight loss by increasing the body's ability to burn energy. His approach leverages the heat-generating properties of brown adipose tissue, also known as brown fat. Building on his team's discovery of diverse populations of adipose progenitors, he hopes to generate large quantities of clinical-grade, patient-derived brown fat cells outside of the body that are optimally amenable to autologous re-implantation. To promote thermogenic activity, the team is engineering these cells with a receptor that couples the absorption of light to the stimulation of brown fat thermogenesis. Dr. Merrick's pre-clinical research studies will evaluate if light-activated transplanted brown fat cells can burn energy and alleviate the metabolic consequences of obesity in animal models.

Integration of a Trained Language Model To Improve Glycemic Control Through Increased Physical Activity: A Fully Digital My Heart Counts Smartphone App Randomized Trial

Daniel Seung Kim, MD, PhD
Stanford University

The introduction of smartphones and watches has allowed people to track their daily movement. For people with or at risk for type 2 diabetes, setting physical activity goals can mean improved success with glycemic targets. Dr. Daniel Seung Kim is advancing his work with the My Heart Counts app, which initially found that personalized e-coaching interventions increased step count by extending the app to link with electronic medical records to import laboratory data. With pre-trained artificial intelligence (AI), the app now delivers personalized e-coaching interventions based on the Stages of Change model.

Dr. Kim will assess the app's effectiveness in a randomized crossover trial that compares the daily AI-generated coaching interventions to reminders to reach 10,000 steps. He also aims to evaluate the efficacy of AI-generated prompts and chatbot capabilities to influence daily step counts, A1C levels, and weight management goals. Combining innovative digital health and AI, Dr. Kim hopes to improve short- and long-term physical activity maintenance in people with type 2 diabetes.

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Pathway to Stop Diabetes® Award Winners

2014

Michael Dennis, PhD
Pennsylvania State University
Hyperglycemia-Induced Translational Control of Gene Expression in the Retina

Kathleen Page, MD
University of Southern California
Neural Mechanisms in Maternal-Fetal Programming for Obesity and Diabetes

Stephen Parker, PhD
University of Michigan
Deconstructing Type 2 Diabetes Using Genome-Wide High-Density Multi-Tissue 'Omics' Profiling

Wolfgang Peti, PhD
University of Arizona
Pathways to a Cure: Novel, Innovative Insights into Insulin Signaling and Regulation using NMR Spectroscopy

Joshua Thaler, MD, PhD
University Washington
Modulating Glial-Neuronal Interactions to Treat Obesity and Diabetes

2015

Mayland Chang, PhD
University of Notre Dame
A Strategy to Accelerate Diabetic Wound Repair

Thomas Delong, PhD
University of Colorado Denver
The Role of Hybrid Insulin Peptides in the Development of Type 1 Diabetes

Zhen Ghu, PhD
University of California, Los Angeles
Bio-Inspired Synthetic Pathway for Closed-Loop Delivery of Insulin and Glucagon

Marie-France Hivert, MD
Harvard Pilgrim Health Care
Understanding Pathways of Fetal Metabolic Programming to Stop the Transgenerational Risk of Diabetes

Celine Riera, PhD
Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
Identification of Sensory Neural Circuits Controlling Metabolic Disorders

Stephanie Stanford, PhD
University of California, San Diego
PTPN22: Model Gene to Unravel the Interaction Between Genetics and Environment in T1D

2016

Daniel Ceradini, MD
New York University School of Medicine
Therapeutically targeting Keap1/Nrf2 dysfunction in diabetes

Zachary Knight, PhD
University of California, San Francisco
Reinvestigation of the arcuate feeding circuit

Andrew Scharenberg, MD
Seattle Children's Hospital
Regulatory T-cell stabilization via gene editing as novel therapy for Type I diabetes

Praveen Sethupathy, PhD
Cornell University
Systems approach to defining genetic regulation of intestinal physiology and gut microbiota in diet-induced obesity

Sui Wang, PhD
Stanford University School of Medicine
Dissection of Gene Regulatory Networks underlying Diabetic Retinopathy

Phillip White, PhD
Duke University
A new homeostatic mechanism for metabolic control

2017

Paul Cohen, MD, PhD
Rockefeller University
Dissecting the role of beige fat in metabolic homeostasis

Jonathan Flak, PhD
Indiana University School of Medicine
Targeting the VMN to Understand Hypoglycemia Pathogenesis

Aleksandar Kostic, PhD
Joslin Diabetes Center
Generation of an in vivo system for dissection of the human type 1 diabetes-associated microbiome

Sumita Pennathur, PhD
University of California, Santa Barbara
Untethering diabetes through innovative engineering

David Spiegel, MD, PhD
Yale University School of Medicine
Targeting glucosepane crosslinks in diabetes

Sarah Stanley, MD, PhD
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
Central nervous system regulation of glucose metabolism

2018

John Campbell, PhD
University of Virginia
Molecular and functional taxonomy of vagal motor neurons

Samie Jaffrey, MD, PhD
Joan & Sanford I.Weill Medical College of Cornell University
Rewiring cellular metabolic networks in diabetes

Alexander Nectow, MD, PhD
Columbia University
Investigation of Brainstem Neurons Regulating Energy Balance

Michael Stitzel, PhD
The Jackson Laboratory
Deciphering Longitudinal Cell Type-Specific Defects in Diabetes Pathogenesis

Randi Streisand, PhD
Children's Research Institute
Improving health communication during the transition from pediatric to adult diabetes care

Jonathan Sweedler, PhD
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
Unraveling diabetes progression a cell at a time

2019

Ebony Carter, MD
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Targeted lifestyle change group prenatal care for obese women at high risk for gestational diabetes: a randomized controlled trial

Sarah Tishkoff, PhD
University of Pennsylvania
Genetic risk factors for adult-onset diabetes in populations of African Ancestry

Matthew Webber, PhD
University of Notre Dame
Hypoglycemic rescue with glucose-responsive glucagon delivery devices

2020

Judith Agudo, PhD
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Harnessing immune privilege mechanisms from stem cells to protect beta-cells from immune attack

Maxence Nachury, PhD
University of California, San Francisco
Regulation of body weight homeostasis and beta cell function by primary cilia

2022

Lisa Beutler, MD, PhD
Northwestern University Medical School
Dissecting sugar-induced modulation of gut-brain circuits

Anna Kahkoska, MD, PhD
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Fusing rapid-cycle testing and adaptive interventions: A scientific pipeline to translate and individualize evidence-based psychosocial and behavioral interventions in routine type 1 diabetes care

2023

Chelsea Hepler, PhD
University of Michigan
Integration of circadian and inflammatory pathways in metabolic homeostasis

Debora Rodrigues Sobreira, PhD
David Geffen School of Medicine at University of California, Los Angeles
Linking variants to function: understanding the genetics of type 2 diabetes through multi-omic data

Lu Wang, PhD
Tufts University
Leveraging the online grocery shopping environment to improve diet and advance health equity

2024

Ilia Droujinine, PhD
The Scripps Research Institute
Decoding and validating interorgan communication proteins as new therapeutic targets in diabetes

Rachel Goode, PhD, MPH, MSW
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Preventing Type 2 Diabetes in Black Emergent Adult Women At-Risk for Binge-Eating Disorder

Daniel Seung Kim, MD, PhD, MPH
Stanford University
Integration of a trained language model to improve glycemic control through increased physical activity: a fully digital My Heart Counts smartphone app randomized trial

David Merrick, MD, PhD
University of Pennsylvania
Optogenetic stimulation of thermogenic adipose as a novel cell therapy for obesity and metabolic disease

MENTOR ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

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Duke University

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Elbert Huang, MD
University of Chicago

Barbara Kahn, MD
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Rohit Kulkarni, MD, PhD
Joslin Diabetes Center

Lori Laffel, MD, MPH
Joslin Diabetes Center

David Nathan, MD
Massachusetts General Hospital

Stephen C.J. Parker, PhD
University of Michigan

Sumita Pennathur, PhD
University of California, Santa Barbara

Jane Reusch, MD
University of Colorado, Denver

Christopher J. Rhodes, PhD
AstraZeneca

Alan R. Saltiel, PhD
University of California, San Diego

Jean E. Schaffer, MD
Harvard Medical School

Michael Schwartz, MD
University of Washington

Andrew Stewart, MD
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

Karen Talmadge, PhD
Nabu Strategic Advisors

> "I want to thank the ADA and the Pathway program for being a game-changer for my work. The ADA Pathway award not only supported the BrainChild Study, uncovering key findings in maternal-child health and diabetes risk, but also inspired my trainees to explore new, exciting areas in diabetes and brain development. It's incredibly rewarding to see how the child participants in the study have been inspired by this work, illustrating the program's goal of cultivating the next generation of research leaders. My Pathway project is making a transgenerational impact—through both the discoveries and the future scientists it inspires."
>
> **— Kathleen Page, MD, MS**
>
> Associate Professor of Medicine and Pediatrics, Co-Chief,
> Division of Endocrinology & Diabetes Director, Diabetes and Obesity Research Institute
> Keck School of Medicine of University of Southern California

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2024 Scientific Sessions

In June 2024, the ADA hosted the 84th Scientific Sessions in Orlando, Florida. The ADA's Scientific Sessions is the world's largest diabetes meeting, convening leading physicians, scientists, researchers, and health care professionals from around the globe. The hybrid meeting featured the latest scientific findings in diabetes research, prevention, and care which included:

2,000+
RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

2,320
ABSTRACTS PUBLISHED

in addition to providing networking opportunities for

11,190 **ATTENDEES**

FROM **116** **COUNTRIES**

Register for the 85th Scientific Sessions at
professional.diabetes.org/Scientific-Sessions.

2024 Outstanding Scientific Achievement Award

While health care professionals don't have a crystal ball to foretell future disease in a patient, research advances are progressively improving the ability to assess disease risk and make more effective treatment decisions. A deeper understanding of the impact of genomic variations has the potential to greatly enhance this ability, enabling health care professionals to better identify predispositions to complex diseases like diabetes and to choose treatments more effectively. Researchers like Steven Parker, PhD, are leading the way in unlocking this life-changing knowledge.

Dr. Parker's research explores how disease susceptibility is encoded in the non-coding portion of the genome. At the 2024 Scientific Sessions, Dr. Parker was awarded the ADA's prestigious Outstanding Scientific Achievement Award for his work in genetic predisposition in type 2 diabetes and related traits. With a long history in bioinformatics, Dr. Parker's research progress was greatly accelerated after receiving the ADA's Pathway award. "I believe the Pathway award in 2014 set me on this trajectory. They invested in me and I'm just so thankful." Along with that support, Dr. Parker credits this award for providing him access to top researchers in the field who mentored him as another reasonfor his accomplishments.

"This award recognizes Steven's ground-breaking research in epigenomics and serves as a testament to the remarkable potential of the Pathway program, which supports and mentors early career researchers who show amazing talent and promise of productivity," said one of the organizers. "Dr. Parker's work epitomizes the commitment of the Pathway program to nurture talent and innovation in the field."

Over the past year, Dr. Parker helped open the Epigenomic Metabolic Medicine Center at the University of Michigan, with the goal of generating single-cell multi-omics datasets from key metabolic tissues. Achieving this goal could lead to a comprehensive picture of the connection between genetic and environmental factors and diabetes onset and progression. Knowing these new genetic mechanisms can lead to better strategies to detect, treat, and prevent type 2 diabetes.

In the work of predicting future health, Dr. Parker emphasizes one point—success in epigenomics is the result of a team-focused approach. "I think of this award as a result of the cumulative effect of the exceptional people on the team, both people who work in my lab as well as collaborators."

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Bringing Researchers Together

Innovative Approaches to Psychosocial Care and Access in Youth and Adult Diabetes Management Workshop

Addressing the psychosocial aspects of diabetes care is essential to improving outcomes for individuals of all ages. Factors such as mental health, stress, and access to social support can significantly influence diabetes management. Innovative strategies are needed to ensure care is both inclusive and responsive to the diverse needs of youth and adults living with diabetes.

In November 2024, the ADA hosted grant recipients conducting research in mental health and difference in health outcomes for the Innovative Approaches to Psychosocial Care and Access in Diabetes Prevention and Management workshop. Program officers from the NIDDK also participated, sharing insights on research priorities and opportunities for funding. This two-day event covered both psychosocial and health challenges in youth and adults with type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

The presentations covered a rich variety of topics, such as rapid implementation and optimization of individualized psychosocial and behavioral interventions in clinical settings and an innovative precision medicine approach to detect and treat device-related diabetes distress. Attendees also discussed their research on youth with type 1 diabetes, including reducing diabetes-specific emotional distress in teenagers, promoting adolescent self-management and investment in diabetes care.

Presenters posed solutions for addressing the psychosocial needs of youth with type 2 diabetes. They highlighted the potential benefits of integrating a team approach for appointments and mental health interventions tailored to youth within the specialty care setting. Additionally, the relationship between brain function and structure in youth with type 2 diabetes was discussed.

Speakers also explored topics that addressed psychosocial issues of vulnerable populations within diabetes care. This included minimizing diabetes-stigmatizing language, addressing multi-level barriers associated with diabetes technology use in under-resourced youth, and developing values-based behavior change programs delivered by bilingual health coaches to enhance diabetes care.

While attendees benefited from hearing the critical research, Marlon Pragnell, PhD, the ADA's vice president of research and science, emphasized the importance of bringing ADA grant awardees together for collaboration and networking. Grant recipients connected during a networking dinner on the first day and a lunch on the second day. Additionally, they were able to discuss challenges and brainstorm opportunities related to their research during the panel discussions. "We also strongly encourage our researchers to attend and present their research at the ADA's annual Scientific Sessions. We look forward to connecting with them at our upcoming 85th Scientific Sessions in Chicago." Pragnell noted.

Bringing together grantees and research program staff from the ADA and NIDDK, in small workshops like these, as well as at Scientific Sessions, provides valuable opportunities for networking and collaboration. Dr. Pragnell emphasized that these interactions support academic success and help participants explore potential avenues for future research funding.

> **Our goal is to facilitate the research progress and career growth of all our awardees. And part of that is engaging researchers, encouraging connectivity, and supporting an environment that maximizes their progress.**
>
> **—Marlon Pragnell, PhD**

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Thank You to Our Volunteers

Research Policy Committee

The Research Policy Committee (RPC) is responsible for providing guidance to the ADA on the strategic direction of its Research Programs. This includes the development of new funding opportunities, evaluation of current grant mechanisms and research initiatives, and recommendations for program enhancements to increase impact.

As one of the oldest committees in the ADA, with co-discoverer of insulin Dr. Charles H. Best serving as the first chair in 1952, the RPC has a long history of advancing breakthrough science and growing the next generation of diabetes researchers. In recent years, the committee has played a pivotal role in broadening the ADA's focus to include the full continuum of experience for a person living with diabetes to encompass things such as mental health. Dr. Mary de Groot, the current chair, stated, "I really welcome this time of expansion, balancing the portfolio with research that supports molecular and genomic science as well as science that promotes public policy, care implementation, and community change to help prevent diabetes and support people with diabetes."

Recently, the committee has spotlighted psychosocial factors as an area of interest. "As the first behavioral scientist to chair the RPC, I'm honored in this capacity. It's an exciting time to be part of this committee," said Dr. de Groot. She elaborated, "Behavioral, emotional, and social aspects of diabetes are intricately intertwined with the physiology of diabetes. We tend to think of different categories of diabetes research and medical care in silos, but, in fact, it all comes together in the person and family with diabetes." While women's health, youth-onset in type 2 diabetes, and mental health have been previous areas of focus, aging in diabetes and primary care were recently selected as the ADA's new research priority areas.

Every two years, the ADA selects new targeted topic areas and launches RFAs to research and expand the field of knowledge to improve the lives of those living with diabetes. At the beginning of 2024, the ADA engaged its People with Diabetes Council, composed of individuals living with diabetes, to help identify research gaps based on their personal experiences. The council's insights were then shared with the RPC, which developed a list of critical research gaps that align with the ADA's mission.

There was an overwhelming enthusiasm that upcoming research should focus on improving the lives of older adults living with diabetes and diabetes prevention and care in primary care settings. Finally, these identified topics were shared with the Science and Health Care Council and ADA leadership for their review and endorsement. Once approved, the Research Programs team worked with the RPC to outline the scope and goals of the new funding opportunities. In September 2024, the Primary Care and Aging in Diabetes RFAs were launched with funding announcements anticipated by May 2025.

> **It has been an enormously gratifying and inspiring experience to be a member of the Research Policy Committee of the ADA. It is so encouraging to see the resources and energy of this association continuing to provide opportunities for new and veteran researchers to address many of the growing needs and new challenges in understanding diabetes and improving outcomes through new treatment approaches. There is no more certain way of providing the pathways for prevention, remission, improved treatment, and yes, eventual cure of diabetes than continuing to build and support a strong, creative, and multi-generational research program.**
>
> **—James R. Gavin III, MD, PhD**

2024 Research Policy Committee

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Indiana University School of Medicine

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Deborah J. Cohen, PhD
Oregon Health and Science University

Melanie Cree, PhD
University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

Shavon Artis Dickerson, DrPH, MPH
National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)

Alessandro Doria, MD, PhD, MPH
Joslin Diabetes Center

James R. Gavin III, MD, PHD
Healing Our Village, Inc

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Emory University

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Hermona Girmay

Alysa Goethe

Abigail Hoppe

Tom Kigin

Shelby Kinnaird

Chris Labuda

Sara Lerner

Jessica Oser

Hector Soto

Stephanie Weaver

Shay Webb

Thank You to our Reviewers

We would like to express our deepest gratitude for the effort and expertise of the researchers that generously volunteered their time to serve on various review panels in 2024.

Each application is reviewed by at least three external scientific experts in the diabetes field and are carefully selected by the Research Program team based on their area of expertise.

Their commitment to excellence and willingness to provide constructive feedback was instrumental in shaping the outcome of the 250+ applications submitted this year. All applicants, including those that were not selected for funding, have benefited from the constructive feedback shared in their reviews.

It is important to note that their insights not only helped us identify projects that push the boundaries of diabetes research, but also contributed to the career development and growth of these applicants.

View the full list of reviewers.

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