The John S. Dunn Foundation has made a transformative $25 million commitment to The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) to bolster the university’s behavioral health initiatives and address significant gaps in mental health care services in our communities.

In honor of the foundation’s generosity, UTHealth will establish the John S. Dunn Behavioral Sciences Center to support innovative behavioral health research, education, and patient care. The pledge embodies the commitment of UTHealth’s faculty and trainees in the Louis A. Faillace, MD, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at McGovern Medical School.
School at UTHealth to provide comprehensive care to patients throughout our campus, in addition to UT Physicians clinics, Harris Health outpatient clinics, and Harris Health’s Lyndon B. Johnson Hospital. Together, the Dunn Foundation and UTHealth mental health specialists are working to ensure a comprehensive array of health services are delivered to patients in all phases of care.

“Our behavioral health experts provide the highest levels of care to patients from across our community, and are also on the forefront of developing innovative and personalized treatments for psychiatric and mental health conditions,” said Giuseppe N. Colasurdo, MD, UTHealth president and Alkek-Williams Distinguished Chair. “The generous support of the Dunn Foundation will provide UTHealth with the critical resources needed to realize our shared vision of improving behavioral health in our communities and setting new standards in excellence of care.”

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 out of every 5 Americans has a mental illness, and the National Institute of Mental Health estimates that only half of people with mental illnesses receive treatment. Furthermore, cases are on the rise due to some of the necessary health and safety measures taken to stop the spread of COVID-19. A recent CDC report revealed more than 40% of adults reported suffering at least one adverse mental or behavioral health condition during the pandemic.

“With the depth and breadth of expertise, we are well-positioned to lead behavioral health care in Houston and across the state,” said Jair Soares, MD, PhD, the Pat R. Rutherford, Jr. Chair in Psychiatry in the Faillace Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. “Our patient-centered programs are designed to break down barriers and provide a continuum of care to help individuals and their families overcome behavioral disorders.”

Since 1986, the John S. Dunn Foundation has generously supported UTHealth’s efforts to improve the physical and mental health of our communities, including investments that have bolstered research on bipolar disorder and treatment-resistant bipolar depression.

“Mental illness has a significant impact on the physical health and well-being of individuals and families, and it reverberates across our community,” said Charles M. Lusk, III, President, John S. Dunn Foundation. “Our continued partnership with UTHealth will carry on John S. Dunn’s legacy and support a cause that was important to him while improving the lives of countless individuals long into the future. Mental health care, much like any other health care, can result in cures, and we are particularly invested in working with UTHealth to that end.”

The foundation’s most recent gift will:

- Create the John S. Dunn Foundation Research Fund to advance discoveries in the treatment of behavioral disorders.
- Establish the John S. Dunn Foundation Education Fund to enhance the academic environment for fellows, residents, and students.
- Establish the John S. Dunn Lecture Series to bring experts to UTHealth for scientific discussion.
- Fund a total of 11 named faculty endowments to recruit and retain outstanding talent to the university and the Greater Houston area.

The commitment is part of the university’s first comprehensive campaign, Many Faces. One Mission. The campaign, representing the largest philanthropic effort in UTHealth’s history, aims to raise $500 million to address pressing health challenges such as advancing brain and behavioral health and to secure the institution’s future as a top health science center. Since the campaign’s quiet phase began in 2015, the university’s closest friends have given more than $400 million toward this goal.
“With this gift from the Dunn Foundation, UTHealth can dramatically improve the lives of people suffering from behavioral disorders for decades to come,” Soares said.

Faculty Spotlight:
Are returns home to join UTHealth

Funlola Are, PhD, recently joined the Faillace Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences as an assistant professor, working as a child psychologist.

Are earned her PhD in clinical psychology at the University of Georgia and completed her clinical psychology internship and postdoctoral fellowship at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Are became interested in psychiatry after completing a semester internship, where she worked in the inpatient psychiatric unit at Lurie Children’s Hospital in Chicago. Are observed children experiencing acute mental health challenges and became interested in developmental pathways that culminated in mental health crises ultimately requiring hospitalization.

Currently, Are’s research is broadly focused on reducing the public health burden of traumatic stress. In her clinical research, she focuses on innovative methods to identify children at risk for traumatic stress and ways to expand care for underserved populations through strategic integration of mental health services in nontraditional service settings.

After traveling extensively for her education and training, Are chose to come back to Houston, having grown up in nearby Alief. She chose UTHealth for the opportunity to work in a care provider environment, giving her the greatest chance for her work to have an impact on communities.

She hopes by developing partnerships within communities in Houston her work will improve access to evidence-based mental health interventions.

“I think the opportunity to engage children and families in conversations about mental health in a way that’s digestible and harnesses individual and family strengths - is just very exciting to me,” Are said. “When you can do that and gather measurable outcomes to inform this work and help strengthen it, I think that is even better.”

Heads named to board of directors for CPDD

Angela M. Heads, PhD, associate professor in the Faillace Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, was recently elected to the board of directors for the College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD).

The CPDD is the premier professional society for addiction scientists. CPDD has more than 1,000 active members, focusing on addressing problems related to substance use. CPDD comprises
Heads has been a member of CPDD since 2013 and has presented research every year since joining. Wanting to be more involved in the organization, she became a member of CPDD’s Underrepresented Populations Committee (URPOP).

Earlier in the year, the URPOP committee chair became aware of upcoming vacancies on the board of directors. Head’s areas of interest – clinical research, policy, and treatment research – aligned with those of board members who were leaving. The chair nominated Heads to be considered for election. In February 2021, she was informed she had been formally elected.

Heads will serve a four-year term with duties to include, ensuring CPDD’s activities are aligned with the mission, providing input on the development of the budget to ensure the overall financial health of the organization, and providing oversight for all CPDD activities through participation in planning and decision-making.

Heads believes being on the board of directors will provide her with tremendous leadership building opportunities. In addition, she will be able to network with scholars in the addiction research and treatment field as well as increase the visibility of her work and the work of others in the department.

“I’m extremely honored to be elected to this position,” Heads said. “This means my work within CPDD and URPOP has been recognized. I will now be in a position to make larger contributions. This is very exciting and a great opportunity.”

Read more about Heads’s election [here](#).

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De Quevedo named associate editor

Please join us in congratulating João L. de Quevedo, MD, PhD, professor and director of the translational psychiatry program, for his recent appointment as associate editor for the *Translational Psychiatry*.

*Translational Psychiatry* is the highest-ranked open access journal in psychiatry. It aims to bridge the gap between the explosion of knowledge in neuroscience and conceptually novel treatments for patients.

The journal allows articles physicians publish a greater chance to be discovered, maximizing the impact on the community. The journal makes the process of accessing, using, and sharing articles much easier.

All areas of medical research are welcome. Specific articles regarding molecular biology, genetics, pharmacology, imaging, and epidemiology are preferred, as those contribute to enhance the field of translational psychiatry.

De Quevedo will work alongside Editor-in-Chief Julio Licinio, MD, PhD, to review the articles and approve them for publication. He is grateful for the opportunity to serve as associate editor for *Translational Psychiatry*.

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“It comes with the great responsibility of keeping the *Translational Psychiatry* standards,” de Quevedo said. “Helping the journal become a preferable venue to publish cutting-edge discoveries in psychiatry is our goal.”

Learn more about *Translational Psychiatry* [here](#).

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**Yoon awarded pilot grant**

Jin H. Yoon, PhD, assistant professor in the Faillace Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, was recently awarded a pilot grant that will assist in future studies.

The McGovern Medical School pilot grant program funded Yoon's proposal, which has two goals: to foster collaborations between departments within the medical school and to collect data that will support a future R01 grant application.

The current proposal will form a collaboration between the Center of Neurobehavioral Research on Addiction (CNRA) in the Faillace Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and the Center for Translational Injury Research (CeTIR) in the Department of Surgery. In addition to Yoon, Joy Schmitz, PhD, of CNRA, and John Harvin, MD, of CeTIR, will be significant collaborators on the current project.

Yoon and his team will recruit participants to collect data regarding opioid demand, opioid use, self-reported pain, and the need for additional treatment support among individuals who have experienced a traumatic injury.

Participants will be patients from the Red Duke Trauma Institute at Memorial Hermann - Texas Medical Center and will be followed for three months following discharge. Follow-ups will consist of brief, weekly text-based questions as well as more in-depth, phone-based interviews at the seven, 30, and 90-day marks.

The proposed study builds off a previously completed preliminary study that yielded promising results. Yoon believes this project can help establish the foundation for developing a research program to help individuals that may develop problematic opioid use following traumatic injuries.

“This award is also timely as it allows us to continue development of the fruitful collaboration that has been developing between CNRA and CeTIR,” Yoon said. “I’d like to add a sincere thank you to the continued support from my colleagues and department that has made the success of this award possible.”

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**Lima wins prestigious award**

Camila Lima, PhD, a postdoctoral fellow at the Faillace Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, was presented with the prestigious and highly competitive Samuel Gershon Junior Investigator
Award at the 23rd Annual Conference of the International Society for Bipolar Disorders.

The Samuel Gershon Awards are presented through the International Society for Bipolar Disorders (ISBD) to young researchers in recognition of the vital role of developing the next generation of leaders in the bipolar disorder field. The awards are named in honor of Samuel Gershon, MD, an early pioneer of lithium research, and are judged on the originality and significance of a manuscript and the applicant's potential for long-term commitment and contributions to the field.

ISBD is an international collaborative society of individuals dedicated to finding ways to improve the lives of those with bipolar disorder through mutual sharing of information, research, and education.

Lima’s postdoctoral research work, mentored by Gabriel Fries, PhD, and João de Quevedo, MD, PhD, looks at bipolar disorder and its poorly characterized association with accelerated epigenetic aging. Her results shed light on the molecular process underlying increased mortality and morbidity among patients.

Lima received the award for her work on the clinical outcomes and poorer functional status associated with epigenetic aging acceleration in bipolar disorder. She hopes that her work will provide the discovery of new biomarkers and potential pharmacoepigenetic drugs in bipolar disorder.

“The Samuel Gershon Award is a significant landmark in my career.” Lima said. “I feel very privileged and honored that my academic work has received international attention and recognition.”

Read me about the Samuel Gershon Junior Investigator Award here.

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**Clinical trials**

The following clinical trials are back in operation, following all necessary safety guidelines. If you're interested, contact the appropriate study.

**Neuroimaging and Brain Cell Structure and Function in Substance Abuse (In Vitro and In Vivo Evidence of Neurotoxicity in Substance Abuse)**
Contact: 713-500-DRUG (3784)

**Management of Chronic Pain and PTSD in Veterans with tDCS+Prolonged Exposure**
Contact: Melba A. Hernandez-Tejada, PhD, DHA PI, 713-486-2524

**Candesartan as an Adjunctive Treatment for Bipolar Depression**
Contact: Liz Vinson, Program Manager, 713-486-2623

To see all open studies, visit our [website](#).
Congratulations to the 2021 Dean's Teaching Excellence Award recipients

Ron Acierno, PhD
Elaheh Ashtari, PsyD
Taiwo Babatope, MD
Rania Elkhatib, MD
Luis Fernandez-Wische, MD
J. Chase Findley, MD
Silvia Hafliger, MD
Amanda Helminiak, MD
We're hiring!

The following positions are open at our department:

**Faculty – Endowed Chair (Research)**

The Louis A. Faillace, M.D., Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences of the McGovern Medical School at The University of Texas Health Science Center Houston has an extraordinary opportunity for a senior scientist with a funded multidisciplinary program of clinical care research who are at the rank of an Associate or Full Professor.

[Apply Here](#)

**Psychiatrists – Clinical Faculty/Tele-Psychiatry**

The Louis A. Faillace, MD, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences of the McGovern Medical School of the University of Texas Health Science Center Houston is currently recruiting for multiple faculty positions based on qualification to include possible rank of Assistant Professor. Our emerging program is currently providing Tele-Psychiatry services to Inpatient Psychiatric facilities in Texas. Work in the comfort of your own home or local office, with only one trip per month needed to visit the site.
Clinician I/II – Texas Child Health Access Through Telemedicine (TCHATT)

Days: Flexible
Hours: Flexible

Adult Psychiatrist – Baytown – Outpatient
*Teledem 80%, Onsite 20%*
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
1 Hour New Patient
30 Min Followup

Extra Supplement for location

Adult Psychiatrist – Acres Homes
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
1 Hour New Patient
30 Min Followup

Child and Adult Psychiatrist – Rosenberg – Outpatient
*Teledem 80%, Onsite 20%*
Monday through Friday
8am – 5pm
1 Hour New Patient
30 Min Followup

Extra Supplement for provider to see life span

Child Psychiatrist (Bilingual Spanish/English) – Spring Branch – Outpatient
*Teledem 50%, Onsite 50%*
Monday through Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
1 Hour New Patient
30 Min Followup

To find out more information about these academically driven positions or to apply, please forward a CV and letter of interest to Jair C. Soares, MD, PhD, Professor and Chair, 1941 East Road, Houston, TX 77054, email: Jair.C.Soares@uth.tmc.edu, phone 713-486-2507, fax 713-486-2553.

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**Publications**

Type 1 interferon mediates chronic stress-induced neuroinflammation and behavioral deficits via complement component 3-dependent pathway

Ashutosh Tripathi, Carl Whitehead, Katelyn Surrao, Ananya Pillai, Amit Madeshiya, Yong Li, Hesam Khodadadi, Anthony O Ahmed, Gustavo Turecki, Babak Baban, Anilkumar Pillai

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**In the news**

Jennifer Bahman, PhD, talked to FOX 26 News about the signs of cognitive dulling due to the ongoing pandemic and ways we can combat it.

Jin Yoon, PhD, spoke to KHOU-TV Channel 11 about positive affirmations and the effect they can have on a person’s mental health.
Addressing the psychological impact of elder mistreatment: Community-based training partnerships and telehealth-delivered interventions
Melba A. Hernandez-Tejada, Theresa Skojec, Gabrielle Frook, Mara Steedley, Tatiana M. Davidson

Systematic Review: Medication Effects on Brain Intrinsic Functional Connectivity in Patients With Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
Victor Pereira-Sanchez, Alexandre R Franco, Dorice Vieira, Pilar de Castro-Manglano, Cesar Soutullo, Michael P Milham, Francisco X Castellanos

Utility of a brief assessment of opioid demand among post-discharge trauma care patients
Yoon JH, Suchting R, Kessler D, Soder HE, Kapoor S, Stotts AL, Heads AM, Harvin JA, Green CE, Lane SD, Schmitz JM

His interview ran in the 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. broadcasts and was also shared online.

Segundo Robert-Ibarra, MD, spoke to Univision Houston Channel 45 about the signs of cognitive dulling related to the pandemic.

Ronald Acierno, PhD, was interviewed by ABC News about how the recent mass shootings will add to mental health issues already affected by COVID-19.

Join our mail list
We appreciate your donation!
Contact us

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Email
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Connect with us: