

Message from Center Director

Welcome to the OPAL Center.

OPAL is supported by the National Institute of Mental Health as one of its new Advanced Laboratories for ACcelerating the Reach and Impact of Treatments for Youth and adults with mental illness (ALACRITY) Research Centers. The goal of these centers is “to foster innovative research aimed at increasing the effectiveness of existing interventions, improving delivery and quality of evidence-based services, and accelerating the diffusion, implementation, and continuous improvement of new practices in diverse settings.”

We are a multidisciplinary team of researchers who will conduct research projects, support pilot projects, and contribute to the development of early-career researchers who share our goals. We are dedicated to conducting research that will accelerate efforts to optimize and personalize treatments and services for individuals diagnosed with schizophrenia. Our goal is to design and test innovative, field-ready interventions that will improve the lives of individuals with schizophrenia and that are important to policy makers. We hope that readers of this newsletter will become collaborators in this work.

Scott Stroup

Developmental Projects

OPAL begins with three developmental projects that address important, representative problems that affect people diagnosed with schizophrenia throughout the course of illness.

Project 1 addresses cognitive impairments, which have been detected during the prodromal period until late life and are a key contributor to functional impairments. We will examine using auditory testing to deliver personalized treatments, and investigate whether cognitive remediation can be successfully delivered outside of clinic settings. Dr. Alice Medalia is the project leader.

Project 2 adapts Critical Time Intervention (CTI) to the needs of individuals with schizophrenia who are hospitalized on medical units for ambulatory care sensitive conditions and examines its preliminary effectiveness. The goal is to improve treatment engagement and linkages to outpatient services. Dr. Tom Smith is the project leader.

Project 3 examines the feasibility and effectiveness of using mobile health technology and Experience Sampling Methods to optimize psychopharmacologic regimens for individuals with first-episode psychosis. Drs. David Kimhy and Scott Stroup are the project leaders.

Methods Core

The Methods Core pursues the development of methods that are applicable to the OPAL aims of developing and adapting treatments and services for schizophrenia that optimizes their effectiveness in real-world clinical settings. In addition, the Methods Core provides investigators with support needed to conduct OPAL projects. Drs. Leo Cabassa and Melanie Wall lead the Methods Core.

The following Methods Core units support OPAL investigators:

- Qualitative Methods Unit
- Quantitative Methods Unit
- Clinical Assessment Unit
- Mobile Health and Technology Unit
- Ethics and Human Subjects Unit
- Health Economics Unit

Seminars and workshops for OPAL investigators and trainees will help build skills. Please visit our [website](#) for more information.

Pilot Project Concepts

The OPAL Scientific Steering Committee, led by Dr. Lisa Dixon, is seeking concepts for our pilot research program. Pilots should collect preliminary data for studies that can ultimately lead to personalized interventions.

Projects must be led by a member of the Columbia Faculty. See [Call for Pilot Project](#).