



American College of Neuropsychopharmacology

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Helen Blair Simpson receives the ACNP Julius Axelrod Mentorship Award

The American College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ACNP) has named Helen Blair Simpson, M.D., Ph.D., as the recipient of the 2020 Julius Axelrod Mentorship Award. Dr. Simpson is the Director of Research at the New York State Psychiatric Institute, Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia University Medical Center and Director of the Center for Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders. Dr. Simpson is a pioneering psychiatrist and clinical researcher who is committed to advancing treatments for people with obsessive-compulsive disorder and related disorders so that these people can live productive lives. Her work ranges from treatment development to clinical trials to brain imaging and animal studies in collaboration with basic scientists to help us better understand the brain mechanisms of OCD.

Dr. Simpson has an outstanding track record in serving as a mentor to junior colleagues ranging from research assistants (aiming for medical or graduate school), research-oriented psychiatric residents and psychology externs, postdoctoral clinical and research fellows, junior faculty working toward K-awards, and other faculty and staff research scientists. Her mentees are from diverse backgrounds, not only regarding their ethnic and racial backgrounds but also regarding their training, and include basic scientists, neuroimagers, cognitive neuroscientists and include psychiatrists, psychologists, and even neurosurgeons. Her mentees have been extremely successful in transitioning to the next steps in their careers. Many have been awarded K-awards, or other prestigious fellowships, followed by independent academic careers. Dr. Simpson's mentoring skills were recognized by NIMH in the award of a five-year K24 award to enhance patient oriented translational research and training. Dr. Simpson's mentorship role extends to helping to recruit and select those M.D., Ph.D. applicants to Columbia's residency program who receive the prestigious Leon Levy Fellowships to pursue neuroscience research. Dr. Simpson was also instrumental in launching the Moynihan Clinical Research Fellowship Program to support residents and postdoctoral fellows to pursue patient-oriented translational research, by securing funding from the Leon Levy Foundation.

Dr. Simpson's present and past mentees speak of her with the highest of praise. They note her ability to see the main story in a dataset regardless of its complexity, her willingness to meet regularly and frequently with mentees, finding opportunities for her mentees to present their scientific work, and being receptive to, and encouraging of, her mentees' ideas. Additionally, they speak of her commitment to installing the highest of ethical standards in her lab and individual meetings. Outside of her own laboratory, Dr. Simpson mentors many others in her institution, for example, her role as member of the Dean's Advisory Committee for Women Faculty. She also mentors outside her institution, in her roles in several professional societies as mentor of travel awardees to the annual meetings of the ACNP and Society of Biological

Psychiatry, and in her role as Associate Editor of JAMA Psychiatry, where she promotes diversity in authorship and the review process.

The Axelrod Mentorship Award, being presented at the 59th Virtual Annual Meeting of the ACNP is awarded to an ACNP member who has made an outstanding contribution to neuropsychopharmacology by mentoring and developing young scientists into leaders in the field.

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ACNP, founded in 1961, is a professional organization of more than 1100 leading scientists, including four Nobel Laureates. The mission of ACNP is to further research and education in neuropsychopharmacology and related fields in the following ways: promoting the interaction of a broad range of scientific disciplines of brain and behavior in order to advance the understanding of prevention and treatment of disease of the nervous system including psychiatric, neurological, behavioral and addictive disorders; encouraging scientists to enter research careers in fields related to these disorders and their treatment; and ensuring the dissemination of relevant scientific advances.