

Columbia Psychiatry Global Mental Health at a Glance 2020-2021

Columbia Psychiatry has a longstanding commitment to improving mental health worldwide through innovative research, education, and advocacy. Columbia first led seminal international epidemiologic studies in the 1960s, and has since become a leader of global mental health research. In places ranging from neighborhoods of New York City and Puerto Rico, to countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South America, Asia, and the Middle East, Columbia Psychiatry has collaborated with local partners to both study mental illness in a global context and work to increase accessibility to evidence-based mental health care. Our faculty are involved in research, education and training, and global advocacy and policy.

Sponsored Research

More than 20 investigators in the Department of Psychiatry are principal investigators of research studies that take place primarily outside the US or have a global focus. This research portfolio includes NIH and private foundation funding that in FY20 totaled almost \$20 million, spanning research from basic neuroscience to implementation science.

These researchers are identifying mechanisms and markers of mental illness that include discovering genetic and environmental prenatal risk factors for autism during pregnancy, assessing risk for neurobehavioral disorders in infancy and early childhood, studying how poverty and trauma affect brain development, identifying neurochemical abnormalities in people with schizophrenia, and determining brain signatures associated with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Columbia researchers also engage in research across four continents to improve access and adherence to care and examines behaviors and mental health conditions that influence transmission of HIV and health outcomes.

Columbia Psychiatry faculty have led field trials of standardized cultural assessment interviews in children, adolescents, and adults to better understand the impact of local cultures on diagnosing and treating mental illnesses across populations, as well as developing automated neurocognitive screening assessments across languages and cultures. Columbia Psychiatry faculty are also committed to disseminating evidence-based practices globally; for example, Columbia faculty developed Interpersonal Psychotherapy, and due to its success in clinical trials around the world, are now translating materials for use into eight different languages.

Columbia Psychiatry researchers are leading global mental health effectiveness and implementation science innovations by conducting studies in multiple low- and middle-income countries, including Botswana, Brazil, Colombia, Kenya, Malawi, South Africa, Uganda, Mozambique, and Zambia, where over 75% of people with mental disorders receive no care. For example, partnering with the Ministry of Health in Mozambique, the fourth poorest country in the world where there are only 18 psychiatrists for 29 million inhabitants, we have trained 1,200 rural clinics' personnel to use a brief validated screener to assess communities for all psychiatric disorders and provide transdiagnostic evidence-based services. These methods are now being applied to New York City.

Education & Training Programs

Funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), Columbia Psychiatry offers Post-Doctoral Fellowships to train the next generation of mental health researchers. Since 1989, the Behavioral Sciences Training in HIV Infection Fellowship has trained fellows in sexuality, gender, and mental health research as applied to HIV prevention and HIV treatment and care across populations in both national and global contexts. Since 2012, our pioneering Global Mental Health Implementation Science Fellowship has trained fellows in methods for decreasing the global mental health treatment gap in low- and middle-income countries, where over 75% of people with mental disorders receive no care. Fellows from both of these programs represent the next generation of global mental health researchers. Further, with two Research Capacity Building grants funded by the NIH Fogarty International Center and one by the NIMH, Columbia Psychiatry is training fellows in mental health implementation science in Botswana, Cambodia, Malawi, Mozambique, Myanmar, Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, and Zambia. With philanthropic funds and as partners with the CDC, we run a Summer Institute in Global Mental Health for undergraduate students annually.

Global Advocacy & Policy

Since 2012, the Global Mental Health Programs (GMH) at Columbia have advanced Columbia's global mental health efforts by developing partnerships between faculty in the Department of Psychiatry and other schools across Columbia University, including the Mailman School of Public Health, Teachers College, and School of Nursing. In 2015, Columbia Psychiatry was designated a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre, and GMH faculty have contributed leadership for the field studies and technical consultation to the revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11), the system used by all WHO member nations to capture public health data and set national health and mental health policies. Our WHO Collaborating Centre in GMH also coordinates the WHO Global Clinical Practice Network, an online research and training platform of over 15,000 clinicians from around the world. Finally, the WHO Collaborating Center in GMH serves as the data coordinating center for research and is now evaluating the clinical utility of the new classification of mental, behavioral and neurological disorders of the World Health Organization ICD-11, which is used by 194 countries around the world.