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**RUTGERS
ADDICTION
RESEARCH
CENTER**

23

ANNUAL REPORT

Bringing together researchers, clinicians,
and community members who are
dedicated to tackling addiction.

The RARC is not a place; it is a community.

The Rutgers Addiction Research Center (RARC) within the Brain Health Institute (BHI) was launched in spring 2022 and is now the largest comprehensive addiction research center in the country.

The RARC brings together faculty, students, and staff from across Rutgers to create a collaborative community that strives to reduce the burden of addiction and improve human health and well-being.

Initial Goals for the RARC

- Strategically assemble ongoing addiction research in a way that coherently tells our story, showcases our breadth of expertise, and allows us to build upon strengths and identify areas for growth
- Grow collaborative and interdisciplinary addiction research, and associated training programs, across the translational spectrum
- Create a supportive and vibrant interdisciplinary community of addiction researchers
- Develop outreach initiatives aimed at translating research findings to the community
- Create a transparent, inclusive, and data-driven approach for growth of the RARC

Director's Letter



Dear RARC Community,

As we embark on the one year anniversary of the launch of Rutgers Addiction Research Center (RARC), I want to take this opportunity to thank each of you for making the past year such a success. I am excited about what we are building together, and this is only the beginning!

We have accomplished much in our first year: a series of town hall meetings to exchange ideas about the development of the RARC; the spring Meet and Greet at the Rutgers Club; the launch of our website, social media channels, listserv, and hiring of the RARC communication coordinator; our fall symposium, featuring research from RARC researchers across the translational spectrum; a trainee appreciation night to recognize the important work of our trainees and collect their input; a philanthropy event, hosted in collaboration with the Rutgers Health development team; the launch of the RARC speaker series, with virtual and in-person options; the initiation of the first round of RARC pilot grants; and the submission of several collaborative grant proposals.

We have four faculty recruitments underway to build out the leadership team of the RARC across the domains of Basic Science; Epidemiology, Etiology & Prevention; Treatment & Recovery; and Public Policy. We hosted a table at Rutgers Day and the American Society of Addiction Medicine meeting to increase our presence in the community and connection to practitioners. We continue to build out resources to support research and training, and we always welcome your input on how the RARC can better support you. In that spirit, we will be hosting a series of town hall meetings in the near future to get your feedback on our first year together and the RARC priorities and initiatives for the coming year. I look forward to your input and continued collaboration.

None of this would have been possible without the RARC leadership team, which has worked tirelessly to get these initiatives off the ground, and the active engagement of our amazing community of addiction researchers. I am also immensely grateful to Rutgers leadership for recognizing addiction as a priority area for growth and generously supporting the RARC. Finally, I am grateful to each of you, who advance our understanding of addiction, transform lives, and make our community the wonderful place that it is. Thank you for a wonderful first year together.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle M. Dick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Danielle Dick, Ph.D.

Director, Rutgers Addiction Research Center, Brain Health Institute
Greg Brown Endowed Chair in Neuroscience
Professor of Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Leadership Team



Danielle Dick, Ph.D.
Director



Emily Balcke, M.Sc.
Program Manager



Chris Pierce, Ph.D.
Chair, Basic Science
and Training



Tammy Chung, Ph.D.
Chair, Epidemiology, Etiology
& Prevention



Nina Cooperman, Psy.D.
Chair, Treatment & Recovery



Lia Nower, Ph.D.
Chair, Public Policy and
Behavioral Addictions



Alexandria Bauer, Ph.D.
Chair, Diversity, Equity
& Inclusion



Morgan James, Ph.D.
Chair, Junior Faculty &
Trainee Engagement

The RARC Leadership Team was selected from existing faculty with expertise across the translational spectrum. They work closely with the Director and Program Manager to spearhead initiatives related to their area. Area domain chairs are also serving as search committee chairs for ongoing recruitments in their area. In these roles, they have helped develop position postings and advertisements, identify individuals who may be a good fit for our community, and orchestrate candidate visits, both virtual and in person. In addition to the four area domain chairs, we have liaisons for early career faculty and trainees, and for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. These chairs have spent much of this year focused on establishing the needs of trainees, early career researchers, and diverse individuals to ensure that the RARC is an inclusive community that is supportive of all.

Creating Connections

In the first year, we formed meaningful connections and sustainable strategies to inform and engage our community on all things addiction-related across Rutgers.

Communication Specialist

- Hired a communications specialist to facilitate internal and external communications and develop engaging content to raise awareness about our research, training programs, and clinical services



Ricki Arvesen, MSW



RARC Listserv

- Constructed an electronic mailing list of subscribers to serve as a central mechanism to facilitate communication



Social Media Presence

- Developed social profiles to provide regular updates and increase engagement with the broader community



Weekly Digest

- Established a weekly newsletter to broadcast addiction-related events, research updates, new grants and findings, and funding and training opportunities



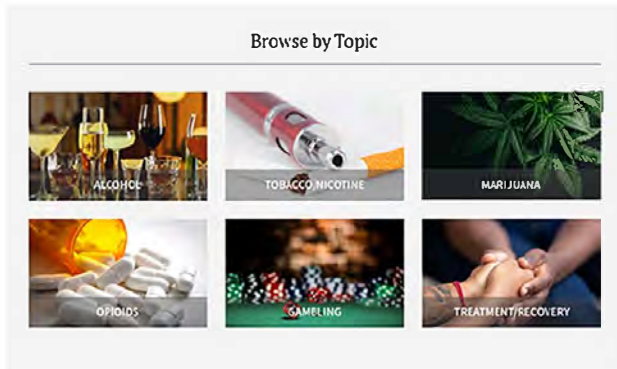
Website

- Launched our website as a central hub to showcase addiction research, training opportunities, and clinical services across Rutgers University

Launching the RARC

The RARC Website

The "home" of the RARC and your one-stop source for all things addiction related at Rutgers

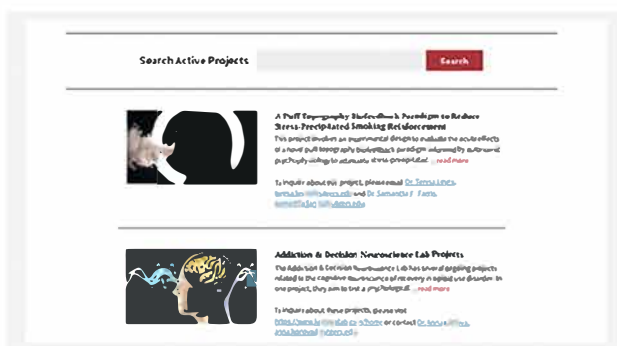


Addiction Facts and Figures

- Evidence-based information for the community on a variety of drugs, behavioral addictions, and treatment and recovery

Researcher Search Tool

- A Research Directory with a search tool that allows one to search by domain, school, department, center, and/or keyword to help connect addiction researchers across Rutgers

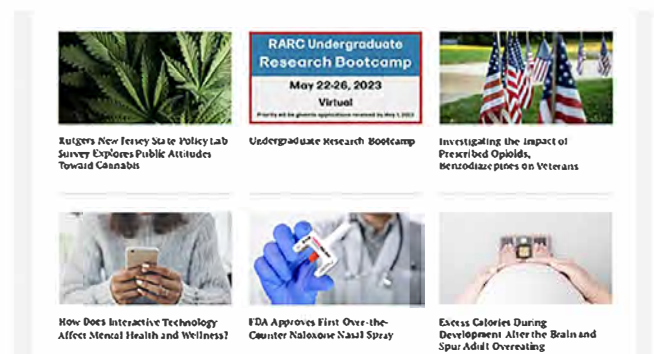


Active Projects

- A running list of ongoing addiction-related projects across Rutgers that provide opportunities for research collaboration

RARC Blog

- Access to the latest addiction-related articles and opportunities coming out of Rutgers





Resources for Researchers

- A running list of funding opportunities from NIH and other funding agencies
- Resources to support grant writing and research, including a range of tools and resources to facilitate grant submissions



Training Opportunities

- Collated training programs, coursework, resources, and opportunities relevant to addiction studies at the undergraduate, graduate, postdoctoral, faculty, and professional development levels



Clinical Services

- Gathered information about the vast array of addiction-related clinical programs offered by Rutgers to help individuals navigate and connect to relevant services



Opportunities to Engage

- Information about research studies that are actively seeking participants
- Events calendar with addiction-related programming across the university and the broader community
- A research intake form to connect researchers to collaboration opportunities with clinical service providers

Join Us

- All Rutgers faculty, students, and staff with interest in addiction are invited to be active members of the RARC.
- We would love to showcase your research, celebrate your grants, papers, and awards, and help publicize your events.
- To have your information included in the RARC, or to learn about ways you can be a member of our community, scan the QR Code.



Building Community

In the first year, we focused on building a sense of community among Rutgers addiction researchers across the university and with our broader community.

Spring Meet and Greet

- Hosted at the Rutgers Club to “kick off” the RARC, with more than 100 researchers and community members in attendance
- Shared new initiatives being launched by the RARC

Trainee Appreciation Night

- An event to recognize and celebrate the important work of our trainees and collect their input on ways we can support them
- More than 40 trainees in attendance

Community Events

Bringing research to the community in engaging and empowering ways



Philanthropic Event

Shared RARC plans to beat the addiction epidemic, save lives, strengthen families, and support communities



ASAM Exhibition Booth

Increased awareness of the RARC in the field of Addiction Medicine, and recruited for a clinician researcher to help bridge our research and clinical services



Rutgers Day

Furthered community connections and provided evidence-based information to families about current drug and addictive behavior trends

RARC Fall Symposium

- A day of talks to showcase ongoing Rutgers addiction research across the translational spectrum, as well as addiction-related programming led by Rutgers clinical colleagues
- More than 100 attendees, 15 presentations, a poster session, and evening reception
- Opportunity to connect with other addiction researchers and clinical partners

Addiction Seminar Lunch and Learns

- Opportunity to learn about the breadth of addiction research ongoing at Rutgers
- Dedicated time to socialize with researchers outside of your department and domain of research
- Hybrid in-person and online format to facilitate attendance

Health Equity Seminar



Jamey Lister, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
School of Social Work



Adrian Gale, Ph.D., MSW
Assistant Professor
School of Social Work

Neuroscience in Newark Seminar



Christine Ramdin, Ph.D.
Department of Emergency Medicine
Rutgers New Jersey Medical School



Ozlem Gunal, M.D., Ph.D.
Department of Psychiatry
Rutgers New Jersey Medical School



Travis Baker, Ph.D.
Center for Molecular and
Behavioral Neuroscience
Rutgers School of Arts and
Sciences-Newark



Mauricio Delgado, Ph.D.
Department of Psychology
Rutgers School of Arts and
Sciences-Newark

Supporting Research

RARC research spans the translational spectrum with more than 150 addiction researchers at Rutgers, representing more than 40 schools and departments, and 23 institutes and centers.

Resources for Researchers – Hosted on the RARC Website

- Created and collated addiction-related resources to support grant writing and research.
- Developed a form to collect information from researchers interested in collaborating with clinical services to connect them directly with the relevant providers.
- Regularly updated a list of funding opportunities from multiple organizations, including NIH.

RARC Pilot Program

- Launched to promote new interdisciplinary collaborations and stimulate new grant applications.
- Priority given to MPI applications with PIs without an established working history and/or who spanned multiple domains or departments/units.
- Awarded pilot grants to three projects (\$40,000 each).

2023 Pilot Grant Program Awardees

David Barker, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, SAS

Zhiping Pang, M.D., Ph.D., Professor, Department of Neuroscience and Cell Biology, RWJMS
Title: Developing a targeted pharmacotherapy for pain without abuse liability

Jiang Hong Ye, M.D., Professor, Department of Anesthesiology, NJMS

Vanessa Routh, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Physiology & Neuroscience, NJMS
Title: A role for the habenula glucose-inhibited (GI) neurons in opioid addiction

Sarah Brislin, Ph.D., Instructor, Department of Psychiatry, RWJMS

David Zald, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Psychiatry, RWJMS

Title: Identifying transdiagnostic versus specific genetic, environmental, and neural risk factors for addictive disorders

Submission of the Rutgers-wide Opioid Settlement Fund Proposal

The RARC hosted town hall meetings and integrated feedback from 55 Rutgers collaborators, including leadership from 13 addiction centers and units across New Brunswick, Newark, and Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences to submit "*A Proposed Partnership Between the State and Rutgers University to Address the Opioid Epidemic*" in response to a call for input from the state of New Jersey on how it should spend its more than \$300 million of opioid settlement funds.

BHI Center Grant Proposal

Submitted a collaborative application for the 2022-2023 Rutgers BHI Pilot Program in Neuroscience for Center and Program Project Grants entitled "*An Integrated Approach to Build Precision Medicine for Substance Use Disorders.*" The proposal features:

- The establishment of a Rutgers Addiction Research Registry with support from leadership at University Behavioral Health Care and RWJBarnabas Institute for Prevention and Recovery
- 4 projects spanning expertise across genetics, neuroimaging, digital phenotyping, and animal models

Mock Grant Review Program

In collaboration with the BHI Motivational and Affective Neuroscience Focus Area Working Group, we launched a mock grant review program for faculty to submit grant proposals for review by senior, well-funded colleagues to receive feedback prior to NIH grant submission.

- 25 senior and/or NIH-funded investigators across Rutgers campuses were included on the reviewer panel
- 9 proposals were reviewed in the first cycle of the program

RARC Undergraduate Research Bootcamp

In collaboration with Virginia Commonwealth University, we launched an undergraduate research bootcamp as part of an R25 to diversify the addiction research community.

- Week-long virtual workshop to introduce students to the fundamentals of research and data science

Looking to the Future

The first year of the RARC has been dedicated to foundational activities to launch the center: identifying and bringing together addiction researchers and clinical partners across the vast Rutgers system, collecting feedback about how the RARC can best support our community, developing associated resources and programs, and creating opportunities for connection and community building.

As we move into our second year, we will be hosting a series of town hall meetings to gather input on how we can continue to support and link addiction research across all Rutgers entities, and what initiatives the RARC should focus on in the year ahead. Your feedback will inform the efforts we prioritize in the coming year. In addition, we have several initiatives underway that will carry into year two.

Multiple Faculty Recruitments Underway

- Multiple tenured and tenure-track open rank faculty positions offering an opportunity to expand our expertise across basic science; epidemiology, etiology and prevention; treatment and recovery; and public policy.
- Candidates for senior faculty positions are being considered for Associate Director roles, with the opportunity to lead the growth of targeted research areas within the RARC.
- We have hosted 11 virtual and 6 in-person visits with highly promising candidates.

Thank you to everyone who has participated in this process; it's been a herculean effort to have so many searches simultaneously ongoing. We hope to expand our leadership team with multiple new recruitments in the coming year.

Interest Group on Cannabis

- Although both recreational and medical cannabis use have become more widespread, research in this area remains in its early stages. The RARC would like to support Rutgers investigators in leading the way on cannabis research.
 - The primary goal of this interest group is to develop an inventory of ongoing cannabis research being conducted at Rutgers, build on the current research to fill in gaps, develop new lines of research, and strengthen collaboration among Rutgers cannabis researchers.
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Addiction Research Registry

The RARC is partnering with University Behavioral Health Care and RWJBarnabas Institute for Prevention and Recovery to invite patients and family members to be part of a Rutgers Addiction Research Registry. As we establish the registry, we plan to host sessions for researchers to learn more about Rutgers' clinical programs and clinicians to learn more about ongoing research.

- Opportunity for individuals and families affected by addiction to participate in research studies and take part in advancing scientific discovery to tackle addiction
- Direct connection to our community through regular communications with registry members about addiction-related advances, news, and events
- Recruitment tool for researchers

Supporting Early Career Faculty, Trainees, and DEI Initiatives

- The RARC plans to continue to build out activities to support early career faculty and trainees and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- This includes sending out surveys this spring to assess the needs of our faculty, staff, trainees, and community organization partners and inform programming for the coming year.

Training Grants

- We will be hosting brainstorming sessions to create more addiction-related T32 training grant programs at Rutgers, capitalizing on our breadth of expertise across the translational spectrum.

As we continue to build out resources to support research and training, we always welcome your input on how the RARC can better support you.



RUTGERS
Addiction Research Center
AT THE BRAIN HEALTH INSTITUTE

addiction.rutgers.edu

rarc@bhi.rutgers.edu

Thank you to all of our collaborating centers and institutes across Rutgers for making our work possible.

Brain Health Institute

Center for Advanced Human Brain Imaging Research

Center of Alcohol and Substance Use Studies

Center for Communication and Health Issues

Center for Gambling Studies

Center for Health Services Research

Center for Health, Identity, Behavior and Prevention Studies

Center for Healthy Aging

Center for Pharmacoepidemiology and Treatment Science

Center for Population-Level Bioethics

Center for Psychiatric Health and Genomics

Center for State Health Policy

Center for Tobacco Studies

Child Health Institute of New Jersey

Human Genetics Institute of New Jersey

Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research

Institute for the Study of Child Development

Institute for Translational Medicine and Science

Northern New Jersey Medication-Assisted Treatment Center of Excellence

Rutgers Community Integrated Services for Addiction Treatment and Recovery

Rutgers Office for Research

Rutgers-Princeton Center for Computational Cognitive Neuropsychiatry

Rutgers Student Health

RWJBarnabas Health Institute for Prevention and Recovery

University Behavioral Health Care

W.M. Keck Center for Collaborative Neuroscience

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