



Rutgers Addiction Research Center
Brain Health Institute

ANNUAL REPORT 2025-2026



WWW.ADDICTION.RUTGERS.EDU

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Over the past year, the Rutgers Addiction Research Center within the Brain Health Institute has continued to grow as a dynamic, interdisciplinary community focused on advancing research to reduce the burden of addiction and improve lives. What began in 2022 as an effort to connect individual researchers has rapidly evolved into a highly collaborative network spanning more than 50 schools and departments, forming the largest addiction research center in the world.

What stands out most this year is the strength and **engagement of our community**. RARC convened 37 events and our mailing list grew to more than 750 subscribers, reflecting increasing participation across Rutgers and beyond. RARC is not a place—it is a network of researchers, trainees, clinicians, and partners working together to advance science and translate discovery into meaningful change.

Our strength is reflected not only in engagement, but in output. Despite a challenging funding landscape, RARC-affiliated researchers secured **16 new NIH grant awards**, advancing work across the translational spectrum. At the same time, our training programs continued to support the next generation of scientists, providing research education and **mentorship to 75 undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral trainees**. Together, these efforts underscore the power of a connected, collaborative research community.

This year also marked a **major milestone** with the launch of a comprehensive strategic planning process to guide our next phase. A center-wide survey received 73 responses from faculty, trainees, staff, and community partners, followed by three town halls and a stakeholder retreat that brought together 38 participants to shape future priorities. The message was clear: build on our strengths in research and training while accelerating our focus on real-world impact.

Looking ahead, we are entering an **exciting new phase**. Our move to the Rutgers Health building at the HELIX will create new opportunities for connection, collaboration, and innovation by bringing researchers into closer proximity with clinical and translational partners. As we continue to grow, our focus remains building a research ecosystem that not only advances discovery and ensuring those discoveries lead to healthier individuals, stronger communities, and more effective systems of care.

Thank you to everyone who contributes to this work. I look forward to what we will accomplish together in the year ahead.

**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



“RARC is not a place—it’s a community driving discovery into real-world impact.”

THIS YEAR AT A GLANCE

A year of growth, collaboration, and impact across the Rutgers addiction research community.



142

RARC-Affiliated
Researchers



98

Schools, Departments
and Centers Represented



16

New NIH Grants Awarded
to RARC-Affiliated
Researchers



56

Active NIDA & NIAAA
grants



759

Weekly Digest
Subscribers

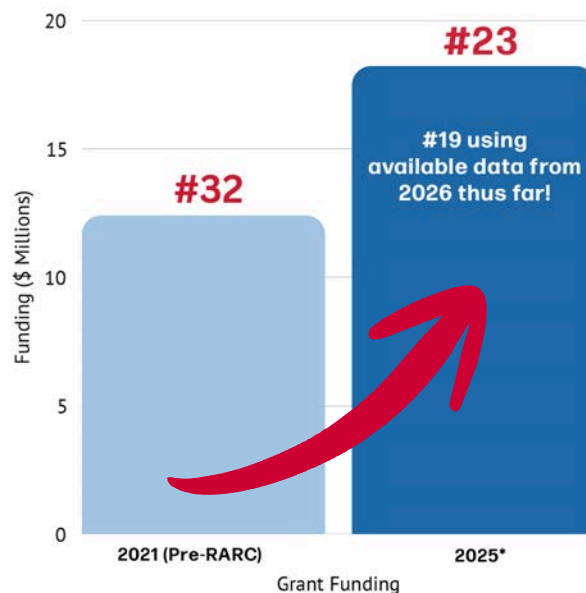


73K

New Website
Visitors This Year

NIAAA/NIDA Funding Metrics

Since the launch of the RARC in 2022, funding from the two NIH institutes focused on substance use (NIAAA and NIDA) has increased from approximately \$12.4 million to more than \$18 million annually, with Rutgers' national ranking in addiction-related funding rising from 32 to 23 during this period.



*NIH FY25 (10/1/24-9/30/25), last full year for which data were available

STRATEGIC PLANNING

SHAPING THE FUTURE OF RARC

This year, RARC launched a comprehensive strategic planning process to guide its next phase of growth. Through surveys, town halls, and a stakeholder retreat, we engaged our community to reflect on progress and identify priorities for the future.



A clear message emerged:
build on our strengths in
research and training while
accelerating our focus on
translation, strengthening
collaborations, and expanding
impact beyond academia.

The resulting strategic framework will guide RARC's priorities through 2030, with a focus on translating research into real-world impact. Progress toward these goals will be tracked and shared with the community as part of ongoing annual reporting.



SCAN TO
 VIEW THE
 2026-2030
[STRATEGIC PLAN](#)

STRATEGIC PLANNING TIMELINE

- FALL 2025**
Leadership Planning
 Initial discussions with RARC leadership to assess progress, refine priorities, and design the strategic planning process.
- NOV 2025 – JAN 2026**
Community Survey
 RARC-wide survey (73 responses) capturing input from faculty, trainees, staff, and partners, with over 90% reporting satisfaction with RARC programs.
- JANUARY 2026**
Town Halls
 Three virtual sessions to share survey findings and gather additional community feedback on strengths, challenges, and opportunities.
- MARCH 2026**
Stakeholder Retreat
 In-person retreat with 38 participants to define key priorities and shape the strategic roadmap for RARC's next phase.



RESEARCH

ADVANCING DISCOVERY THROUGH COLLABORATION

The RARC hosted 37 events over the past year, bringing together leading experts from across disciplines. Below are a few highlights:



FALL SYMPOSIUM

170 ATTENDEES | 40 RESEARCH POSTERS

RARC's annual Fall Symposium showcased research spanning the full addiction research continuum. The program featured a keynote from National Medal of Science recipient, Dr. Huda Akil, along with panel discussions, lightning talks, and a poster session highlighting emerging research.

TOP POSTER AWARDS



Clinical: Ugne Ziausyte
(PI: Anna Konova)

Ecological momentary assessment of affective dimensions in opioid use disorder



Neuroscience: Lamyaa Alsarkhi
(PI: Nicholas Bello)

Mitragynine and insulin signaling under hyperglycemic conditions



Undergraduate: Molly Saunders Lucy
(PI: Rafiq Huda)

Alcohol effects on neuron activity in the prefrontal cortex



ANNUAL EATING DISORDERS LECTURESHIP

RARC co-sponsored this lecture with the Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School Department of Psychiatry, featuring Dr. Kelly L. Klump from Michigan State University. The talk highlighted the role of puberty and ovarian hormones in genetic risk for binge eating.





DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES

RARC hosted leading experts across disciplines, including:

- **Johannes Thrul**
(digital health & tobacco cessation)
- **Debra Bangasser**
(stress and neurobiology)
- **Grace Kong**
(social media & public health)
- **Heath D. Schmidt**
(GLP-1 and addiction)



25+ additional invited speakers across neuroscience, genetics, public health, and clinical research



ABT (AND, BUT, THEREFORE) SCIENCE COMMUNICATION TRAINING

RARC Associate Director Dr. Kristina Jackson partnered with MindSpeaking to deliver an interactive science communication training for RARC investigators, focused on expanding the reach and impact of our research.

The workshop supported 18 PIs in applying the ABT (And, But, Therefore) framework to communicate their work more effectively to broader audiences. A condensed version was later shared at the RARC Fall Symposium by Dr. Lia Nower to extend its reach.



Helping researchers translate their work into clear, compelling stories for broader audiences.



EARLY CAREER FACULTY FORUM

Amid shifting NIH priorities, RARC leadership hosted an informal forum for early-career faculty to discuss funding challenges and career trajectories.

The goal of this forum was to create a supportive space for early-career faculty to share concerns, ask questions, and exchange ideas.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP OFFERED:



Insights into the current funding landscape



Career guidance and mentorship



Pathways for alternative funding

WORKGROUPS: CONNECTING IDEAS & COLLABORATION

RARC Workgroups bring together researchers, trainees, and partners across Rutgers who have shared interests around particular topic areas. These groups create space for sharing ideas, building collaborations, and developing new research directions.



NEW THIS YEAR!



Digital Health (Kristina Jackson, Marilyn Piccirillo): Invited speakers share insights from the development and implementation of digital and mobile health interventions, highlighting opportunities to advance technology-driven approaches in addiction research.



Translational Impact (Jamey Lister, Danielle Dick): Focuses on advancing the real-world application of research, including improving implementation strategies, informing policy, and increasing the public impact of scientific findings.



Psychiatric and Behavioral Genetics (Jessica Salvatore, Jill Rabinowitz, Sarah Brislin): Features presentations from national and international experts and provides a collaborative forum to discuss research ideas, manuscripts, presentations, and grant proposals.



OTHER WORKGROUPS



Science Communication (Jessica Hamilton): Supports researchers in translating addiction science for public audiences, media, and stakeholders, while building practical communication skills to expand research reach and impact.



Community Engagement (Alexandria Bauer): Promotes community-engaged research and partnerships, connecting investigators with community organizations to strengthen collaboration and improve dissemination of findings.



Cannabis Research (Mary Bridgeman): Brings together researchers studying cannabis use, treatment, and policy to foster collaboration, address emerging questions, and advance cannabis-related research.



Treatment & Recovery (Ethan Cowan): Advances research in treatment and recovery through interdisciplinary collaboration, with a focus on improving access, quality, and outcomes of care.



Feeding (Bridget Matikainen-Ankney): Provides an interdisciplinary forum that brings researchers together to share and discuss mechanisms underlying feeding behaviors and eating disorders.



Scan to learn more about RARC workgroups and how to get involved.



RESEARCH IN ACTION: MEDIA COVERAGE - RUTGERS TODAY

RARC-affiliated researchers are frequently featured in *Rutgers Today*, the official source for university news. These stories highlight the impact of our research, the expertise of our investigators and our commitment to improving health and advancing solutions for addiction.

Genetic Pathways Shape Addiction Risk

Holly Poore, *Robert Wood Johnson Medical School*
Danielle Dick, *Robert Wood Johnson Medical School*



A study of more than 2.2 million individuals shows addiction risk is largely driven by genes related to reward, impulse control, and decision-making—not specific substances.

Medicaid Expansion Drives Access to Addiction Treatment

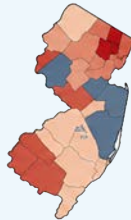
Stephen Crystal, *Center for Health Services Research, Rutgers Institute for Health*



States that expanded Medicaid saw major increases in buprenorphine treatment, underscoring Medicaid's critical role in expanding access to life-saving care.

Where You Live Matters for Opioid Outcomes

Jamey Lister, *School of Social Work*



Across all 21 New Jersey counties, higher social vulnerability is linked to greater treatment need and higher overdose deaths, highlighting persistent disparities.

Cannabis Risks for Youth

Jill M. Williams, *Robert Wood Johnson Medical School*



Early and frequent cannabis use is linked to increased risk of addiction, mental health concerns, and impacts on brain development, especially as potency rises.



How Cutting Back or Cutting Out Alcohol Affects Your Health
Marilyn Piccirillo, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School



Mental Health & Pain Medication Prescriptions for Young People Have Declined in the Past 20 Years
Greta Bushnell; Hillary Samples; Stephanie Shiao, School of Public Health



Study Sheds Light on Early Risk Factors for Teen Drinking
Sarah Brislin; Danielle Dick; Maia Choi; Fazil Aliev; Sally I. Kuo; and Jessica E. Salvatore, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School



Older Adults With HIV May Be Facing Unequal Burden in the Opioid Crisis
Stephanie Shiao, School of Public Health



From Undergraduates to Postdocs, Rutgers Trains the Next Generation of Neuroscience Leaders
RARC & BHI Training Programs

SPOTLIGHT ON NEW GRANTS FROM RARC-AFFILIATED RESEARCHERS



RARC-affiliated researchers continue to advance high-impact science through federally funded grants across multiple disciplines.



NIMH R01 – ADHD AND SLEEP: EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF DRUG-DRUG AND DRUG-DISEASE INTERACTIONS TO INFORM CARE

Greta Bushnell, Biostatistics and Epidemiology, School of Public Health & Institute for Health



NIDA R01 – ADVANCING PATIENT-CENTERED RESEARCH USING META-ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL PATIENT DATA TO IDENTIFY CLINICALLY SIGNIFICANT TRAJECTORIES OF PTSD/SUD AND RECOVERY OUTCOMES

Denise Hien, Clinical Psychology, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology & Center of Alcohol & Substance Use Studies



NIAAA T32 – TRAINING IN ETIOLOGY AND CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL USE ACROSS THE LIFESPAN

Kristina Jackson, Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School & Brain Health Institute



NIMH RF1 – NEURAL AND COMPUTATIONAL MECHANISMS OF MULTI-OPTION CHOICE IN PREFRONTAL CORTEX

Vincent McGinty, Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience, Rutgers-Newark School of Arts & Sciences



NIDA F32 – NEURAL AND BEHAVIORAL CORRELATES OF SIMILARITY TRUSTWORTHINESS AND STRESS IN DECISION-MAKING

William Mitchell, Psychology, Rutgers-Newark School of Arts & Sciences



NINDS K99 – CONVERGENT MECHANISMS OF RESPIRATORY DYSREGULATION AFTER SEIZURES AND ALCOHOL POISONING

Benton Purnell, Neurosurgery, New Jersey Medical School & Brain Health Institute



NIDA K99 – INTEGRATING AI AND CO-PRODUCTION TO ANALYZE COMMUNICATIONS IN SOCIAL MEDIA SUBSTANCE USE RECOVERY GROUPS

Xiangyu Tao, Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School & Brain Health Institute



NIDDK R01 – ROLE OF A DIABETES-SPECIFIC CIRCULAR RNA IN DIABETIC NEUROPATHIC PAIN

Yuan-Xiang Tao, Anesthesiology, New Jersey Medical School



NIMH R01 – TEMPTATION RESISTANCE FAILURES: TRANSDIAGNOSTIC FEATURES AND ETIOLOGICAL INFLUENCES ACROSS EXTERNALIZING AND INTERNALIZING DISORDERS

David Zald, Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School & Brain Health Institute



NIAAA R21 – BLOOD BRAIN BARRIER DYSFUNCTION IN CHRONIC ALCOHOL USE DISORDER

David Zald, Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School & Brain Health Institute

SPOTLIGHT ON NEW PILOT GRANTS



RUTGERS CENTER FOR ALCOHOL & SUBSTANCE USE STUDIES (CAS) DEVELOPMENTAL/PILOT PROJECTS PROGRAM – UNDERSTANDING RESEARCH ATTITUDES AROUND MULTIMODAL DATA COLLECTION AMONG PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS

- Sarah Brislin, Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (PI)
- Alexandria Bauer, Center of Alcohol and Substance Use Studies and Applied Psychology, Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (MPI)
- Marilyn Piccirillo, Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (MPI)
- Jill Rabinowitz, Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (MPI)



RUTGERS CENTER FOR BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS & HEALTH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (BMIHAI) PILOT GRANT PROGRAM – MULTIDIMENSIONAL, INTELLIGENT, NEXT-GENERATION DATA CORE (MIND-CORE)

- Zeeshan Ahmed, Medicine, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (Lead PI)
- Tammy Chung, Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (Co-PI)
- Danielle Dick, Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (Co-PI)



NJACTS PILOT GRANTS PROGRAM – CLINICAL TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE: BRIDGING DECADES DEVELOPING DATA ARCHITECTURE TO LINK HISTORICAL COHORT WITH CONTEMPORARY ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORDS

- Stephanie Shiao, Biostatistics and Epidemiology, School of Public Health (MPI)



RUTGERS BRAIN HEALTH INSTITUTE NEUROTECHNOLOGY INNOVATION CENTER (NTICe) PILOT GRANT PROGRAM – EXCITATORY-INHIBITORY HOTSPOT MAPPING FOR PRECISION TMS TARGETING: AN EEG-BASED NEUROTECHNOLOGY FOR INDIVIDUALIZED REWARD CIRCUIT MODULATION

- Travis Baker, Center for Molecular and Behavioral Neuroscience, School of Arts & Sciences - Newark (PI)
- Danielle Dick, Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (Co-I)
- Avram Holmes, Psychiatry, Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (Co-I)

BHI-RARC MOCK GRANT REVIEW PROGRAM

Through collaboration with the BHI Motivational & Affective Neuroscience Focus Area Working Group, the RARC sponsors a Mock Grant Review Program to help improve the success of NIH and other grant proposals. Rutgers investigators receive tailored feedback from reviewers with NIH study section and funding experience, including written comments, a recorded "mock study section" discussion, and an optional interactive follow-up. Submissions are accepted year-round, with reviews typically completed within two weeks.



SCAN ME

SPOTLIGHT ON RARC PUBLICATIONS:

Highlighting high-impact research from RARC-affiliated investigators across disciplines



Stimulant Use Disorder Diagnoses in Adolescent and Young Adult Medicaid Enrollees, 2001–2020

Bushnell G; Keyes K; Zhu Y; Cerda M; Gerhard T; Hasin D; Izuka A; Lloyd K; Samples H; Olfson M

[JAMA Psychiatry](#)



Genetic Associations Between Orexin Genes and Phenotypes Related to Behavioral Regulation in Humans, Including Substance Use

Aliev F; De Sa Nogueira D; Aston-Jones G; Dick DM

[Molecular Psychiatry](#)



Multivariate Genetic Analyses of 2.2 Million Individuals Reveal Broad and Substance-Specific Pathways of Addiction Risk

Poore HE; Chatzinakos C; Leger S; Gonzalez J; Mallard TT; Aliev F; Hatoum A; Waldman ID; Sanchez-Roige S; Palmer AA; Harden KP; Dick DM; Barr PB

[Nature Mental Health](#)



Peer Navigator Intervention and Opioid-Related Adverse Events for Emergency Department Patients: A Randomized Clinical Trial

Doran KM; Welch AE; Kepler KL; Jeffers A; Chambless D; Cowan E; Wittman I; Regina A; Siu K; Bailey VS; Rostam-Abadi Y; Kennedy J; Kuns HW; Gwadz M; Shelley D; Cleland CM; McNeely J

[JAMA Network Open](#)



Associations Between a Genetic Liability Toward Behavioral Disinhibition and Externalizing Outcomes Spanning Toddlerhood Through Early Adulthood

Choi M; Poore HE; Brislin SJ; Aliev F; Zellers SM; Saunders GRB; Salvatore JE; Vrieze SI; Harden KP; Palmer AA; Raevouri A; Latvala A; Dick DM

[Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry](#)



Perceived Partner Substance Use, Genetic Predispositions, and Alcohol Outcomes

Cooke ME; Kuo SJ; Lumpe E; Aliev F; Brislin SJ; Bucholz KK; Chang G; Dick DM; Edenberg HJ; Kamarajan C; Kramer J; Kuang W; Kuperman S; McCutcheon VV; Neale Z; Plawecki MH; Porjesz B; Rabinowitz JA; COGA Investigators; Salvatore JE

[Psychological Medicine](#)



Implicit Opioid Associations in OUD Treatment: Prediction of Treatment Response and Moderation by Mindfulness-Oriented Recovery Enhancement

Cooperman NA; Khauli N; Hanley AW; Garland EL

[Psychological Medicine](#)



Trajectories of Genetic Risk Across Dimensions of Alcohol Use Behaviors

Savage JE; Aliev F; Barr PB; Choi M; Drouard G; Cooke ME; Kuo SJ; Stephenson M; Brislin SJ; Neale ZE; Spit for Science Working Group; COGA Investigators; Latvala A; Rose RJ; Kaprio J; Dick DM; Meyers J; Salvatore JE; Posthuma D

[Addiction](#)



Efficacy of Counter-Attitudinal Advocacy and Personalized Feedback for Heavy-Drinking College Students

Carey KB; DiBello AM; Hatch MR; Weinstein AP; Neighbors C

[Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology](#)



Prevalence of Nonfatal Drug Overdose in Adolescents by Intent and Substance, Medicaid 2016–2020

Bushnell G; Olfson M; Calello D; Lloyd K; Zhu Y; Samples H

[Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry](#)



Medicaid Expansion and Buprenorphine Dispensing in Early vs Recent Expansion States

Siegel N; Gupta S; Miles J; Samples H; Simon K; Aalsma MC; Crystal S

[JAMA Network Open](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON RARC PUBLICATIONS: JOURNAL OF STUDIES ON ALCOHOL AND DRUGS

For 86 years, the *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* (JSAD), published by the Rutgers Center of Alcohol & Substance Use Studies, has been a leading nonprofit voice in addiction research. From early breath-alcohol testing to today's challenges around opioids and cannabis, JSAD continues to shape the field through rigorous, independent science.

RECENT RARC ARTICLES IN JSAD:



Parental Remission From Alcohol Use Disorder Shows Limited Protective Effects on Offspring Alcohol Outcomes

Vivia V. McCutcheon, Sally I-Chun Kuo, Rebecca L. Smith, Rebecca Tillman, Dongbing Lai, Meredith W. Francis, Jessica L. Bourdon, Chella Kamarajan, Grace Chan, Weipeng Kuang, Christina E. Garasky, Carolyn E. Sartor, Victor Hesselbrock, Samuel Kuperman, Martin H. Plawecki, Arpana Agrawal, Emma C. Johnson, Marc A. Schuckit, Jessica E. Salvatore, Kathleen K. Bucholz



Pseudoscience and the Detection of Marijuana-Based Impairment: We Can and Must Do Better

William J. McNichol



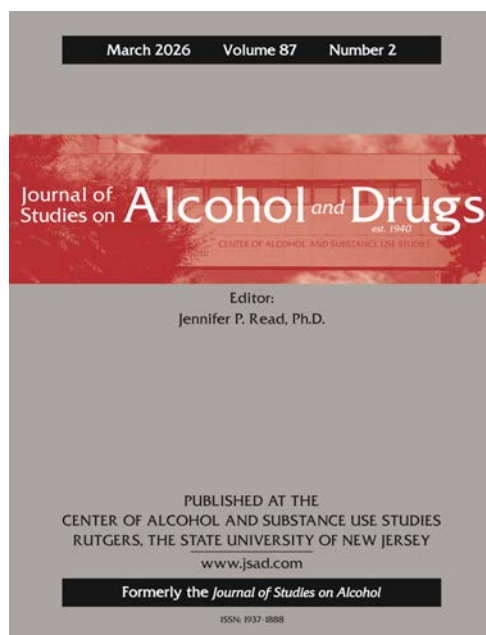
Identifying and Characterizing Models of Substance Use Treatment in Outpatient Substance Use Treatment Facilities

Zoe Lindenfeld, Jonathan H. Cantor, Ji E. Chang



Adjusting for Measurement Bias in the MEEQ-B Across Sex and Race/Ethnicity in the ABCD Study

Tammy Chung, Shawn J. Latendresse, Nicole Kennelly, Margret Z. Powell, Carolyn E. Sartor



Share your research
with a global audience

Submit online at
www.jsad.com

TRAINING

THE NEXT GENERATION OF ADDICTION RESEARCHERS

Training the next generation of addiction researchers is central to RARC's mission. Through NIH-funded programs and hands-on opportunities, trainees at all levels gain critical skills while contributing to ongoing scientific discovery.

**NEW
THIS
YEAR!**

TRACE (NIAAA T32)

Training in Research on Alcohol Use and its Consequences and Etiology

Led by Dr. Kristina Jackson, TRACE is focused on training postdoctoral researchers across biological, psychological, and environmental drivers of alcohol use.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- Mentored research with interdisciplinary faculty
- Advanced methods training and professional development
- First cohort launched this year

TRACE FELLOWS



Maia Choi, PhD
Department of Psychiatry
Robert Wood Johnson
Medical School
Mentors: Sarah Brislin, PhD & Danielle Dick, PhD



I-Tzu Hung, PhD
Department of Psychiatry
Robert Wood Johnson
Medical School
Mentors: Jill Rabinowitz, PhD & Danielle Dick, PhD



Two additional postdoctoral fellows will join the program in Fall 2026.



Learn more: trace.rutgers.edu



TARP (NIDA T32)

Training in Addiction Research Program

Led by Dr. Chris Pierce, TARP provides interdisciplinary training in addiction neuroscience for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- 3 graduate + 3 postdoctoral trainees
- 2 additional fellows supported by BHI
- Strong track record of NIH funding outcomes



TRAINEE IMPACT:

Justin Burdge awarded NIH SBIR grant

ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES



3 trainees secured F31/F32 funding

“Being part of the NIDA T32 program has been an enlightening and motivating journey... I feel like I’m part of a supportive community that’s shaping the future of addiction research.”

— Akhil Sharma (Pierce Lab)

“What I most appreciate about TARP is the community it has built... it’s been an important way to connect with peers across Rutgers and develop collaborations and friendships.”

— Annie Ly (Rossi Lab)



TRUE RARC (NIDA R25)

Training in Research
Undergraduate Experience

TRUE RARC provides undergraduate students with year-long research experiences paired with coursework in data science and addiction research.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- 18 undergraduate fellows placed in RARC-affiliated labs
- 16 funded through the training grant, with additional support from the Brain Health Institute and the School of Graduate Studies
- Integrated coursework and hands-on research training



21 students earned the *Data Science and Addiction Research Fundamentals* digital badge

- ✓ Completed advanced coursework in data science and addiction research
- ✓ Earned digital credentials in key competencies
- ✓ Conducted independent research projects
- ✓ Preparing to present findings at upcoming research forums

“TRUE RARC completely changed my perspective... it helped me discover my passion for epidemiology and gave me the skills to pursue it.”

— **Andrea Lopez (Piccirillo Lab)**

“Through TRUE RARC, I was placed in a lab that aligned perfectly with my interests... I gained hands-on experience in data collection, analysis, and participant recruitment, and developed the skills to successfully present my research.”

— **Ishita Sharma (Brislin Lab)**



GREAT (NIAAA R25)

Guided Research Experiences
and Applied Training

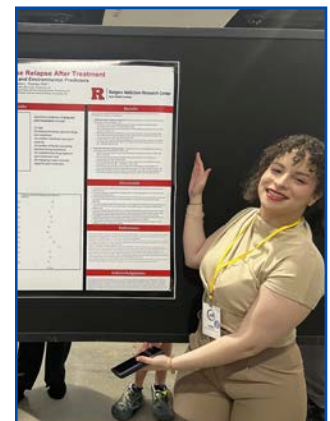
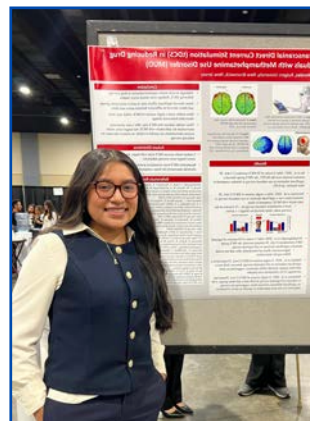
GREAT provides undergraduate students with intensive summer research training, and is a collaboration with Virginia Commonwealth University.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- 5 students selected per cohort
- Weeklong research bootcamp followed by mentored summer lab placements
- Over 40 applications received for the second cohort



Students from the inaugural cohort presented their research at the RARC Fall Symposium and the National Conference on Undergraduate Research.



“Through the GREAT program, I gained firsthand insight into the research process while working alongside dedicated professionals. This experience was instrumental in shaping my development as a psychology student with a focus on addiction.”

— **Stephanie Cisne (Brislin Lab)**

TRANSLATION IN ACTION: FROM DISCOVERY TO IMPACT

The RARC is committed to accelerating the translation of research into real-world impact. This will be a major focus of our next phase, as defined through the strategic planning process. Through expanded partnerships with clinical systems, community organizations, and external stakeholders, RARC is working to ensure research is both relevant and actionable, moving findings beyond the lab and into settings where they can make a difference.



CLINICAL PARTNERSHIPS

Embedding research in healthcare systems



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Connecting with public audiences and stakeholders



IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE

Connecting with public audiences and stakeholders



DATA-TO-ACTION PIPELINES

Using data to inform treatment and policy

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE



RARC has built strong collaborations with University Behavioral Health Care and RWJ-Barnabas Health Institute for Prevention and Recovery (IFPR). These partnerships support joint research initiatives, access to clinical populations, and opportunities to evaluate and implement new approaches to addiction treatment and prevention.



In collaboration with IFPR, RARC hosts monthly collaborative research meetings, bringing together investigators and clinicians to share project ideas, present findings, and generate treatment-focused research.



RARC engages the broader community through outreach events such as Rutgers Day and Mobilize Recovery, and a biannual community newsletter that shares accessible updates on addiction research, resources, and programs.



RESEARCH COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP (RCP)

Connecting community members with research opportunities.

SCAN ME!



PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION



EXPANDING ACCESS TO LIFE-SAVING TREATMENT

Emergency Department Medication for Opioid Use Disorder Quality Initiative

PI: Alexis LaPietra (RWJBH)
RARC Collaborator: Ethan Cowan

- A new Quality Metric initiative across RWJBH greatly increased buprenorphine initiation after overdose and expanded naloxone distribution across 12 hospitals
- Partnering to translate system-level data for publication and support scaling



BRINGING PRECISION HEALTH TO CLINICAL CARE

Comprehensive Addiction Risk Evaluation System (CARES) Platform Implementation

PIs: Holly Poore, Danielle Dick
Clinical Collaborator: Rich Brodsky (RWJMS, Pediatric Emergency Department)

- Integrated CARES into pediatric emergency care workflows
- Identified real-world barriers and provider needs
- Pilot deployment completed with direct clinician feedback



BUILDING THE FUTURE OF PRECISION TREATMENT

NIDA P50 Center of Excellence Proposal

PIs: Collaborative effort by PIs across the RARC and UBHC/clinical providers statewide

- Integrating genetics, neuroimaging, AI, and digital phenotyping to understand variability in treatment outcomes

Supported by:

- Brain Health Institute (BHI) Pilot Award
- Center for Biommedical Informatics and Health AI Pilot Award



NEW JERSEY TREATMENT NETWORK (IN PROGRESS)

Building a statewide roster of treatment partners

Co-Leads: Ethan Cowan, Nina Cooperman

- Rapid matching of researchers with treatment centers
- Identifying real-world research priorities
- Expanding collaboration across levels of care statewide

Collaborative projects with partner networks are underway.



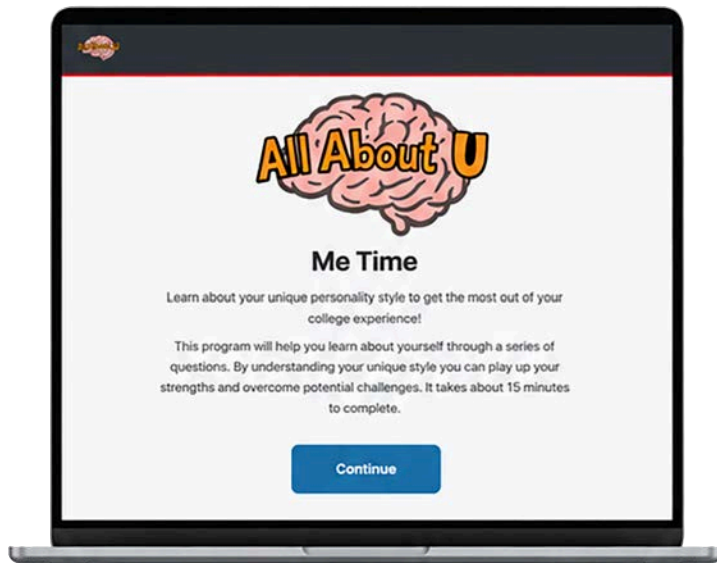
PRECISION MEDICINE FOR SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER TREATMENT

NJ Health Foundation Pilot Award – Jill Rabinowitz & Marilyn Piccirillo

- 182 participants enrolled across partner treatment centers
- 130 genetic samples processed
- Longitudinal tracking of treatment outcomes underway

This project examines how genetic and environmental factors shape treatment experiences and recovery, with the goal of identifying predictors of relapse and improving personalized addiction treatment.

ALL ABOUT U: A NEW APPROACH TO PREVENTION & STUDENT ENGAGEMENT



The RARC partnered with the Rutgers–New Brunswick Office of Student Affairs to launch **All About U**, a new online, evidence-based program designed to serve as the mandatory alcohol education training for incoming first-year students.

The program shifts the focus from simply educating about substance use harms to helping students understand their individual risk factors and build strategies to reduce risk.

As part of this initiative, de-identified data on personality and substance use will support both student wellness and future research.



LAUNCHING MAY 2026

Serving all incoming Rutgers–New Brunswick first-year students



**PERSONALIZED
RISK INSIGHTS**



**DATA-DRIVEN
APPROACH**



**STUDENT-FOCUSED
PREVENTION**

ENGAGING COMMUNITIES BEYOND RUTGERS



RUTGERS DAY

At Rutgers Day, RARC engaged the public through an interactive, educational booth focused on substance use and behavioral health.

- Hands-on activities, including trivia and 3D displays
- Accessible resources and information to support awareness and prevention



MOBILIZE RECOVERY

RARC participated in the Mobilize Recovery Rutgers Campus Surge as part of a Resource Fair designed to share information on addiction and recovery.

- RARC Leadership Council speakers
- Highlighted opportunities for public engagement and dialogue around prevention



GLOBAL CROSSROADS SYMPOSIUM

Hosted by IFPR & co-sponsored by RARC, the Global Crossroads Symposium brought together leaders across sectors to address risks related to illicit drugs and public health.

- Speakers from federal and state agencies alongside RARC researchers
- Opportunities for knowledge sharing

LOOKING AHEAD: THE NEXT PHASE OF THE RARC

RARC is entering its next phase with a sharper focus on translation, partnership, and real-world impact.

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

A new Leadership Council brings together civic, business, and philanthropic leaders to accelerate the translation of research into real-world impact.



Identify high-impact translational priorities



Expand strategic partnerships



Drive philanthropic investment

HELIX NJ: A NEW HOME FOR INNOVATION

RARC leadership will relocate to the Health & Life Science Exchange (HELIX NJ), a hub connecting academia, industry, and entrepreneurship to accelerate discovery and implementation.



STAY CONNECTED

Sign up for our weekly Digest or semiannual Community Newsletter to stay up to date on the latest news, research, and upcoming events related to addiction at Rutgers.



SCAN THE QR CODE
TO SUBSCRIBE



JOIN THE RARC COMMUNITY

All Rutgers faculty, students, and staff with an interest in addiction are invited to be active members of the RARC community. We aim to showcase your research, celebrate grants, publications, and awards, and help amplify your events and initiatives.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO
ADD YOUR PROFILE TO
OUR WEBSITE



WWW.ADDICTION.RUTGERS.EDU



RARC@BHI.RUTGERS.EDU

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR COLLABORATING CENTERS AND INSTITUTES ACROSS RUTGERS

Brain Health Institute

Center for Advanced Human Brain Imaging Research

Center of Alcohol and Substance Use Studies

Center for Biomedical Informatics and Health Artificial Intelligence

Center for Communication and Health Issues

Center for Gambling Studies

Center for Health Services Research

Center for Health, Identity, Behavior & Prevention Studies

Center for Healthy Aging

Center for NeuroMetabolism

Center for Pharmacoepidemiology and Treatment Sciences

Center for Population Behavioral Health

Center for Population-Level Bioethics

Center for Psychiatric Health and Genomics

Center for State Health Policy

Child Health Institute of New Jersey

Human Genetics Institute of New Jersey

Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research

Institute for Nicotine and Tobacco Studies

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-New Brunswick Office of Student Affairs

Rutgers Office of 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