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Home > Bartley named an inaugural Deeda Blair Research Initiative award recipient

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UCSF's Christopher Bartley, MD, PhD [1], is a clinician-researcher exploring the connection between the human immune system and mental illness.

UC San Francisco physician-scientist Christopher Bartley, MD, PhD [1], has been selected as one of three inaugural award recipients for the Deeda Blair Research Initiative for Disorders of the Brain [2] by the Foundation for the Institutes of Health [3] (FNIH). The award will allow him to further his research on autoantibody discovery in neuropsychiatric behavioral syndromes.

Conceived by FNIH Board of Directors member Mrs. William McCormick Blair, Jr., the Research Initiative supports the taking of risks and creative—even disruptive—ideas to accelerate diagnoses and treatments for severe mental illness. The ultimate goal is to foster transformative change, save lives, and prevent great pain and suffering by helping uncover new targets and approaches for therapy. The program is funded by Mrs. Blair, with the generous additional support of individual contributors, and the awardees were chosen by a cross-disciplinary group of leaders from major scientific institutions, clinical practice, and industry.

"I am intensely committed to advancing transformative and transcendent approaches to mental health research," said Mrs. Blair. "Especially critical at this time, mental health must be treated as a global public health response to, and recovery from, the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic."

Exploring the immune system's role in mental health

While completing his psychiatric residency training at UCSF, Bartley worked closely with mentors Samuel Pleasure, MD, PhD [4], and Michael R. Wilson, MD [5], both fellow members of the UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences [6], to study how antibodies produced by the human immune system can trigger psychiatric symptoms when they mistakenly target the brain instead of infectious microbes. Now an adjunct faculty member in the UCSF Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, he will use his award to further that research by generating patient-derived monoclonal autoantibodies (mAbs) that will be used as mechanistic research tools to investigate the molecular and circuit-based underpinnings of psychotic spectrum disorders and other mental illnesses. His studies could ultimately lay the groundwork for new and more effective psychiatric medications.

In recognition of his work, Bartley also previously received an A.P. Giannini Foundation Postdoctoral Research Fellowship and Career Development Award and a UC President's Postdoctoral Fellowship [7], and was named as a UCSF Watson Faculty Scholar [8]. He was also selected as an HHMI Hannah Gray Fellow [9] in 2019.

About the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health

The Foundation for the National Institutes of Health [3] (FNIH) creates and manages alliances with public and private institutions in support of the mission of the NIH, the world's premier medical research agency. Established by Congress in 1990, the FNIH is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization that works with its partners to accelerate biomedical research and strategies against diseases and health concerns in the United States and across the

globe. The FNIH organizes and administers research projects, supports education and training of new researchers, organizes educational events and symposia, and administers a series of funds supporting a wide range of health issues.

About UCSF Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

The UCSF Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences ^[10] and the Langlely Porter Psychiatric Institute are among the nation's foremost resources in the fields of child, adolescent, adult, and geriatric mental health. Together they constitute one of the largest departments in the UCSF School of Medicine and the UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences, with a mission focused on research (basic, translational, clinical), teaching, patient care, and public service.

UCSF Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences conducts its clinical, educational, and research efforts at a variety of locations in Northern California, including Langlely Porter Psychiatric Hospital and Clinics ^[11]; UCSF Medical Centers at Parnassus Heights, Mission Bay, and Mount Zion; UCSF Benioff Children's Hospitals in San Francisco ^[12] and Oakland ^[13]; Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center; the San Francisco VA Health Care System; UCSF Fresno; and numerous community-based sites around the San Francisco Bay Area.

About the UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences

The UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences ^[14], established by the extraordinary generosity of Joan and Sanford I. "Sandy" Weill, brings together world-class researchers with top-ranked physicians to solve some of the most complex challenges in the human brain.

The UCSF Weill Institute leverages UCSF's unrivaled bench-to-bedside excellence in the neurosciences. It unites three UCSF departments—Neurology, Psychiatry, and Neurological Surgery—that are highly esteemed for both patient care and research, as well as the Neuroscience Graduate Program, a cross-disciplinary alliance of nearly 100 UCSF faculty members from 15 basic-science departments, as well as the UCSF Institute for Neurodegenerative Diseases, a multidisciplinary research center focused on finding effective treatments for Alzheimer's disease, frontotemporal dementia, Parkinson's disease, and other neurodegenerative disorders.

About UCSF

The University of California, San Francisco ^[15] (UCSF) is exclusively focused on the health sciences and is dedicated to promoting health worldwide through advanced biomedical research, graduate-level education in the life sciences and health professions, and excellence in patient care. UCSF Health ^[16], which serves as UCSF's primary academic medical center, includes top-ranked specialty hospitals ^[17] and other clinical programs, and has affiliations throughout the Bay Area.

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Links

- [1] <https://profiles.ucsf.edu/christopher.bartley>
- [2] <https://www.fnih.org/our-programs/deeda-blair-research-initiative-disorders-brain>
- [3] <https://www.fnih.org/>
- [4] <https://profiles.ucsf.edu/sam.pleasure>
- [5] <https://profiles.ucsf.edu/michael.r.wilson>
- [6] <https://weill.ucsf.edu>
- [7] <https://psychiatry.ucsf.edu/news/bartley-berendzen-tapped-receive-research-fellowships>
- [8] <https://psych.ucsf.edu/news/bartley-pennington-named-2019-watson-faculty-scholars>
- [9] <https://psychiatry.ucsf.edu/news/ucsfs-bartley-named-hhmi-hanna-gray-fellow>
- [10] <https://psychiatry.ucsf.edu/welcome-ucsf-psychiatry>
- [11] <https://psychiatry.ucsf.edu/lpphc>
- [12] <https://www.ucsfbenioffchildrens.org/>
- [13] <https://www.childrenshospitaloakland.org/main/home.aspx>
- [14] <http://weill.ucsf.edu/>
- [15] <http://www.ucsf.edu/>
- [16] <https://www.ucsfhealth.org/>
- [17] <https://health.usnews.com/best-hospitals/area/ca/ucsf-medical-center-6930043>