

HOPE THROUGH RESEARCH



SPRING 2023

THE HDRF DEPRESSION TASK FORCE CELEBRATES PROGRESS AT ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC SUMMIT



Members of the Depression Task Force (DTF)

KEY FACTS ABOUT DEPRESSION

- Depression is a debilitating psychiatric disorder affecting millions worldwide that is roughly one-third heritable.
- Large-scale genomic studies indicate that more than 200 risk genes contribute to depression.
- Depression is a disorder that involves an interaction between an individual with a susceptible genotype and exposure to life stressors.

WHY THE DEPRESSION TASK FORCE STRATEGIC PLAN GIVES HOPE

The DTF is a consortium of scientists working together as a single unit to study how depression pathways develop in individuals with susceptible genotypes. Their annual summit, held on April 19 in New York City, laid out their broad strategic plan for the next three-year grant cycle.

It is well-established that stress is the strongest risk factor for depression. But what's particularly noteworthy is that **many** people who are exposed to severe stress, according to studies with combat veterans and civilian victims of physical or sexual assault, many people are somehow able to maintain normal function. This is what scientists refer to as "resilience." The question of what makes one person susceptible under some circumstances, and another person resilient under those same circumstances, is the major issue that the Depression Task Force is addressing.

To find answers, the DTF's strategy is to better understand the effects of stress on the brain, in health and disease. They are looking at how pathways of risk can develop in the fetus and childhood and continue to develop through old age. They are observing how risk pathways develop on multiple layers – from molecules to cells to the whole brain and behaviors.

They are also looking to define the

subtypes of depression that are driven by different genes that contribute to the risk pathways. This will lead us to a more precise way to treat depression in each individual, rather than the one-size-fits all approach of today.

Our knowledge of the biology of resilience can also help people with more susceptible genotypes by giving them treatments to activate their own mechanisms of resilience, rather than undoing the negative effects of stress after depression takes root.

Only a consortium of scientists who work together as a single unit can mount an effort of such breadth and mine important advances to develop better, precision treatments. Their work continues to lead the field of stress and depression research.

◆ LOUISA BENTON

Please turn the page to read highlights from the DTF's recent annual scientific summit.



FOUNDER'S MESSAGE

Depression Task Force Triennial Review

Dear Friend,

In April we held our Triennial Review for our acclaimed Depression Task Force scientists. This is a major summit marking the start of a new three-year grant cycle. We take stock of research achievements and refine our research strategy.

It is an absolute thrill to be present in the same room with this All-Star team of world leaders in science. Each day we see creative research ideas that would not have been possible without the synergy **and trust** of the group. Each day we see a steady increase in knowledge because our scientists are actively collaborating and working as a single unit.

Today, HDRF is at the forefront of a rapidly expanding field, and we are discovering novel genetic and epigenetic targets to accelerate the next generation of depression treatments.

I want to thank each and every one of our donors for your role in this remarkable progress. Your support has and *will continue* to make a world of difference.

Thank you,

Audrey Gruss
Founder & Chair

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HDRF ANNOUNCES THE INAUGURAL TEEN RACE OF HOPE



SUNDAY, MAY 21, 2023

Pier 40 • Hudson River Park • 10:00 am *sharp*
353 West Street, NYC 10014

IN HONOR OF MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH, THE TEEN RACE OF HOPE HAS BEEN STARTED BY TEENS FOR TEENS TO:

- Share facts about depression and treatment
- Fight the stigma still surrounding mental health
- Fundraise for advanced research on depression
- Reinforce our connection in school community, because that is a powerful protective factor in future mental health

#TEENS4HOPE #CONNECT4HOPE
#RACE4HOPE

nycteen.raceofhopeseries.com

For more information, please contact:

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SUPPORT HDRF

100% of all donations go directly to spur cutting-edge neuroscience research into the origins, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of depression and related mood disorders such as bipolar disorder, postpartum depression, PTSD, anxiety and suicide.

HDRF is a non profit 501(c)(3) public charitable organization. All donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.

Visit us at hopefordepression.org

ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC SUMMIT HIGHLIGHTS



“Since we can’t undo the stress in this world, a major goal of my lab is to understand how we can counter it by inducing resilience. Resilience is an active process – something the brain can acquire.”

Huda Akil, Ph.D.
University of Michigan



“What is the circuit of depression that you can map in humans? The goal is to find it so we can track if a patient is getting better.”

Helen S. Mayberg, M.D.
Mount Sinai School of Medicine



“In my lab we record electricity in the brain. Just like we take an EKG to monitor the heart, I want to come up with an EKG for the brain to diagnose states like anxiety and depression.”

Kafui Dzirasa, M.D., Ph.D.
Duke University



“We try to understand the early pathways of risk in children. Depression has a peak age of onset around adolescence, so we need to catch it early.”

Michael Meaney, Ph.D.
McGill University & Singapore Institute



“Childhood is a very critical period. The shaping of our risk and resilience to psychiatric illness already starts in the womb.”

Elisabeth Binder, M.D., Ph.D.
Max Planck Institute of Psychiatry



“Today we just lump everybody together in their treatments. Soon we might be able to actually separate patients and know how to treat them with precision psychiatry.”

Jonathan Javitch, M.D., Ph.D.
Columbia University



“When people take SSRIs, like Prozac and Zoloft, about 50% respond, and 50% don’t respond. We’re trying to figure out the mechanisms for that lack of responsiveness, to find novel targets to treat the non-responders.”

René Hen, Ph.D.
Columbia University



“We believe there is a kind of rainbow of different flavors of depression. The goal is to discover new subtypes of depression and devise ways of treating people based on their subtype.”

Conor Liston, M.D., Ph.D.
Weill Cornell Medicine



“The DTF has been in the thick of this research for a decade now. We are delineating how it is that stress causes changes in the brain that are harmful in the vulnerable brain, starting in utero and persisting throughout life.”

Eric Nestler, M.D., Ph.D.
*Mount Sinai School of Medicine
Chair, HDRF Depression Task Force*

PALM BEACH RACE OF HOPE



Livingston Builders, largest team award

Hope for Depression Research Foundation (HDRF) celebrated the Fifth Anniversary of our signature winter event — the Palm Beach Race of Hope to Defeat Depression — on Saturday, February 18, 2023.

The event gathered more than 900 men, women, and children on a beautiful morning, and raised over \$550,000 for urgent research into depression and anxiety.



Mona Nasser gets top individual fundraiser award from Grand Marshals Audrey Gruss and Scott Snyder



Joe Hernandez and Bettina Anderson



Michellie Jones wins the medal for first place female



Stephen Wilsman wins the medal for first place male

PALM BEACH JUNIOR COMMITTEE COCKTAIL PARTY



Co-Hosts Eddy and John Taylor



Katherine Lande and Kevin Condon



Host Tricia Quick (center) with Vice Chairs Hollis Pica and Mona Nasser



Chairs PJ Quick and Casey Taylor with Audrey Gruss and Scott Snyder

PALM BEACH RACE OF HOPE SPONSORS



UPCOMING EVENTS

NEXT GENERATION MENTAL HEALTH SYMPOSIUM

September/October 2023
Palm Beach, FL

17TH ANNUAL HOPE LUNCHEON SEMINAR

Tuesday, November 14, 2023
The Plaza Hotel, New York, NY
11:30 am - 2:00 pm

PALM BEACH RACE OF HOPE

Saturday, February 17, 2024
Bradley Park, Palm Beach, FL
8:00 am