



California Initiative to Advance  
**Precision Medicine**

## California Awards Innovative Proposals for Precision Medical Research on Depression

*1 in 7 adults in California has experienced a mental illness*

**Sacramento, CA** – California is announcing awards for innovative research on the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of depression through the [California Initiative to Advance Precision Medicine](#) (CIAPM). Precision medicine is an innovative approach to disease prevention and treatment that tailors individual treatment to specific patients.

“The newly established research projects that address depression demonstrate the Newsom administration’s continued commitment to transforming and improving [Mental Health for All](#) Californians,” said **California Health and Human Services (CalHHS), Secretary Kim Johnson**. “This critical investment marks an expanded California Initiative to Advance Precision Medicine-supported research portfolio in mental and behavioral health, including seven research projects on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) funded in 2021/2022.”

**RESEARCH AWARD RECIPIENTS:** After a competitive selection process, three research teams have been awarded up to \$3 million each for a 3-year project term:

- 1) **Making the Unseen Seen Trial of Depression (MUST-D): Scrutinizing social determinants of depression to advance precision and equitable care** – Lead Principal Investigator: Suzi Hong, PhD, University of California San Diego (UCSD); Family Health Centers of San Diego; NeuroUX
  - The UCSD team will aim to discover the social and environmental factors leading to depression risk or resilience in communities that experience those factors associated with greater incidence of depression. These studies will help identify the needs, priorities, and barriers, to prevent depression and determine mental health outcomes through assessments using a mobile mental health platform.
- 2) **Personalized and scalable interventions for reducing depression among LGBTQ+ adolescents: Combining novel digital therapeutics and peer counseling** – Lead Principal Investigator: Greg Hajcak, PhD, Santa Clara University (SCU); Alum Rock Counseling Center; Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science; Stanford University; Yale University; UCLA; Muse; Flourish Labs
  - The SCU team will focus on reducing depression among LGBTQ+ youth by building and disseminating accessible and innovative digital therapeutic tools for emotional regulation and increasing positive emotions to bolster stress resilience. In addition, they will aim to train and develop educational materials for peer counselors working with LGBTQ+ youth.

3) **Precision Mental Health to Predict Risk, Prevent, and Treat Depression in Publicly Funded Youth** – Lead Principal Investigator: Tony Yang, MD, PhD, University of California San Francisco (UCSF); Edgewood Center for Children and Families; NeuMarker; Teens4Teens

- The UCSF team aims to improve the mental health outcomes of publicly supported, at-risk youth by identifying those most likely to develop depression based on clinical data, test the efficacy of neuroscience-based interventions to prevent depression, and build an online dashboard to help clinicians identify and choose the best prevention and treatment combinations for specific patients.

Research teams are co-led by academic research institutions and one or more community-based organizations or community clinics that support people with or at risk for depression and include a private sector collaborator that contributes in-kind, financial, or other resources.

**WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT:** According to the [California Healthcare Foundation](#), roughly 1 in 7 adults in California has experienced a mental illness, and nearly two-thirds of California youth with major depression do not receive treatment for their condition. Black, Native American, and LGBTQ+ youth have been underrepresented in biomedical research according to the [National Institutes of Health](#).

“We are grateful for the recognition of important research needs that address depression prevention, diagnosis, and treatment by the California Legislature,” said **CIAPM Science Officer Dr. David Reiner**. “Post-COVID, many states including [California](#), saw rises in depressive symptoms. Youth [report](#) barriers related to access, stigma, transportation and privacy when attempting to address their mental health. These research projects will provide innovative ways to identify and provide care to these vulnerable populations.”

#### **ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA INITIATIVE TO ADVANCE PRECISION MEDICINE**

CIAPM, which moved from the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research to the [California Health and Human Services Agency](#) (CalHHS) in July 2024, will administer the research grant funds. The funding will support precision medicine research studies in California to improve outcomes for people with or at risk for depression, particularly as a pathway to reduce health inequities.

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**Contact:** Ramon Martinez, Science Communications Officer

California Health and Human Services Agency (CalHHS)

1215 O Street, Sacramento, CA 95814; (916) 279-6332

Email – [ramon.martinez@chhs.ca.gov](mailto:ramon.martinez@chhs.ca.gov)