



Brigham and Women's Hospital  
Founding Member, Mass General Brigham

# Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Women's Health Research

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

# Vision and Mission



Our mission is to spark meaningful progress in women's health by advancing innovative research, generating essential knowledge, and preparing the next generation of medical leaders.

Over the past decade, women's health research has advanced significantly – thanks in part to pioneering work at the Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Women's Health Research at Brigham and Women's Hospital. Yet critical gaps remain. How do diseases, medications, devices, and treatments affect women and men differently? Why are women still underrepresented in clinical trials – even for conditions that disproportionately affect them?

The Connors Center is working to close these gaps. Through our First.In.Women® Precision Medicine Platform and other initiatives, we champion the timely and rigorous inclusion of women in clinical research. We develop innovative tools and community-engaged strategies to better understand – and strengthen – women's participation in trials. Our investigators also lead groundbreaking studies on conditions that affect women exclusively, more frequently, or differently.

Our goal is to embed biological sex as a fundamental variable in biomedical research – ensuring that every woman benefits from more precise, personalized, and effective care.

To achieve this vision, we invest in people. We provide early funding to promising scientists, mentor emerging leaders in women's health, and develop sex-informed educational programs for clinicians and researchers in training.

Thank you for your partnership. Together, we are transforming women's health – one discovery and one leader at a time.

## Connors Center Members

The Connors Center proudly includes more than 175 affiliated members representing faculty from a wide range of departments, divisions, and institutions across the Mass General Brigham system and beyond. Together, these members cultivate a vibrant, collaborative community – partnering on research initiatives, engaging in Connors Center programs and events, and advancing the shared mission of improving the health of women through innovative, interdisciplinary science.

# Message from the Former Executive Director, Hadine Joffe, MD, MSc



It has been one of the greatest privileges of my professional life to serve as Executive Director of the Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Women's Health Research for the past 12 years. Together, we have worked to elevate women's health from a niche focus to a central pillar of scientific excellence at Brigham and Women's Hospital and across Mass General Brigham.

In 2025, despite a challenging funding landscape, the Connors Center continued to expand its impact — launching enterprise-wide initiatives such as the Sex-Informed Research Collaborative Think Tank (SIRCTT), celebrating a record-setting Women's Health Luncheon, and demonstrating the measurable return on investment of our early-career funding programs. None of this would have been possible without the visionary generosity of Jack and Eileen Connors, our Women's Health Advisory Board, and our committed supporters.

As I step into a new leadership role as Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, I do so with immense pride in what we have built — and deep confidence in the Center's future. I am delighted that Dr. Primavera Spagnolo is serving as Interim Executive Director. Her scientific rigor, strategic vision, and unwavering commitment to sex-informed medicine position the Connors Center to enter its next chapter with strength and ambition.

With gratitude and enduring commitment to this mission,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Joffe'.

**Hadine Joffe, MD, MSc**

Former Executive Director

The Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Women's Health Research

Paula A. Johnson Professor of Psychiatry in the Field of Women's Health, Harvard Medical School

# Message from the Interim Executive Director, Primavera A. Spagnolo, MD, PhD



The future of medicine will not be equitable, precise, or truly innovative unless women are fully represented in research – and unless biological sex is rigorously integrated into how we study, diagnose, and treat disease.

It is both an honor and a privilege to lead the Connors Center for Women's Health Research during this important moment of transition. I am deeply grateful to Hadine Joffe for her extraordinary leadership in establishing the Connors Center as a national leader in advancing sex-informed science.

As Mass General Brigham continues to integrate and expand its vision for women's health across the system, I am honored to guide the Center during this pivotal period – working to ensure that our mission not only endures but grows in ambition and impact.

At the Connors Center, we are not simply advocating for inclusion; we are building the infrastructure, science, and leadership pipeline required to transform women's health at scale.

In 2025, we expanded the First.In.Women® Precision Medicine Platform to strengthen women's representation in clinical trials and develop novel tools to understand and overcome barriers to participation. We launched the MGB-wide Sex-Informed Research Collaborative Think Tank (SIRCTT), bringing together investigators across disciplines to embed sex as a fundamental biological variable in biomedical research. We continued to invest in IGNITE and other early-career funding mechanisms, accelerating high-risk, high-impact research across traditional, cardiovascular, breast cancer, and collaborative domains. And we deepened our commitment to training the next generation of leaders in sex-informed medicine.

Importantly, we are advancing not only research, but culture change – ensuring that women's biology is no longer treated as noise, but as essential scientific signal.

The challenges facing women's health research are real. Funding landscapes are shifting. Health inequities persist. Yet our resolve is stronger than ever. We are committed to ensuring that every discovery, every clinical trial, and every emerging investigator moves us closer to a future where women receive care that is informed by evidence truly reflective of their biology.

Together – with our donors, advisory board, faculty, trainees, and community partners – we will continue to lead this transformation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Primavera A. Spagnolo". The signature is fluid and cursive.

## **Primavera A. Spagnolo, MD, PhD**

Interim Executive Director

Scientific Director of First.In.Women® Precision Medicine Platform

Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Women's Health Research

Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School

# Leadership



**Hadine Joffe, MD, MSc**  
Former Executive Director



**Primavera A Spagnolo, MD, PhD,**  
Interim Executive Director, Scientific Director of First.In. Women Precision Medicine Platform



**Laura Holsen, PhD**  
Director of Research Training



**Cindy Liu, PhD**  
Director of Stress and Adversity



**Deborah Bartz, MD, MPH**  
Director of Education



**JoAnn Manson, MD, MPH, DrPH**  
Scientific Advisor



**Lydia Pace, MD, MPH**  
Director of Women's Health Policy and Advocacy, Director of Global Women's Health Fellowship



**Polina Teslyar, MD**  
Director of the Women's Mental Health Fellowship



**Janet Rich-Edwards, ScD, MPH**  
Director of Lifecourse Epidemiology



**Kari Braaten, MD, MPH**  
Director of the Fellowship in Complex Family Planning



**Alisa Goldberg, MD, MPH**  
Founder and Inaugural Director of the Fellowship in Complex Family Planning

# Staff



**Natasha Minor, MPH**  
Interim Administrative Director



**Aleta Wiley, MPH, MSc**  
Director of Research Program Management



**Annie Walsh, BS**  
Senior Project Manager/ Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships



**Patricia Gallegos, MPH**  
Project Manager/ Education and Community-Participatory Initiatives



**Jacqueline McCormick, BA**  
Program Coordinator



**Aisling Maher, BA**  
Senior Administrative Assistant



**Monica Bennett Fonseca, MS**  
Research Specialist



**Doruntina Fida, MPH**  
Research Coordinator



**Julie Wilson, BA**  
Research Assistant



**Hannah Kim, MSc**  
Research Assistant



**Emily Sinrod, BS**  
Research Assistant



**Tiffany Tran, BA**  
Assistant Director of Finance

# Greetings from Academic Medical Center President David F. M. Brown, MD



The mission of the Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Women’s Health Research is closely aligned with the broader vision of Mass General Brigham (MGB). Together, we share a deep commitment to advancing collaborative, interdisciplinary research that leads to equitable, patient-centered improvements in health – both within our system and across the wider scientific community.

This 2025 Annual Report highlights the Connors Center’s exceptional leadership in applying a sex-informed lens to biomedical research and clinical innovation. By investigating how sex differences shape health outcomes and supporting emerging investigators, the Center continues to drive meaningful discoveries and elevate the standard of excellence in women’s health research. The Center’s dedication to education, advocacy, and community engagement is helping to ensure that sex-informed science becomes an integral part of the future of medicine.

I invite you to explore the remarkable accomplishments of the Connors Center over the past year. This work exemplifies the power of collaboration, innovation, and purpose – and its influence extends far beyond our institutions, shaping the national and global dialogue on women’s health and equity in research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David F. M. Brown'.

**David F. M. Brown, MD**

President, Academic Medical Centers  
Mass General Brigham

# With Gratitude to the Women's Health Advisory Board



The generosity and leadership of the Women's Health Advisory Board are essential to the success of the Connors Center and the annual Women's Health Luncheon. This signature event provides vital philanthropic support that fuels the cutting-edge research improving the health of women everywhere.

The 19th Annual Women's Health Luncheon was a record-breaking success, featuring **Arianna Huffington** — founder and CEO of Thrive Global, founder of The Huffington Post, and bestselling author — as keynote speaker. Mass General Brigham experts **Elizabeth Ginsburg, MD**, and **Florian Fintelmann, MD**, also delivered compelling presentations on advances in women's health research, including fertility-preservation strategies for cancer patients and the use of artificial intelligence to detect lung cancer in women earlier and more accurately.

Through their dedication and generosity, members of the Advisory Board have played a pivotal role in establishing and strengthening several cornerstone Connors Center programs. These include:

- **The Mary Ann Tynan Fellowship in Women's Health**, which supports physicians and scientists working to improve women's health;
- **The Gretchen S. Fish Fund for the Women's Health Interdisciplinary Stress Program of Research (WHISPR)**, which advances understanding of how physiological and psychological stress affect women's health and disease;



Arianna Huffington is interviewed by journalist Lisa Hughes of WBZ-TV News

- **The Martignetti Award in Women's Health**, providing distinguished scientists with the protected time and resources needed to pursue transformative sex-informed research;
- **The Casey Toolin McAuliffe Memorial IGNITE Award**, which enables early-stage investigators to explore key questions in women's health; and
- **The Scott Schoen and Nancy Adams Research Fund in Women's Cardiovascular Disease**, which supports critical initiatives through a Specialized Cardiac and Vascular Disease IGNITE Award and the First.In.Women<sup>®</sup> Fellowship — both designed to cultivate the next generation of innovators in therapeutic development for women with cardiovascular disease.



Suzanne Joyce, Eileen Connors and former Executive Director Hadine Joffe, MD, MSc



Giles Boland, MD, Florian Fintelmann, MD, David Brown, MD, Isabelle Loring, Arianna Huffington, Melissa Weiner Janfaza, Hadine Joffe, MD, MSc, Elizabeth Ginsburg, MD, and Lisa Hughes

Additional philanthropic investments continue to drive the Connors Center’s mission forward. **The Hale Fund for Women’s Health** supports research on how stress exposure influences cardiovascular and brain health in women. **The Lisa L. Leiden Fund for Excellence in Women’s Health** accelerates research and education aimed at enhancing the patient-care experience for women and improving the well-being of nursing staff.

Generous gifts from **Kendra Wilde and Pam Miles** further strengthen this work — supporting Dr. Cindy Liu’s research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on women during the perinatal period and advancing the discovery of novel diagnostic tools for ovarian cancer, respectively. Finally, **two anonymous donors** have provided significant seed funding to advance research on maternal mental health conditions and their impact on maternal and fetal/infant morbidity and mortality.

The Connors Center is deeply grateful for the Advisory Board’s steadfast commitment to advancing women’s health through their advocacy and generous philanthropy.



Monica Fonseca, MS, Natasha Minor, MPH, Laura Holsen, PhD, Primavera A. Spagnolo, MD, PhD, Hadine Joffe, MD, MSc, Aleta Wiley, MPH, Aisling Maher

# Catalyzing Research



Connors Center research is organized around two major pillars: the **First.In.Women® (FiW) Precision Medicine Platform** and **Stress and Women's Health Research**. The FiW platform provides a translational research structure that supports and advances studies at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH) focused on developing and evaluating treatments for the full spectrum of diseases affecting women. Through this platform, the Connors Center educates, informs and engages a broad range of stakeholders – both across Mass General Brigham (MGB) and externally – to ensure that novel therapeutics are rigorously understood in both women and men.

The stress and women's health research pillar, examines how different forms of stress influence women's physical and mental health, advancing knowledge that is critical to improving prevention, diagnosis and care.

## First.In.Women® Precision Medicine Platform (FiW)

FiW facilitates the intentional and timely inclusion of sex and factors in every step of the R&D process, using standardized, evidence-based methods that promote efficiency, accuracy and reproducibility. We accomplish this important goal by:

- 1 Conducting research aimed at facilitating the adequate representation of women, particularly those from underserved groups, in clinical trials;
- 2 Performing analyses and developing tools that facilitate the inclusion of sex and gender-related factors in the data collection and analysis plan;
- 3 Partnering with academia, industry and non-profit organizations;
- 4 Supporting and expanding the sex and gender research community within BWH and MGB via education, training, networking opportunities and seed grants.

## Improving Women's Representation in Clinical Trials

Women remain underrepresented in many clinical trials, and female-specific biological factors are still too often overlooked in research design and analysis. This gap limits our understanding of how diseases manifest and treatments work in women, ultimately affecting the safety, effectiveness, and equity of medical care. At the Connors Center, we are addressing this challenge through a multi-level approach – generating national data to understand barriers to participation and translating these insights into community-based programs that empower women to engage with clinical research. Together, these efforts aim to ensure that the evidence guiding medical care truly reflects the biology, experiences, and needs of women.

## The Women's Health and Research Participation Survey

Led by Dr. Spagnolo, the Women's Health Research and Participation Survey was launched nationally in January 2023 to assess the health needs and behaviors of women living in the United States and to better understand their



Primavera Spagnolo, MD, PhD

knowledge, attitudes, and experiences related to clinical trials. The survey closed in May 2023 after receiving more than 5,300 responses from a racially diverse group of women across the country. In collaboration

with the Survey and Data Management Core at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Dr. Spagnolo and her team analyzed the data to examine how factors such as race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and medical history shape women’s health priorities and their perceptions of clinical research.

Findings from the survey, set to be published this year, revealed that accessible and trustworthy information about clinical trials is the most critical unmet need among women. The results also highlighted structural barriers that make participation difficult, including lack of childcare support, limited information about potential side effects or implications for fertility, and insufficient outreach from trusted sources. Importantly, the survey also showed that women are strongly motivated to participate in clinical trials when they understand the potential benefits for other women, their families, and their communities.

At the Connors Center, these findings serve as a foundation for action – guiding the development of initiatives designed to reduce barriers and advance equitable participation in clinical research.

### Empowering Women to Transform the Health of Their Communities – Project Artemisa

Women continue to be **underrepresented in and underserved by clinical trials across many therapeutic areas**. This lack of inclusion limits our ability to detect sex differences in the safety and effectiveness of drugs, devices,

and diagnostics, ultimately restricting access to medical advances that are optimized for women.

Guided by insights from the **Women’s Health and Research Participation Survey**, as well as our work examining the magnitude of female underrepresentation in more than **1,500 clinical trials across multiple therapeutic areas**, Dr. Spagnolo and the Connors Center team launched **Project Artemisa**. This initiative is designed to provide accessible, evidence-based information about clinical trials to women in the Greater Boston community.

Women are often **the primary health decision-makers within their families**, influencing up to **80% of healthcare decisions**. Project Artemisa builds on this reality by creating a community-based education and skill-building program that empowers minoritized women to become **research advocates within their families and neighborhoods**. Participants receive training and tools to understand clinical trial opportunities, navigate research participation, and confidently advocate for their health and the health of their communities.

Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous member of the Connors Women’s Health Advisory Board, the Connors Center has secured seed funding to pilot this initiative among English- and Spanish-speaking women in the Greater Boston area. The program is being implemented in partnership with the Walgreens Clinical Trials Office, creating a model for community engagement that can be expanded to other regions.

**By translating research insights into community-driven action, Project Artemisa represents a scalable model for increasing trust, awareness, and equitable participation in clinical research – ensuring that women’s voices and experiences shape the future of medicine.**

# Transforming Cardiovascular Health Outcomes in Women



Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in women worldwide, yet women’s cardiovascular health has long been understudied and undertreated. The Connors Center is committed to advancing research that uncovers sex-specific mechanisms of disease, improves early detection, and ensures that prevention and treatment strategies reflect the unique biological and life-course factors that influence women’s heart health. By integrating sex-informed science into cardiovascular research, we aim to improve outcomes for women across the lifespan.

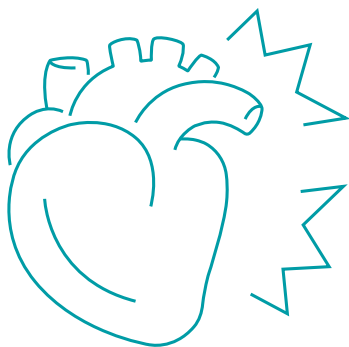
## First.In.Women® Researcher



Leilah Grant, PhD

**Dr. Grant** was appointed as a Connors Center First.In.Women® Research Scientist to support her work advancing sex-informed approaches to cardiovascular and cardiometabolic health in

women. Drawing on her expertise in sleep and circadian medicine, her research investigates how circadian rhythms influence cardiovascular and metabolic risk across the female lifespan, with a particular focus on peri- and postmenopausal women. Her projects include studies of time-restricted eating as a circadian-based intervention to improve cardiometabolic health, as well as research examining links between ovarian reserve, sleep health, and the interaction between melatonin and estradiol.



## Scott Schoen and Nancy Adams First.In.Women® Cardiovascular Fellowship

In 2024, **Dr. Xiaowen “Wendy” Wang, MD** and **Dr. Maria Pabon** completed their First.In.Women® Cardiovascular Fellowship program. Dr. Wang’s fellowship project focused on evaluating sex differences in clinical characteristics and outcomes in PARADISE-MI, a randomized, controlled trial evaluating the use of specific treatments in patients with high-risk myocardial infarction. Her work led to several publications and presentations at national and international conferences including the American Heart Association Scientific Session and the European Society of Cardiology Heart Failure Congress. Dr. Pabon focused on adverse pregnancy outcomes and risk of cardiovascular diseases. Findings from her project were summarized in a publication in the Journal of the American College of Cardiology, and were also presented at the American College of Cardiology National Conference in April 2024.



Wendy Wang, MD



Maria Pabon, MD

# Accelerating Innovation in Women’s Health Research



Transforming women’s health requires bold ideas and the investigators willing to pursue them. The Connors Center IGNITE Program provides seed funding to early-career researchers developing innovative, high-risk, high-reward approaches to understanding and improving women’s health. This year’s IGNITE awardees are advancing new discoveries that will shape the future of sex-informed medicine.

## IGNITE Research Awards

The IGNITE Awards are a key component of FiW that advances our understanding of female-specific and sex-differentiating mechanisms of diseases and the discovery of novel therapeutics and diagnostics. These awards provide funding to investigators and are supported by generous donors at the annual Women’s Health Luncheon. IGNITE investigators leverage FiW to shape the scientific focus of the study, utilize Connors Center and FiW resources, and assess milestones, deliverables, and project goals to make sure emerging clinical translation remains aligned with the FiW mission. The IGNITE program includes several types of awards: The IGNITE Research Awards, The Casey Toolin McCauliffe Memorial IGNITE award, the Cardiac and Vascular IGNITE award, the Gayle Brinkenhoff Memorial IGNITE award, and the Connors BWH-MGB Collaborative IGNITE awards.

The Connors BWH-MGB Collaborative IGNITE Award supports a Brigham and Women’s investigator and their collaboration with an investigator from another MGB institution on a joint project. This year, these two awards were combined.

The 2025 Connors BWH-MGB Collaborative Cardiovascular IGNITE awardees are: **Leilah Grant, PhD** and **Louisa Sylvia, PhD**, *Time-Restricted Eating to Improve Body Weight and Mood in Peri- and Postmenopausal Women*. This award was made possible through funding from the Scott Schoen and Nancy Adams Research Fund in Women’s Vascular Disease and the MGB Office of the Chief Medical Officer.

The 2025 Casey Toolin McCauliffe IGNITE awardee is **George Stamatiades, MD, PhD**, *Deciphering the Mechanisms Underlying the Higher Female Prevalence of Cushing’s Metabolic and Reproductive Complication*. The Casey Toolin McCauliffe IGNITE award is made possible through funding from Women’s Health Advisory Co-Chair Jennifer Toolin McCauliffe.

The Specialized Cardiac and Vascular IGNITE Award supports innovative early-phase, proof-of-concept investigations on sex-differences in cardiac and vascular diseases, including studies on disease mechanisms, biomarkers, diagnostics and therapeutics.

The Gayle Brinkenhoff IGNITE Award for Cancer Research supports innovative proof-of-concept investigations related to breast cancer.

The 2025 Gayle Brinkenhoff IGNITE Awardee is **Sungwook Jung, PhD**, *Clathrin Light Chain Proteins: A Tool to Improve Drug Delivery and Efficacy in Metastatic Breast Cancer*. This Award is made possible through funding from the Global Philanthropy Division of Revitalash Cosmetics.



Leilah Grant, PhD



Louisa Sylvia, PhD



George Stamatiades, MD, PhD



Sungwook Jung, PhD



## Catalyzing Collaboration in Sex-Informed Research

The Sex-Informed Research Collaborative Think Tank aims to build a system-wide community of sex-informed and women’s health researchers across MGB. By fostering belonging, catalyzing interdisciplinary collaboration, and strengthening expertise in sex-informed research, SIRCTT moves beyond traditional dyadic mentorship to create a sustained, peer-supported ecosystem that advances research and accelerates career development across the academic pipeline. To ensure alignment across the system, the administrative team established an Advisory Board composed of MGB leadership and representatives from MGB institutions, creating a continuous feedback loop that integrates institutional priorities and ensures SIRCTT serves the broader MGB research community. SIRCTT’s structure is comprised of three integrated components:

**Group Mentoring and Education:** To strengthen the pipeline of women’s health researchers, SIRCTT offers a yearlong Education and Networking Program in which carefully structured cohorts of junior faculty and fellows participate in recurring sessions with senior leaders in women’s health and sex-informed science.

**Networking and Collaboration Platforms:** Throughout the year, SIRCTT hosts structured mixer events designed to catalyze interdisciplinary collaboration across Mass General Brigham. Each event integrates three components: a focused panel or presentation on a strategic topic in women’s health, guided networking, and organized breakout groups aligned around shared scientific interests.

**Community Resources:** To sustain engagement and provide resources beyond live programming, SIRCTT maintains two core infrastructure tools. First, the SIRCTT Research Matrix serves as a centralized, searchable directory of women’s health investigators across MGB, functioning as a streamlined collaboration hub for sex-informed research. Second, a quarterly newsletter highlights investigator achievements, funding opportunities, upcoming events, and strategic initiatives within the women’s health ecosystem.

This year, SIRCTT hosted its first mixer events, one in the spring and one in the fall (shown on the following page), to bring together members of the sex-informed and women’s health research community from across MGB. SIRCTT also convened the first cohort of its Educational and Networking program. Each cohort consists of junior and mid-career MGB investigators who are either considering or have already established a career in sex-informed and women’s health research who gather during four meetings over the course of one year. At each meeting, they can interact with subject-matter experts via fireside chats and speed mentoring and to network with other investigators enrolled in SIRCTT. Across these two programs, along with the SIRCTT advisory board and faculty core, SIRCTT has brought together over 100 MGB investigators.



Fall Mixer Panelists Vesela Kovacheva, MD, PhD, with moderator Primavera Spagnolo, MD, PhD and Bhamini Vadalingiah, MSC, MBA



Fall Mixer attendees during the networking portion of the event

In addition to these programs, SIRCTT has also created a “research matrix” (shown below), a database where MGB-affiliated women’s health and sex-informed scientists can submit their information. This allows other scientists to use the matrix as a resource to find potential collaborators or mentors whose research aligns with or complements their own.

### SIRCTT research matrix

SIRCTT Research Matrix > SIRCTT Investigators												
Faculty Name	Primary Dept/Div	Main Research Topic	Disease Area	Methods/Approach	Stage of Research	HMS Title	Additional Titles	MGB Institution				
Hadine Joffe, MD, MSc	Psychiatry	Mental Health	Menopause	sleep	Clinical	Paula A. Johnson Profes...	Executive Director, C...	Brigham and Women's H				
Primavera A Spagnolo, MD, PhD	Psychiatry	Mental Health	PTSD	Addiction	Clinical	Assistant Professor of Ps...	Associate Director, C...	Brigham and Women's H				
Pamela Mahon, PhD	Psychiatry	neurobiological mechanis	Menopause	sleep	neuroendocrinology	Associate Professor of P...	Associate Chief for R...	Brigham and Women's H				
Laura Holsen, PhD	Psychiatry	hormonal clinical studies	eating disorders	mood	neuroimaging	Associate Professor of P...	Faculty Member, Divl...	Brigham and Women's H				
Laura Cox, PhD	Neurology	Microbiome	Immunolo	Microbiome	Alzheim	Microbiology	DNA Se	Pre-Clinical	Translati	Assistant Professor of N...	Primary Investigator, ...	Brigham and Women's H
Charles Jennings, PhD	Neurology	Neuroscience	Brain Disorders	Oversee core facilities at	Pre-Clinical	Clinical	Lecturer in Neurology	-	Brigham and Women's H			
Deborah Bartz, MD, MPH	OBGYN	Education	Family Plan	Education	Curriculum	-	Translational	Clinical	Associate Professor of O...	Director, Ryan Trainin...	Brigham and Women's H	
Dawn E Sugarman, PhD	Division of Alcohol, Drug	Substance Use Disorders	Substance Use Disorders	-	Clinical	Assistant Professor of Ps...	Director, Clinical Mea...	McLean Hospital				
Dawn DeMeo, MD, MPH	Channing Division of Net	Omics	Genomics	Sex	Lur	-	Associate Professor of M...	-	Brigham and Women's H			
Amy Tsurumi, PhD	Surgery	Omics	Biomarkers	Aging	Alzheimer's Dis	analyzing -omics data	Population	Clinical	Assistant Professor of S...	-	Massachusetts General	
Andrea Edlow, MD, MSc	OBGYN	Omics	basic research	maternal exposures	F	Animal Models	Gene	Pre-Clinical	Clinical	Associate Professor of O...	Associate in Obstetri...	Massachusetts General
Jenna Wilson, PhD	Anesthesiology, Perioper	Chronic Pain	Mental	Chronic Pain	Postsur	Longitudinal, observat	Clinical	Instructor in Anaesthesia	Senior Research Scie...	Brigham and Women's H		
Lydia Pace, MD, MPH	Division of Women's Hea	Women's Health	Women's Health	Carc	-	Clinical	Associate Professor of M...	Associate Physician L...	Brigham and Women's H			
Rose Olson, MD, MPH	Division of Global Health	Women's Health	Chrc	long-term effects of intin	Intervention Developm	Clinical	Instructor of Medicine	Associate Physician, ...	Brigham and Women's H			
Florian Fintelmann, MD	Radiology	Body Composition Analy	Lung Cancer	Imaging	quantitative image analy	-	Associate Professor of R...	Radiologist, Thoracic ...	Massachusetts General			
Arlindam 'Andy' Bhattacharjee, P...	Pediatrics	Female Carriers in Duch	Genomics	X-linked di	-	-	Assistant Professor of N...	Faculty Investigator, ...	Brigham and Women's H			
Emily Lau, MD, MPH	Cardiology	Women's Cardiovascular	Cardiovascular Health	epidemiology	-omics	-	Assistant Professor of M...	Director, Women's H...	Massachusetts General			

For illustrative purposes only.

## Connors Center/Massachusetts Life Sciences Center First Look Awards

The First Look Awards are a collaboration between the Massachusetts Life Sciences Center (MLSC) and the Connors Center. This grant program aims to support translational research at Massachusetts research institutions that furthers understanding of sex differences, especially for diseases or conditions that affect women exclusively, predominantly, or differentially. Five awards were granted in 2025 to investigators at institutions across Massachusetts, including BWH, Tufts University, and Boston University.

The 2025 First Look awardees are **Joyce Wong, PhD**, *Identifying Mediators of Tubal Infertility from Upper Reproductive Tract Infections in a Fallopian Tube-On-A-Chip*, **Ursula Kaiser, MD**, *Targeting the Role of OSR1 in Embryo Implantation: A Promising Approach to Improve Management of Recurrent Implantation Failure (RIF)*, **Juan Gnecco, PhD**, *Development of CRISPR/Cas9-Engineered Organoid Model to Reveal Genetic Origins of Endometriosis*, **Therese Rajasekera, PhD**, *Uncovering the Crosstalk Between the Gut and Vaginal Microbiota Ecosystems and Its Role in Brain Health and Disease*, and **Jie Shen, PhD**, *Accelerating Women's Health Solutions: A Bioengineered Vaginal Tissue Model for Modern Drug Development and Testing*.



Joyce Wong, PhD



Ursula Kaiser, MD



Therese Rajasekera, PhD



Jie Shen, PhD

## Ovarian Cancer Research and Vaginal Microbiota-Immune cross talk

**Naoko Sasamoto, MD, PhD** and **Kathryn Terry, ScD** received funding from Women's Health Advisory Board Member Pam Miles for their research project *Discovery of New Blood-Based Biomarkers to Improve Ovarian Cancer Survival*. This research effort focuses on identifying prognostic biomarkers at time of diagnosis utilizing an innovative biomarker discovery platform, which will help providers design personalized treatment strategies for women with ovarian cancer. Results from this study will open new research avenues to discover novel therapeutics targets and blood biomarkers that would identify patients who may most benefit from new treatments that specifically target ovarian cancer.

Generous additional support for this project was provided by Pam Miles in 2024. This additional funding is supporting pioneering research from **Therese Rajasekera, PhD** and the Harvard Microbiome Center to investigate the role of vaginal and gut microbiota in modulating immune response in stress- and trauma-related psychiatric disorders during periods of reproductive transition.



Naoko Sasamoto, MD, PhD



Kathryn Terry, ScD



Therese Rajasekera, PhD

# Stress and Women's Mental Health



Another core pillar of our research examines how environmental, psychological, and physiological stress shape women's health across the lifespan, including their critical impact on maternal mental health. The Connors Center supports three signature programs under this pillar: **the Brigham/Harvard Center for Reproductive Outcomes of Stress and Aging (ROSA)**, which investigates the neural mechanisms of stress in postmenopausal women; the Women's Health Interdisciplinary Stress Program of Research (WHISPR), which examines how stress affects women's mental and physical health while convening an interdisciplinary community of investigators across Brigham and Women's Hospital; and the **Maternal Mental Health Research Program**, which advances research aimed at understanding, detecting, and improving mental health outcomes during pregnancy and the postpartum period.



The ROSA Center is funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and assembles a network of leading investigators across BWH and Harvard Medical School (HMS). Initially funded in 2020, the ROSA Center is one of 10 NIH Specialized

Center of Research Excellence (SCORE) U54 grant established to investigate how stress exposures and how neural regulation transmits stress to worsen women's health during and after menopause. In 2025, investigators received funding to support an additional five years of the Center.

The Center is led by **Hadine Joffe, MD, MSc**, Principal Investigator, and **JoAnn Manson, MD, MPH, DrPH**, Leadership Administrative Core Co-Leader. In addition, investigators from across BWH and HMS lead three major research projects and three additional cores (sleep and light resource, leadership, career enhancement). Additional project and core leaders include: **Jorge Chavarro, MD, ScM, ScD; Ursula Kaiser, MD; Elizabeth Klerman, MD, PhD; Pamela Mahon, PhD; Carrie Mahoney, PhD,**

**Victor Navarro, PhD; Emily Oken, MD, MPH; Kathryn Rexrode, MD, MPH; and Janet Rich-Edwards, ScD, MPH.**

In the first five years of the ROSA Center, investigators focused on the role of stress and its neural mechanisms in reproductive aging health outcomes that are associated with a higher risk of cardiovascular disease and dementia in aging women. With the conclusion of these projects in 2025, ROSA researchers have published results in *Menopause*, *Journal of the Endocrine Society*, and *Sleep Health*.

In the second five-year term, ROSA Center Investigators, building upon the results of the first funding cycle will study the impact of both individual- and neighborhood-level stress exposures on vasomotor symptoms (VMS) and problems with sleep, mood, memory, and cognition during menopause.

The ROSA Center also provides funding opportunities to expand its research focus. The ROSA Scholar program helps early-stage faculty or established investigators refocus their careers on sex-differences and women's health translational research, providing them with the necessary tools to become leading

researchers in the field with a mentored research project that hopefully results in NIH K- or R-level funding. In addition, the ROSA Pilot program distributes 2-year awards that allow early-stage investigators to obtain preliminary data, facilitating applications for future NIH K- or R-level awards.

In 2025, two additional ROSA Pilot Awardees were announced: **Shauni Omond, PhD**, *Exploring the impact of artificial light exposure at night in midlife women with vasomotor symptoms* and **Elvira Rodriguez, PhD**, *Characterization of the role of NK1R in VMS*. Over the next two years these awardees will participate in the Career Enhancement Core programming and work closely with ROSA faculty to support their science and grow their careers.



Shauni Omond, PhD Elvira Rodriguez, PhD

## 2025 NIH Annual SCORE Meeting

Annually, the ROSA Center sends a group of our investigators to the NIH SCORE Annual Meeting in Bethesda, MD. Due to a temporary lapse in federal funding, the 2025 meeting was postponed. However, join us in congratulating the ROSA Center presenters who will be sharing their amazing work once the meeting is rescheduled.

**Emily Oken, PhD** will present results from the population project and **Matthew Weaver, PhD** will present on his 2023 ROSA Pilot Award. In addition, **Dr. Weaver, Delphine Franssen, PhD**, 2023 ROSA Pilot Awardee, **Irene Gonsalvez, MD**, WHISPR Awardee and ROSA Associate Scientist, and **Jesse Poganik, PhD**, WHISPR Awardee and ROSA Associate Scientist, will present posters on their work.

## The Women's Health Interdisciplinary Stress Program of Research (WHISPR)

WHISPR is funded by the Gretchen S. Fish Fund for Women's Health and Stress Research. WHISPR advances our understanding of the relationship between physiologic and psychological stress and women's health and disease. Since its inception in 2018, the program has continued supporting pilot projects, facilitating collaborations between investigators, and hosting an annual scientific symposium. WHISPR research spans clinical, translational, population, and basic research studies that will investigate interactions of physiologic indicators of stress and stress exposures with women's health and disease. WHISPR includes investigators from across BWH to develop cutting-edge research and foster synergy in this interdisciplinary field.

The 2025 WHISPR Awardee is **Jesse Poganik, PhD**, *Leveraging Proteomic Models of Biological Age to Improve Pregnancy Outcomes*.



Jesse Poganik, PhD

The 8th Annual WHISPR Symposium and Awardee Presentation was held at Brigham and Women's Hospital on April 2, 2025, in collaboration with the ROSA Center, an NIH Specialized Center of Research Excellence (SCORE) on Sex Differences. More than 100 participants attended in person and virtually from the Connors Center, across the Mass General Brigham system, the greater Boston community, and beyond.



Hadine Joffe, MD, MSc, Laura Holsen, PhD, Victor Navarro, PhD  
Alfonso Abizaid, PhD, Jesse Poganik, PhD

**Alfonso Abizaid, PhD**, Professor of Neuroscience at Carleton University in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, delivered the keynote address, “Bridging the Gap: The Metabolic Stress Response to Social Stress in Females.” His research focuses on the hormone ghrelin and its role in regulating energy balance in response to stress and other environmental challenges. In his presentation, Dr. Abizaid discussed how social stress influences food intake and metabolic responses through interactions between ghrelin signaling, the mesolimbic dopaminergic system, and the endocannabinoid system, highlighting emerging evidence for sex differences in stress-related metabolic responses.

**Victor Navarro, PhD**, Associate Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School and Principal Investigator in the Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes and Hypertension at Brigham and Women’s Hospital, also presented remarks on the neuronal mechanisms underlying menopausal vasomotor symptoms. Dr. Navarro, a Project Lead within the ROSA Center, shared research on how KNDy neuronal activity regulates luteinizing hormone pulses and contributes to hot flashes, illustrating how insights from mouse models are helping to advance understanding of menopause-related symptoms in humans.



Alfonso Abizaid, PhD



Victor Navarro, PhD



Jesse Poganik, PhD

**The Hale Fund for Women's Health** provides support for Connors Center investigators to examine important contributors to



health in midlife women. Specifically, how exposure to stress adversely impacts cardiovascular and brain health in women, the role of brain chemistry in women with stress-related mental health disorders, and how harnessing women's hormones might help treat depression in women. This work is led by Executive Director **Hadine Joffe, MD, MSc** in collaboration with Associate Director **Primavera A Spagnolo, MD, PhD**.

Examples of supported projects include:

**Shadab Rahman, PhD, MPH** and **Leilah Grant, PhD**, of the Division of Sleep and Circadian Disorders, are investigating how female hormones and sleep impact metabolism and cardiac risk factors. They presented this research at the 2023 National Endocrine Society Annual Meeting. Their findings highlight the importance of sleep for midlife women's heart health.

**Jessica Busler, PhD**, of the Department of Psychiatry, conducts research connecting mood and vexations of hot flashes to metabolism in midlife women, identifying links between mental well-being and metabolic health in postmenopausal women. Dr. Busler presented this research at the 2023 NIH SCORE National Meeting.

## Maternal Mental Health in the Community

The Connors Center advances women's health research across multiple domains, with a strong emphasis on maternal mental health. Our work examines risk factors associated with postpartum anxiety and depression and childbirth-related post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), centers the lived experiences of affected individuals, and identifies barriers that limit access to care. The Community-Focused Maternal Mental Health team employs diverse research methods including surveys, interviews, observational studies, and population-level data analyses, to develop a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing maternal mental health outcomes. These efforts inform strategies for earlier identification and more effective interventions, strengthening support for mothers and their families. Team members include: **Cindy Liu, PhD**, **Amanda Koire, MD, PhD**, and **Natalie Feldman, MD**.



Cindy Liu, PhD



Amanda Koire, MD, PhD



Natalie Feldman, MD

## Lisa L. Leiden Fund for Excellence in Women's Health Research



Annie Lewis-O'Connor, PhD, NP-BC, MPH, FAAN

The Lisa L. Leiden Fund for Excellence in Women's Health Research has facilitated a partnership with **Annie Lewis-O'Connor, PhD, NP-BC, MPH, FAAN**, founder and director of the Brigham's Coordinated Approach to Resilience and Empowerment (CARE) Clinic. Through this partnership, the Connors Center and Dr. Lewis-O'Connor will accelerate research and

educational activities aimed at improving care for women and the well-being of nursing staff. These goals will be realized by a better understanding of factors that influence the patient-care experience, with a particular focus on exposure to traumatic events, emotional and physical pain, and other stressful life experiences more common in women. The Leiden Fund supports three projects:

### Building a Learning Collaborative to Address Stress Among Healthcare Providers



Andrea MacDonald,  
RN, BSN

Led by **Dr. Lewis-O'Connor**, this project aims to create and foster a 'Learning Collaborative' dedicated to mitigating stress and promoting wellness among women and nurses. Dr. Lewis-O'Connor is continuing her work with **Andrea MacDonald, RN,**

**BSN**, of the Emergency Department at BWH, and Drs. Liu and Spagnolo from the Connors Center to implement the first program addressing stress and trauma exposure among Brigham nurses working in the emergency department. Further, Dr. Lewis-O'Connor surveyed nearly 300 nurses about their experiences working in COVID-19 treatment units during the pandemic and found that utilizing a trauma-informed approach by leaders could build resilience and enhance workplace wellness among this population.

### Studying Stress, Well-being, Resilience, and Social Support During Motherhood



Cindy Liu, PhD

Research led by **Cindy Liu, PhD**, has followed mental health outcomes among pregnant individuals and new mothers during the COVID-19 pandemic. This work aims to capture the range of experiences in

women's mental health during motherhood to better identify interventions for improving family well-being. The study has enrolled over 2,000 women across the United States. Her team has published over a dozen papers since 2020 and in 2024 published two papers focused on maternal stress and infant neurodevelopment, and virtual group experiences on peripartum mental health during the pandemic. This past year, her team has been actively processing survey and video-based data involving interactions with mothers and infants. With emergence of generative artificial intelligence (AI) technology, they have been exploring the feasibility of using ChatGPT as a facilitator for coding human interactions. Aside from the potential to significantly reduce manual coding efforts and resources, Dr. Liu's team will utilize this strategy to detect possible behavioral phenotypes of maternal mental health in mother-child interactions.

### Improving Clinical Care for Women with Functional Neurological/Conversion Disorder



Primavera Spagnolo,  
MD, PhD

**Primavera A Spagnolo, MD, PhD**, is working with Dr. Lewis-O'Connor to incorporate trauma-informed care in the management of functional neurological/conversion disorder, a female-predominant and highly disabling condition. Together, they are preparing a manuscript on trauma-informed approaches for the disorder, organizing a talk on this topic at the Brigham, and designing an online course for care providers.

# Education and Training



The Connors Center’s mission includes bolstering knowledge in the field of women’s health research through hosting educational events, programs, and symposia that convene academics, physicians, scientists, industry, and community partners. By integrating and applying knowledge of women’s health and sex-differences to care delivery, the Connors Center aims to transform training and develop a generation of women’s health research trainees through fellowships and training programs.



Laura Holsen, PhD

The Connors Center leads the way at BWH as a major resource for early-career investigators through its robust programs that focus on pilot funding, research training, and educational activities. Paired with

funding opportunities is active training and mentorship on funded projects and careers, as well as educational symposia through which the awardees/fellows and their work are showcased across the academic community.

Education and training efforts at the Connors Center are led by the Director of Research Training, **Dr. Laura Holsen**. In this role, Dr. Holsen works to expand the career development efforts and sponsorship of trainees and pilot award recipients within the Center. She leads this training mission and provides formal oversight of early career investigators.

Each year, Dr. Holsen and Connors Center staff examine the return on investment (ROI) of the Center’s education and training program to further understand how awardees have benefited from resources provided by the Center.

Since 2017, the Connors Center has raised nearly



**\$5 million in early-stage investigator grants** to



**100+**

awardees



**189**

publications



**100**

national presentations

Over the last year, the Connors Center has distributed nearly



**\$465,000 in funding** leading to

**\$24.8 million of further grant funding**



**17**

NIH/Federally-funded grants

**5,324%**

**ROI**

## ROSA Center Seminar Series

The ROSA Center hosts a monthly Seminar Series through its Career Enhancement Core, based in the Division of Women’s Health at BWH. The seminars feature leading investigators sharing their cutting-edge research on sex differences.

### Connors Center Medical Education Initiative- Harvard Medical School Course on Sex-Informed Medicine: Research, Clinical Practice and Population Health.

Under the leadership of **Deborah Bartz, MD, MPH**, Director of Education at the Connors Center, and in collaboration with Connors Center Scientific Advisor **JoAnn Manson, MD, MPH, DrPH**, as well as experts across Mass General Brigham and Fenway Health, the Medical Education Initiative advances the integration of sex-informed medical education within the Harvard Medical School curriculum. This effort begins with the development of a cross-campus Advanced Integrated Science Course (AISC) for third- and fourth-year medical students. AISCs, taken after core clerkships, offer immersive instruction on specialized topics.

Co-taught by Dr. Bartz and Massachusetts General Hospital physician **Alex Keuroghlian, MD, MPH**, the Sex-Informed Medicine course equips students with the knowledge and skills needed to conduct research and translate scientific findings into clinical practice in ways that meaningfully account for sex diversity in health and disease. The course aims to train clinicians to apply a sex-informed lens early in their careers, helping to build a future workforce prepared to advance equitable, evidence-based care.

Dr. Bartz continues to play a central role in teaching, advising, and curriculum development, contributing to the education of the next generation of leaders in women’s health research and clinical care.



Deborah Bartz, MD, MPH  
Director of Education



JoAnn Manson, MD, MPH



Alex Keuroghlian, MD, MPH

## Harvard Medical School Course on Sex- and Gender-Informed Medicine: Content at-a-Glance

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Course Introduction</b> <b>COVID-19 Case Example</b>	<b>Clinic:</b> Women’s and Men’s Health Care	<b>Research Methods Primer I</b>	<b>Clinic:</b> LGBTQIA+ Health Care	<b>Research Methods Primer II</b>
<b>Research Methods Primer III, Genetics</b>	<b>Clinic:</b> Life Course Considerations: Neonatal Intersex Care; Oncology Palliative Care	<b>Endocrinology of Gender-Affirming Care; Hormone Disruptors; Competitive Sports Access</b>	<b>Clinic:</b> Multidisciplinary Gender-Affirming Medical and Surgical Care	<b>Immunology</b>
<b>Depression; Minority Stress and Mental Health</b>	<b>Clinic:</b> Team-based Care for Eating Disorders; Substance Use Disorders; Minority Stress & Mental Health	<b>Cardiovascular Disease, Interaction with the Healthcare System</b>	<b>Clinic:</b> Trauma and Toxic Stress, Medical Trauma; Culturally Responsive Sexual Health Care for Black Women	<b>Pharmaco-epidemiology, -regulation, and -ethics, Health Law</b>
<b>Global Health, Health Systems, Implementation Science</b>	<b>Clinic:</b> Health Systems Outside the Standard Health System	<b>Health Policy</b>	Student Capstone Presentations	<b>Intersection of Professional &amp; Sex- and Gender-related Identities</b>

## Annual Research Symposium

The Connors Center hosted its 8th Annual Research Symposium on October 28, 2025, at Brigham and Women's Hospital, in partnership with the ROSA Center – an NIH Specialized Center of Research Excellence on Sex Differences. More than 150 attendees participated from across the Mass General Brigham system, the Connors Center network, the Greater Boston community, and beyond. The program featured presentations from Connors Center grant awardees and fellows, as well as associate scientists from the ROSA Center.



Keynote Speaker Roberta Brinton, PhD (R) answers a question from the audience as moderator Primavera A Spagnolo, MD, PhD (L) looks on.

**Roberta Brinton, PhD**, delivered the keynote address, “The Menopausal Transition: Critical Window for Preventing or Increasing Risk of Alzheimer’s Disease.” Dr. Brinton is the Director of the Center for Innovation in Brain Science at the University of Arizona and a Professor of Pharmacology, Neuroscience, and Neurology.

In her keynote, Dr. Brinton underscored the gender disparity in Alzheimer’s disease risk and its connection to the neurological changes that occur during the perimenopause–menopause transition. She highlighted emerging evidence on metabolic reprogramming of the brain during this period, as well as the role of the APOE4 gene. Dr. Brinton also discussed the evolving landscape of hormone replacement therapy (HRT), including its potential to mitigate

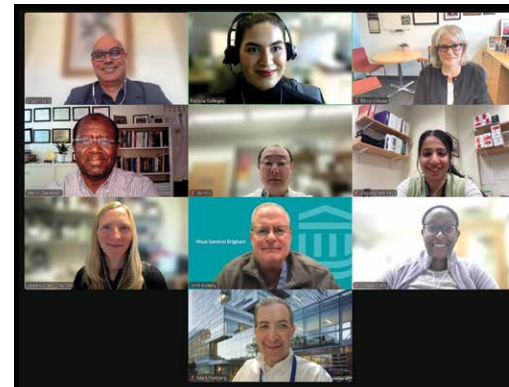


2025 Annual Symposium Speakers and Moderators, pictured from left to right: Cindy Liu, PhD; Florian Fintelmann, MD; Farhad Nezami, PhD; Holly Crowe, PhD; Roberta Brinton, PhD; Laura Holsen, PhD; Saranna Fanning, PhD; Deborah Bartz, MD, MPH; Amanda Koire, MD, PhD (Not pictured: Anahita Dua, MD)

heightened Alzheimer’s risk during menopause. She concluded by addressing hesitancy around menopausal HRT and emphasizing the need for treatment strategies that support both brain and breast health, such as Estrogen Receptor  $\beta$ -targeted PhytoSERMs – therapies that may enhance neurological function while reducing breast cancer risk sometimes associated with conventional HRT.

## Work in Progress Meetings

Each year, the Connors Center organizes and hosts Work in Progress (WIP) Meetings for its Awardees. These meetings include content experts ranging from within the MGB system to international researchers in their field. WIP meetings provide Awardees with the valuable opportunity to share information and updates on their ongoing research projects, and to receive feedback and advice on how to navigate challenges and solidify next steps. The 45-minute meetings serve to support Awardees as well as connect them to experts and potential collaborators in their field they may have not normally had the opportunity to connect with. Center leadership has received tremendous feedback from Awardees about the value of these meetings.



# Fellowships



With both clinical and research fellowships, the Connors Center equips a new generation of leaders in women’s health with critical-seed funding. These fellowships showcase commitment to the discovery, dissemination, and integration of knowledge on women’s health and sex-based differences and the application of this knowledge to care delivery.

## Mary Ann Tynan Fund

The Mary Ann Tynan Fellowship Fund is endowed in the name of Mary Ann Tynan, the third woman elected partner at Wellington Management Company. It is awarded to physicians and scientists at BWH who are driven to improve the health of women.

The current Tynan Research Scientists are **Behnood Bikdeli, MD, MS** whose research focuses on the assessment of sex differences in presentation, treatment strategies, outcomes, and response to therapies in thrombotic cardiovascular diseases, and **Liane Hunter, MD, PhD**, whose focus is on the biological mechanism of neurodegenerative diseases, to understand sex-specific outcomes for brain-related disorders.



Behnood Bikdeli, MD, MS



Liane Hunter, MD, PhD

## Global Women’s Health Fellowship

The Global Women’s Health Fellowship Award supports critical research advancing the health of women worldwide, elevating the visibility of the field of global women’s health. The fellowship trains clinicians, research fellows, and early-career clinical investigators for successful careers that use innovative and meaningful research to transform the health and well-being of women around the globe. In addition, fellows conduct clinical and field research based on robust quantitative and analytical research skills and obtain fundamental knowledge and understanding of global health issues that uniquely impact the health of women within the context of social, cultural, and political environments.

The current Global Women’s Health Fellowship awardee, **Rumbidzai Mushavi, MD**, is conducting a research project titled “Exploring provider comfort with PrEP and contraceptive service integration in south-west Uganda”. The Global Women’s Health Fellowship is led by **Lydia Pace, MD, MPH**, who provides strategic direction and mentorship to support fellows in advancing impactful global women’s health research.



Rumbidzai Mushavi, MD



Lydia Pace, MD, MPH

## Women's Mental Health and Reproductive Psychiatry Fellowship

The Women's Mental Health and Reproductive Psychiatry Fellowship, housed within the Department of Psychiatry at BWH, prepares clinicians to provide specialized psychiatric care for women across the lifespan. The program offers advanced training in the assessment and treatment of psychiatric symptoms associated with reproductive transitions. Fellows receive dedicated mentorship and clinical guidance Fellowship Director Dr. Polina Teslyar.

The 2024–2025 Women's Mental Health and Reproductive Psychiatry Fellow is **Marissa Caan, MD**, who completed her fellowship in June, the 2025 Fellow is **Samina Mahesar, MD, MCRC**, and the 2025–2026 fellows are **Sitara Soundararajan, MD**, and **Diana Nakad-Rodriguez, MD**.



Marissa Caan, MD



Samina Mahesar,  
MD, MCRC



Sitara  
Soundararajan, MD



Diana Nakad-  
Rodriguez, MD

## Complex Family Planning Fellowship

The two-year Complex Family Planning Fellowship provides obstetrician-gynecologist residency graduates with an opportunity to build on their clinical skills in complex abortion and family planning while developing research expertise. The Fellowship is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and the Fellowship is offered at 33 leading universities across the United States. Fellows are trained and mentored by Founder and Inaugural Fellowship Director Dr. Alisa Goldberg, Fellowship Co-Director Dr. Kari Braaten, and faculty members Drs. Deborah Bartz, Kathryn Fay and Elizabeth Janiak.

The first year Complex Family Planning fellow is **Adrian Chiem, MD**. The second year Complex Family Planning fellow is **Armide Storey, MD**.



Adrian Chiem, MD



Armide Storey, MD

# Our Impact

- **90 research projects** completed or currently advancing sex-informed discovery across multiple disciplines, including brain health, cardiovascular and cardiometabolic disease, and cancer
- **189 peer-reviewed publications** strengthening the scientific foundation of women's health
- **101 national and international presentations** disseminating findings to academic, clinical, and policy leaders
- **100+ faculty investigators supported**, building a sustained pipeline of leaders in sex-informed and women's health research
- **\$24M+ in external federal and foundation funding** catalyzed through strategic philanthropic investment

“True medical progress cannot be achieved if women are left behind. When we study women rigorously, we advance health for everyone.”



**Primavera A. Spagnolo, MD, PhD**  
Interim Executive Director,  
Connors Center for Women's Health Research

“I’ve spent the past decade trying to understand the barriers that keep women from stepping into their full power, and this much is clear: There is no path to equality in a world that neglects women’s health.”

— *Melinda French Gates*

## **Brigham and Women's Hospital**

Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Womens Health and Gender Biology

### **To learn more about how to support the Connors Center:**

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