

~ REQUEST FOR RESEARCH PROPOSALS ~

**The Connors Center Women's Health Interdisciplinary
Stress Program of Research (WHISPR)**

Investigating physiologic and psychological stress in women's health and disease

Research Proposal
Cover Sheet Due:
March 14, 2022

Final Proposals Due:
April 4, 2022

Symposium and
Finalists' Pitch Presentations
May 25, 2022

*Sponsored by the Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology
Funding provided by the Gretchen S. Fish Fund for Women's Health and Stress Research*

The Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology is pleased to announce the 5th annual request for proposals (RFP) from the Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH) research community.

Established in January 2018, the goal of the **Women's Health Interdisciplinary Stress Program of Research (WHISPR)** is to advance our understanding of how physiological and psychological stress affect women's health and disease, and vice versa, by supporting pilot projects, facilitating interactions among WHISPR investigators and other stress researchers, and hosting an annual scientific symposium for the BWH academic community. The scope of proposed research includes clinical, translational, population, and basic research studies investigating interactions of physiologic indicators of stress (e.g., adrenergic, immune, neural, endocrine) and stress exposures (e.g., trauma, adversity, cognitive, affective) with women's health and disease. WHISPR aims to involve investigators from across BWH to develop new research and foster synergy among investigators in this interdisciplinary and cross-cutting field. Please visit the [WHISPR page](#) of the Connors Center website for information about the previous WHISPR awardees.

Two one-year grants, each for \$25,000 direct costs (plus applicable indirect rate of 15%), will be awarded. Application finalists will be required to deliver live pitch presentations of their proposals at the 5th annual WHISPR Symposium, which will be held virtually on **May 25, 2022** to an audience of reviewers and symposium attendees.

Timeline:

Request for Proposals Announced:	February 14, 2022
Research Proposal Cover Sheet with Project Overview Due:	March 14, 2022
Final Proposal Due:	April 4, 2022
Finalists for Presentations Notified:	May 4, 2022
Symposium with Finalists' Pitch Presentations:	May 25, 2022
Award Recipients Announced:	June 1, 2022
Earliest Start Date:	July 1, 2022

Mary Horrigan Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology

Eligibility:

You are invited to apply if you meet the following criteria:

- You have a doctoral degree (MD and/or PhD or equivalent).
- Your primary appointment is at Brigham and Women's Hospital.
- You are a junior investigator (i.e. postdoctoral fellow, Instructor, or an Assistant Professor within 3 years of appointment as of the March 14th application deadline) or an established investigator pursuing a new line of research.
- The focus of your research proposal is women's health and stress.
- You have not previously been awarded WHISPR pilot funding.
- **You are available, if selected as a finalist, to present your work at the WHISPR Symposium on May 25, 2022.**

The program is open to both US and non-US citizens. Each applicant may serve as the Principal Investigator on only **one** proposal. Projects must be ready to commence upon receipt of award.

Application Materials:

Due **March 14, 2022, at 5:00pm:**

1. The Research Proposal Cover Sheet including 100-word Project Overview submitted electronically by 5:00pm to Annie Walsh, Connors Center Project Manager, ConnorsCenter@bwh.harvard.edu

Due **April 4, 2022, at 5:00pm:**

1. The Research Proposal Cover Sheet, if any changes need to be made
2. A 2-page research statement with a maximum of 500 words describing the scientific work that you propose to undertake. Figures, tables, images, and a maximum of 10 references may be included within the two pages.
3. Brief description of plans for future grant applications and investigations using these pilot data (150-word max)
4. Brief description of project in lay language for a non-scientific audience, no more than 3-4 sentences.
5. Completed one-year budget template for a maximum of \$25,000 (direct costs) with budget justification (200-word max)
6. NIH biosketch
7. Junior investigators only: Letter of support from your mentor (1-page max, on letterhead)
8. Established investigators only: Brief statement about how your proposal introduces a new line of research (100-word max).

Application materials must be submitted electronically to ConnorsCenter@bwh.harvard.edu by 5:00pm on April 4, 2022. An editable Research Proposal Cover Sheet and Budget Template page can be downloaded from the [Connors Center Website](#).

Application text must be in Arial, 11-point font. Single-spacing is allowed, and margins must be at least 0.5 inches. **All items above must be compiled into a single PDF in the stated order.** You may make reasonable edits to your Project Overview when re-submitting the application cover sheet with your full proposal. Incomplete applications, applications submitted in multiple files, or multiple applications submitted by a single PI will not be considered.

Please include a line item budget using the budget template provided. Budgets may not exceed \$25,000 direct costs. Include your effort as PI and indicate whether salary support is being requested. All expenses must be directly project related. Please provide a brief written justification (200-word max) that addresses each requested expense.

Proposal Review Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed by a panel of established researchers. Applications will be judged on scientific merit, feasibility, potential for future funding, fit with WHISPR, and ability to contribute to the BWH research community under a collaborative umbrella of women's health and stress.

Proposals in two priority areas are especially encouraged:

1. Connections between stress and the health of older women and mechanisms through which stress may adversely affect aging women's health aligning with our Brigham/Harvard ROSA Center U54 grant (see <http://connorscenter.bwh.harvard.edu/score/>)
2. Structural and social determinants of health frameworks in understanding the experiences of stress.

Finalists will be selected and notified by May 4th of their eligibility to present their proposals to the panel at the May 25th Symposium. Priority will be given to junior investigators. Decisions from the review committee will be final. No written feedback will be provided.

Finalists must present their proposals at the virtual Symposium on May 25, 2022, in order to be eligible for an award. Presentations will be limited to five minutes and will be followed by a Q&A with the Review Panel.

Other terms of the program:

Funding recipients will benefit from their engagement with an interdisciplinary community of BWH researchers studying women's health and stress.

- Attendance at the annual Symposium, one small group meeting with other stress researchers, and the Connors Center annual research retreat is expected.
- All recipients will be required to submit a brief interim and a one-page final written report of research activity.
- A one-time no-cost extension will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Recipients may be asked to present their project at the 6th annual WHISPR Symposium (Spring 2023) and at other Connors Center events.
- Recipients must maintain their primary appointment at BWH for the duration of the funding period. If an awardee leaves the BWH community, all unspent funds will be returned to the Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology.

For questions about the Connors Center Women's Health Interdisciplinary Stress Program of Research (WHISPR) and associated funding opportunities, please contact Annie Walsh, at ConnorsCenter@bwh.harvard.edu.