

~ 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

Final Proposals Due:
February 1st, 2024

Symposium:
April 23rd, 2024

*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 7th 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 (broadly defined) 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 women's health-focused 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). WHISPR aims to involve investigators from across BWH to develop new research and foster synergy among investigators in this interdisciplinary and cross-cutting field. As a mentored program of research, WHISPR awardees will receive scientific guidance and career development advice from Connors Center leadership and a group of scientific advisors via structured events and informal interaction. Please visit the [WHISPR page](#) of the Connors Center website for information about the previous WHISPR awardees.

Up to two one-year grants, each for \$25,000 (plus an additional 20% for indirect costs), will be awarded. The awardees will be asked to present their proposed research projects at the 6th annual WHISPR Symposium, which will be held **in-person on April 23rd, 2024**.

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/>)

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2. Structural and social determinants of health frameworks in understanding the experiences of stress, including factors comprising an individual's or community's identity, such as race, ethnicity, SES, and gender.

Timeline:

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|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| Request for Proposals Announced: | November 27, 2023 |
| Final Proposal Due: | February 1, 2024 |
| Awardees Notified: | March 18, 2024 |
| Symposium with Awardee Presentations: | April 23, 2024 |
| Earliest Start Date: | May 1, 2024 |

Eligibility:

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

- The focus of your research proposal is women's health and stress.
- You have a doctoral degree (MD and/or PhD or equivalent).
- Your primary appointment is at Brigham and Women's Hospital.
- You are an early-stage investigator (defined as an Instructor or an Assistant Professor within 3 years of appointment as of the February 1st application deadline)
 - *Postdoctoral fellows whose promotion to Instructor is pending and expected to be completed prior to the start of the Award will be considered if a written letter from the Division Chief or Department Chair confirms the status of the faculty appointment consistent with these criteria.*
- You have not previously been awarded WHISPR pilot funding.
- **You are available to present your work in-person at the WHISPR Symposium.**

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 **February 1, 2024, 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. Early-stage investigators only (see definition above): Letter of support from your mentor (1-page max, on letterhead)

Application materials must be submitted electronically to ConnorsCenter@bwh.harvard.edu by 5:00pm on February 1, 2024. 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 in direct costs. Include your effort as PI and indicate whether salary support is being requested. Please provide a brief written justification (200-word max) that addresses each requested expense.

Awardees will be notified by March 18th and informed to present their proposals at the Symposium. Presentations will be limited to five minutes and may be followed by a Q&A with a review panel. Priority will be given to early-stage investigators. Decisions from the review committee will be final. No written feedback will be provided.

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 and 1-2 small group meeting with other stress researchers is expected.
- All recipients will be expected to attend 1-2 structured career development activities and meet individually with the Director of Research Training for the Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology during the course of the award.
- All recipients will be required to submit a brief progress report at the halfway point of the grant, a final report at the conclusion of the grant, and post-award progress surveys on research activity following the conclusion of the grant.
- A one-time no-cost extension will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Should a no-cost extension be granted, awardees will still be required to submit a progress report every six months of the project period.
- Recipients may be asked to present their project at future annual WHISPR Symposia 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.
- Any unspent award funds at the end of the project period will be returned to the Connors Center for Women's Health and Gender Biology within 60 days of the project end date.

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