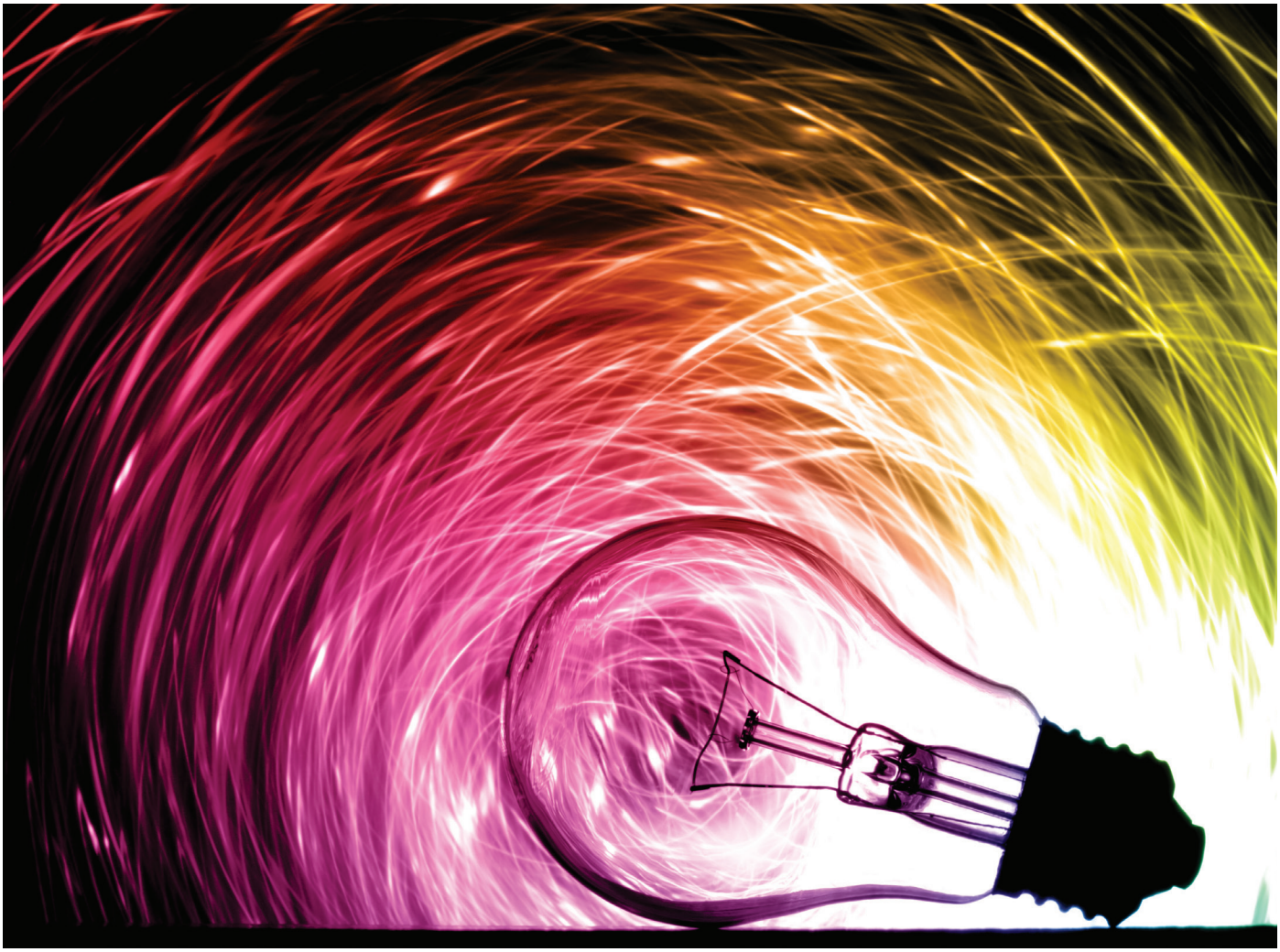
Stanford MEDICINE | Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences



Early-Career Innovators Fund

FUELING THE VISIONARY IDEAS OF NEXT GEN INNOVATORS

Psychiatric and neuroscience research represent one of the most urgent and high-impact ventures in society today. Every one of us, no matter our circumstances, is touched in some way by the personal and societal impact of mental illness and brain-based disorders. And we all share a desire to achieve personal wellness and advance human potential to love, create, learn, and achieve. The brain—our most complex organ—holds the keys.

Mental illness is the second leading cause of disability and premature death globally, with immense human and social impacts. New paradigms are needed to advance our understanding of the brain and develop better, more strategic treatment solutions to advance human potential. Bold research, and sometimes failure, is part of the pathway to success. This creative, "no box" thinking is one of the hallmarks of early-career researchers. The Early-Career Innovators Fund invests in the people and ideas at the heart of human ingenuity.

Fueling Innovation

"Nowhere is psychiatry's promise more evident than in the labs and clinical investigations of our early-career faculty and postdoctoral fellows," says Laura Roberts, MD, MA, Chairman, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. "Many of psychiatry's most miraculous findings begin in the visionary approaches and ideas of new researchers."

At Stanford, early-career researchers are exploring a variety of pathways to improve mental health and advance human potential—from a new approach to behavioral therapy that reduces suicide risk in teens, to brain monitoring to improve cognition and memory, to creating 3D brain models that allow exploration of the biological underpinnings of brain disease, or using DNA sequencing to gain an understanding of the molecular and neurochemical changes that underlie psychiatric conditions. These innovative projects share a common goal of understanding the brain.

"Early-career philanthropy allowed me to pursue my ideas and continue investigations even after early hypotheses had to be re-evaluated and retested," says Karl Deisseroth, MD, PhD. His decade-long research led to the discovery of optogenetics and CLARITY, research tools that have been shared with researchers around the world. "When I see that same support for today's young scientists, I feel confident that the answers to our deepest questions about the brain will be used to relieve the suffering of psychiatric illnesses."

"My goal is to help young scientists and engineers who have dedicated themselves to bold, high-risk research with 'change the world' potential, who have proven themselves to be crazy enough to keep risking everything to pursue their dream."

— **Sujay Jaswa**
Entrepreneur, investor, and founder of the Jaswa Innovator Award for early-career investigators in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

Fellow Stanford Department of Psychiatry colleague, Karen Parker, PhD, says early-career support was instrumental to her lab's discovery of two hormones linked to autism, both of which have the potential to one day improve the social functioning of children with autism. "Early philanthropy provided me with the freedom to launch a line of research I never could have pursued otherwise," says Parker. "This work really paid off—we filed two full patent applications (one on autism detection, one on autism treatment). It stands to revolutionize the way we detect and treat autism and provides a proven platform for understanding the biology of social functioning that can translate into solutions for other brain-based disorders."

Join the Early-Career Innovators Fund

The Early-Career Innovators Fund creates a funding path that brings together scientists and philanthropy-minded individuals for the greater good, leveraging resources imaginatively to improve human health. You can also establish a unique fund to support the research of a specific faculty member or a field of scientific discovery.

One day, you may be able to say that you supported a Nobel Laureate or the genius behind an idea that transformed the landscape of our understanding of the brain and treatment of mental disorders.

Contact Us

Deborah Stinchfield | *Philanthropic Advisor, Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences*
dstinchfield@stanford.edu | 650.725.1073
medicalgiving.stanford.edu | med.stanford.edu/psychiatry.html