

NIMH Clinical Psychology Doctoral Student Practicum Program

Experimental Therapeutics and Pathophysiology Branch Externship Program

The Experimental Therapeutics and Pathophysiology Branch (ETPB) of the National Institute of Mental Health Intramural Research Program (NIMH IRP), at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is committed to training the next generation of clinician scientists at one of the premier research sites in the world. The renowned NIH Clinical Center on the 300-acre Bethesda campus of the NIH, near Washington D.C., houses unsurpassed, state-of-the-art neuroimaging facilities all dedicated to research, as well as superb clinical facilities, and an exciting, interactive research community of hundreds of talented colleagues. The ETPB clinical research unit at the NIH Clinical Research Center is dedicated to the study of treatment resistant depression and suicide risk. The strong scientific environment and outstanding resources at NIH make this a unique opportunity for trainees.

Program Objectives

The trainee will work with an interdisciplinary team of clinicians and researchers, all with the goal of understanding how to advance treatment approaches for individuals with depression, bipolar disorder and suicidal thoughts and behaviors. The trainee would be trained and supervised in clinical assessment and diagnosis of mood disorders and suicide risk, including the following:

- Students will participate in a 16 hour per week psychology externship program on a psychiatric research inpatient unit focused on clinical trials of individuals with treatment-resistant depression, bipolar disorder and suicide risk.
- Students will receive training to administer clinician-administered research rating scales and neurocognitive tasks for the assessment of mood disorder symptoms and suicide risk in the context of research studies and clinical trials, including rapid acting interventions such as ketamine.
- Students will receive training to administer psychiatric diagnostic interviews for the assessment of individuals with mood disorder symptoms and healthy volunteer participants in research studies.
- Students will perform and assist in coordinating screening evaluations of potential research participants using structured and semi-structured interviews.
- Students will have the opportunity to produce up to three integrated reports based on the results of their clinical interviews, diagnostic assessments and cognitive tests.
- Students will have the opportunity to follow one to two psychotherapy cases at a time in an outpatient clinic.
- Students will interact with a multidisciplinary team of psychiatrists, psychologists, nurse practitioners, counselors and other research staff in the recruitment, screening and completion of study protocols.
- Clinical responsibilities: phone screening training and administration, clinical case support, administration of Montgomery Asberg Depression Rating Scale (MADRS), Hamilton Depression Ratings Scale (HDRS), Columbia Suicide

Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), Scale for Suicide Ideation (SSI) and other clinical assessment measures, Structured Clinical Interview for DSM Disorders (SCID) training and administration, NIH Toolbox measures, weekly supervision with licensed psychologists.

- Didactic opportunities: regular clinical rounds, didactic meetings and journal clubs weekly within the branch

Primary Supervisors

- Elizabeth Ballard, PhD
- Kelly Hurst, PhD

Application Process

- Candidates are expected to have previous coursework in the fundamentals of assessment and psychopathology. Strong verbal and written communication skills are essential.
- Interested applicants should email a letter of interest, CV, 2 letters of recommendation, to Elizabeth Ballard Ph.D. Elizabeth.Ballard@Nih.gov by February 7th.
- We will interview students starting in January and will make offers by the uniform notification day based on the Washington DC Externship Consortium