



News Release

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The American Diabetes Association Announces 2025 Pathway to Stop Diabetes Grant Recipients

ARLINGTON, Va. (Feb. 10, 2025) — Today, the American Diabetes Association® (ADA) announced the awardees of the 2025 Pathway to Stop Diabetes® (Pathway) grants. This year’s grants dedicate more than \$6.1 million to support breakthroughs in translation and clinical science, technology, care, and potential cures in the field of diabetes.

Through the Pathway program, talented early-career scientists who demonstrate exceptional innovation, creativity, and productivity receive five to seven years of funding to explore new ideas without traditional project constraints. They are also paired with world-renowned diabetes scientists who offer mentorship as well as scientific and professional guidance throughout the duration of their grant.

This year, Pathway grants have been awarded to the following researchers and their breakthrough projects:

- **Iliia Droujinine**, PhD, assistant professor at the Scripps Research Institute
 - Droujinine received the Pathway grant for his research, Decoding and Validating Interorgan Communication Proteins as New Therapeutic Targets in Diabetes, which seeks to discover systemic metabolic mechanisms in type 2 diabetes and the potential of intestine-secreted proteins as therapy for type 2 diabetes and its complications.
 - “How does muscle talk to fat? How does the intestine talk to the brain? I believe that unraveling the intricate network of communication between organs is key to understanding and treating diabetes. I am grateful for the support of the American Diabetes Association Pathway to Stop Diabetes Accelerator Award, which will allow my lab to identify the secreted mediators driving this interorgan dialogue, unlocking new therapeutic opportunities for diabetes management,” said Droujinine.
- **Rachel Goode**, PhD, MPH, MSW, Wallace Kuralt Early Career Distinguished Scholar associate professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Social Work
 - Goode received a grant for her work, Preventing Type 2 Diabetes in Black Adult Women At-Risk for Binge-Eating Disorder. The research will inform, create and pilot an individually tailored program to reduce binge eating and prevent weight gain in emerging adulthood as a pathway to reducing type 2 diabetes risk in Black women.
 - “I am excited to have the opportunity to focus on advancing the science on the prevention of diabetes in a group that is persistently underserved—Black emergent

adults. Young adults are on track to be diagnosed with type 2 diabetes at record levels. I am looking forward to the time, support, and guidance this award will provide to equip me to move forward to help this next generation avoid this pending threat,” said Goode.

- **Daniel “Dan” Seung Kim, MD, PhD, MPH**, cardiovascular medicine fellow at Stanford University
 - Kim’s research, Integration of a trained language model to improve glycemic control through increased physical activity: a fully digital My Heart Counts smartphone app randomized trial, builds on his prior work— a large-scale digital trial conducted via the My Heart Counts (MHC) app, which found that personalized e-coaching interventions increased step count.
 - “My research focuses on increasing exercise as a medium to improve glycemic control via a smartphone application (My Heart Counts) that autonomously generates text-based coaching messages. Through the technological development funded by the American Diabetes Association, the My Heart Counts smartphone application will “learn” from a user’s response to coaching messages and tailor future text-based prompts to better account for an individual’s psychological profile (e.g., what type of coaching personality they prefer) and activity patterns (e.g., when are they most likely to exercise). This will ultimately result in an “exercise coach on the smartphone”, tailored to each individual patient, working to combat the immense morbidity and mortality caused by diabetes,” said Kim.
- **David Merrick, MD, PhD**, assistant professor of medicine in the division of endocrinology, diabetes, and metabolism at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania
 - Merrick’s research, Optogenetic stimulation of thermogenic adipose as a novel cell therapy for obesity and metabolic disease, seeks to fill a gap in current obesity therapies by focusing on increasing energy expenditure.
 - “GLP-1 therapeutics have revolutionized the medical management of diabetes and obesity, primarily through the reduction of caloric intake. However, these medications do not significantly enhance energy expenditure and are prohibitively expensive as a lifelong weight maintenance solution. We propose to address this healthcare challenge with the innovation of a novel, light-inducible thermogenic adipose cell-therapy to compliment GLP-1 treatment by augmenting energy expenditure and promoting the long-term maintenance of weight loss and blood sugar control,” said Merrick.

The Pathway program is one of many ways the ADA is investing in advancing diabetes research and clinical practice. Currently the ADA manages a portfolio of more than 190 active research awards, including 51 new projects funded in 2024. Additional information about the ADA’s research findings and ongoing areas of study is available in the [ADA’s 2024 Research Report](#).

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About the American Diabetes Association

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) is the nation's leading voluntary health organization fighting to end diabetes and helping people thrive. For 84 years, the ADA has driven discovery and research to prevent, manage, treat, and ultimately cure diabetes. There are 136 million Americans living with diabetes or prediabetes. Through advocacy, program development, and education, we're fighting for them all. To learn more or to get involved, visit us at diabetes.org or call 1-800-DIABETES (800-342-2383). Join us in the fight on Facebook ([American Diabetes Association](#)), Spanish Facebook ([Asociación Americana de la Diabetes](#)), LinkedIn ([American Diabetes Association](#)), and Instagram ([@AmDiabetesAssn](#)). To learn more about how we are advocating for everyone affected by diabetes, visit us on X ([@AmDiabetesAssn](#)).