

Nina Schooler Early Career Research Awardee



Each year, the Nina Schooler Early Career Research Award is given to a promising early career investigator in the field of clinical psychopharmacology. This year, the ASCP Membership Committee determined that David Adamowicz, M.D., Ph.D. was most deserving of this competitive award. Dr. Adamowicz is a current geriatric psychiatry fellow at Massachusetts General Brigham, though he is finishing off within the month to begin a well-deserved appointment to a full position at Brigham and Women's Hospital.

David Adamowicz, M.D., Ph.D

Mass General Brigham

2024 Nina Schooler
Early Career Research
Awardee



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His research aims to identify the underlying pathophysiology of inflammation in schizophrenia. In his own words, “Based on some epidemiological data and the theory that a virus might be part of the cause in certain cases of schizophrenia, we hypothesized that latent viruses could be contributing to the inflammation we're seeing in these patients.”

“We collaborated with a lab at Northwestern University that developed a technique called ViroFind, which allows you to detect RNA and DNA from viruses in any type of sample. This technique can identify all the viruses known to infect humans, so it’s an unbiased approach to see what we might find. We really don't know what viral presence might look like in post-mortem brain tissue, even in healthy individuals. Our focus was to see if we could detect any viruses in the brains of these patients and whether there would be differences in terms of the viral burden and diversity.”

At ASCP, he presented on some of the preliminary data using this novel methodology – “We collected placentas from normal births, intrauterine growth restriction cases, and preeclampsia cases. We suspected these might have different viral compositions detectable in the placenta. We detected nine different types of viruses from these samples, but with the small sample size (four of each group), we didn't see differences yet. Now that we have feasibility data, we plan to expand to the whole cohort of 30 placentas (10 from each group). After that, we’ll apply the method to the brain cohort, with 30 samples (15 in the schizophrenia group and 15 in the control group).”

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His work has always been on the intersection of neurology and psychiatry, previously working with neurodegenerative diseases including the involvement of lewy bodies in dementia for his Ph.D. work, trying to recapitulate hallmarks of disease within cell culture. In the future, he hopes to continue his studies at this intersection, running a lab focused on the overlap of viral infection, inflammation, aging, and mental health.

We at ASCP once again congratulate David on his well-deserved Nina Schooler Early Career Research Award, and are excited to see what the future holds for his research.

Jenessa Johnston, Ph.D

National Institute of
Mental Health, NIH

ASCP Social Media Ambassador

