Psychiatry Residency at Mount Sinai: Research Tracks

Training academic leaders in psychiatry and neuroscience.
Mount Sinai’s unique culture of flexibility and innovation offers you an exceptional place to learn how to become a 21st century psychiatrist and scientist. Our top-notch faculty is in the vanguard of the ever-expanding field of psychiatry, including neuroscience, clinical research, and psychotherapy. The outstanding researchers in these disciplines regularly exchange ideas, working to transcend the conceptual barriers that often separate biological models of mental illness from “the mind.” We encourage new ideas, and strive to provide an open, stimulating, and supportive environment. At Mount Sinai, you will find a wealth of raw materials from which to create your own distinctive educational, academic, and professional journey.

While we excel in teaching the cores of clinical psychiatry, our research tracks are particularly attractive to residents seeking a personalized and supportive program that balances clinical training and research. PhD-level training has become critical for translational research and for obtaining research funding, and we designed our research tracks to prepare you for success. Residents have the flexibility to develop programs and exercise independent thinking at an early stage. Beyond core requirements, we help you build your own experiences so that you can become a true specialist as a physician-scientist while you master the skills to provide the most effective treatments in your domain of expertise. You’ll be nurtured by your mentor as well as a multidisciplinary advisory committee, with structured oversight on the grant submission process, furthering your chances of success.

Residency training is hard work, but we are dedicated to helping you make these years professionally productive and personally fulfilling. Welcome to Mount Sinai!

Your program directors,

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“Mount Sinai had one of the largest amounts of protected research time of any program that I visited, and the amount has only increased. Importantly, the administration worked to ensure that this time truly was protected.”

—Drew Kiraly, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor (class of 2017)

Our Physician-Scientist Research Track, which has a separate match number in the National Residency Matching Program (1490400C2), is designed for applicants who have demonstrated interest in and aptitude for psychiatric research. While this track is not formally limited to applicants with an MD/PhD, priority is generally given to those who have participated in substantial research activities prior to residency. We anticipate two positions in each entering class.

Program Structure

The purpose of this track is to provide substantial protected time for research throughout residency training. Residents have two to three full-time research months in the PGY-2. When residents treat outpatients longitudinally, a block research assignment is replaced by a longitudinal allocation of protected time, to which we dedicate 33 percent of the program’s time throughout the latter half of PGY-2 and continuing throughout PGY-3. The fourth year allows even more protected time for research (75 percent) and is meant to provide for the execution of projects that could be continued following graduation from residency (e.g., obtaining preliminary data and writing a K-award).
Support for Your Research

Mercedes Perez-Rodriguez, MD, PhD, is our Assistant Training Director for Research. She graduated from our Physician-Scientist track in 2012, then completed a MIRECC research fellowship before accepting a faculty position in 2014. She is currently Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Medical Student Clerkship. She is also the Medical Director of Critical Connections, the Psychosis Research Program at Mount Sinai. Her research in psychosis spectrum and trauma-related disorders has been funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the CDC, the Brain and Behavior Science Foundation, and the VA MIRECC.

Dr. Perez-Rodriguez works closely with the training directors, as well as with Rene Kahn, MD, PhD, and Eric Nestler, MD, PhD, to advise and oversee the professional and scientific development of residents throughout the research tracks, with a focus on successful mentorship relationships and planning for grant submissions.

Given the substantial protected time we’ve created, Physician-Scientist track residents are expected to intensively pursue their research, translating their scientific interests into demonstrable products. This requires time and energy, and we expect that when such residents are not engaged in clinical responsibilities, they will be involved in research-related pursuits.
As supplemental compensation, we’ve sought (through foundation grants and other departmental sources) additional research funding and salary stipends, including the following:

- Augmented salaries
- Funding for research needs (travel costs, equipment, etc.)
- Mount Sinai housing

Applicants should note that this level of financial support is not guaranteed and is dependent on supplementary evaluations and evidence of ongoing progress in research.

Faculty

Per the most recent NIH funding ranking data available (from 2018), our Department of Neuroscience is No. 1 in the country as ranked by federal funding, and our Department of Psychiatry is No. 6, with individual investigators listed among the top-funded PIs.

The Friedman Brain Institute represents the large-scale multidisciplinary nature of our work, involving numerous basic science and clinical departments, including the Icahn Institute for Genomics and Multiscale Biology as well as other laboratories at Mount Sinai.

How to Apply

Applicants to the Physician-Scientist Track should indicate their interest to the training directors and select it as one of their chosen ERAS tracks. Given the specialty nature of this track and the expectation that applicants will have considerable prior research experience, we will often ask for additional information to supplement their ERAS portfolios, including a scientific biography, a statement of research interest, and two letters from research mentors specifically commenting on the applicant's research accomplishments and potential (if not included as one of the ERAS LORs) before releasing invitations to interview. If you are selected to interview, you will attend our usual interview process as well as additional meetings that could occur on the day before or after your interview day. Based on the material you provide, we will select some investigators who we believe share interests with you, and likewise we would like to know which scientists on our faculty you may be particularly interested in meeting.

“Mount Sinai’s Psychiatry Residency and PhD track offers a unique opportunity to combine clinical care with training in neuroscience or genomics. The program provides a collaborative, highly flexible, and intellectually stimulating environment that allows for full academic and professional development of trainees while also offering excellent mentorship and financial support.”

– Amirhossein Modabbernia, MD, PhD candidate (current PGY-4)

We have been awarded support from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) for this extraordinary and groundbreaking program, unique in the nation in offering a second path to MD/PhD training for up to two residents per year. Designed for residents ready to commit to both psychiatry and research, the “PhD+” program integrates clinical and research training over the course of seven years. It also offers the possibility of substantial financial advantages through the NIH’s Loan Repayment Program (up to $35,000 per year for up to six years). Our PhD+ track participates as Residency + PhD (1490400C3) in the offerings of the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai’s Psychiatry Residency Training Program, so that applicants may enter the program via the National Residency Matching Program as PGY-1s. Current PGY-1s may also transfer into this track, from within our residency or from elsewhere.

The PhD+ program consists of five components:

1. Completion of all clinical rotations/experiences required for Board Certification by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, attendance at core didactics of the Residency Program.
2. Completion of all coursework, examinations, research activities, and thesis requirements of the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai for the PhD degree in Neuroscience, Biomedical Sciences (Genetics and Genomics), or Clinical Research (Clinical Trials, Outcomes Implementation, Bench to Bedside, and Molecular Epidemiology tracks)
3. Dual mentorship, with true integration of PhD work with one’s clinical psychiatry training, including protected time for PhD thesis research while maintaining one’s clinical skills
4. A program customized to your goals, with flexible adjustment of experiences and objectives including close mentorship, training in research and grant writing, scientific career-building activities (presenting at meetings; joining professional organizations), and connecting with other scientists (including those in our Physician-Scientist Track, other doctoral candidates, and other neuroscientists at Mount Sinai and beyond)
Program Structure

Clinical experiences are front-loaded and continue throughout the seven-year program. PGY-1 is a full intern year devoted to meeting residency requirements in Primary Care, Neurology, and Inpatient Psychiatry. For each of the following six years, 50 percent is hospital-supported “residency time” and 50 percent is NIMH-supported “PhD time.” The residency time includes core clinical training, core residency didactics, and research electives; the PhD time is used for PhD didactics and research. Total research-related time is 55 months (4.6 years) and is appropriate for completing a PhD. PhD+ Residents attend core didactics with residency classmates in Years 1-3; they do not attend in Year 4 and beyond, unless they wish to.

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PhD Didactics and Thesis

The Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai has nine defined Multidisciplinary Training Areas, each with its own curriculum and leaders, including Neuroscience, Genetic and Genomic Sciences, and the PhD Program in Clinical Research.

The graduate school didactic component of our Residency + PhD program will begin in Year 2 and continue in Years 3 and 4, on a part-time basis, along with the half-time residency activities described above. The PhD coursework required in this program is similar to that required of current MD/PhD candidates at Mount Sinai.

Credits may be awarded for prior medical school coursework and research.