

'U' receives \$5.8M gift towards bipolar research

by Michal Ruprecht
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The Richard Tam Foundation gifted the University a \$5.8 million gift on Sept. 9, bringing the foundation's total donations to \$10 million. The gift will be used in partnership with the Heinz C. Prechter Bipolar Research Program to advance the translational part of bipolar disorder research at the University.

Melvin McInnis, professor of bipolar disorder and director of the Prechter Program, said his research team will have the opportunity to improve clinical care for patients with bipolar disorder.

McInnis said the gift will also support the University's [Precision Health](#) effort, which was [launched](#) in the fall of 2017 to find personalized solutions to illness and diseases using large data sets. According to the Precision Health [website](#), the organization received \$500,000 from the gift. McInnis said his team will work to implement findings in the clinic.

"The goal of the Tam foundation gift is to enhance the work in bipolar disorder ... and to utilize data that have been collected over the past 10-12 years here at the bipolar program in order to ... advance research and the knowledge of bipolar disorder to work towards translating the research that has been done so far into clinical utility," McInnis said.

McInnis emphasized the importance of bipolar disorder research. He said about 3-4 percent of the U.S. population has the illness, which is characterized by recurrent episodes of depression and can range in

severity. He said the illness is life-long and can cause personal and health problems, and added that about 20 percent of people with the illness attempt to or actually do harm themselves.

The gift will also fund a professorship in the Department of Psychiatry at Michigan Medicine and support graduate students working in bipolar disorder research and other research in cell biology.

McInnis said the gift has brought new excitement to this team.

“This gift energizes the University,” McInnis said. “It energizes the work that we’re doing here, and it’s very attractive to dedicated people who want to focus their careers on research in bipolar disorder. This is just a major effort that we’re embarking on.”