

the 2020
OLIVER MAX GARDNER AWARD

Dr. Samantha Meltzer-Brody

The Oliver Max Gardner Award embodies the University of North Carolina System's guiding mission "to discover, create, transmit, and apply knowledge to address the needs of individuals and society" through instruction, research, and public service. The award recognizes exemplary faculty work that has far-reaching impact, not just throughout the state, but across the nation and around the world.

During her lengthy tenure at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Dr. Samantha Meltzer-Brody has devoted her career to investigating postpartum depression. She has been the academic principal investigator for clinical trials examining the effects of the first and only drug approved by the FDA designed specifically to treat the mood disorder. The new, highly effective treatment represents a monumental advance in the field of psychiatry and maternal healthcare, and it reflects more broadly how Dr. Meltzer-Brody's research, service, and instruction drastically improves and saves lives.

Prior to this groundbreaking work, Dr. Meltzer-Brody founded the Perinatal Psychiatric Program, a comprehensive clinical and research program housed in the UNC Center for Women's Mood Disorders. She and her colleagues also opened the nation's first hospital unit specifically focused on serving prenatal women who need inpatient treatment. Her leadership and national reputation have helped make UNC-Chapel Hill a preeminent hub of research and instruction, which is advancing the world's understanding of mood and anxiety disorders and training the best medical students from across the country.

With seemingly boundless energy and tireless dedication, Dr. Meltzer-Brody continues to innovate. She has published more than 130 peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on topics including the quality of life of patients with mood disorders, subtypes of pain and how they vary with trauma history, antidepressant use during pregnancy, and the risks and symptoms of postpartum depression. She has recently been the driving force behind a mobile app-driven genetic study of postpartum depression. Having collected thousands of DNA samples from across the globe, this research is the largest international genetic study of postpartum depression and postpartum psychosis.

Dr. Meltzer-Brody's impressive output has a global reach, and yet it also has a significant impact on North Carolinians. For example, her leadership helped found the Taking Care of Our Own Program, a critical resource for the UNC School of Medicine and all UNC System healthcare employees. This program provides critical awareness and wellness support to help prevent physicians from experiencing burnout.

Suffice it to say, the achievements listed above represent only a fraction of what Dr. Meltzer-Brody has accomplished.

The UNC System Board of Governors bestows the honor of the Oliver Max Gardner Award — the highest faculty award in the System — to Dr. Samantha Meltzer-Brody for her research into the causes of and treatments for postpartum depression and other women's mood disorders. One in nine women will experience postpartum depression. Their children, too, suffer the long-lasting effects of the disorder. Dr. Meltzer-Brody's research is transforming those lives. The impact of her work is vast and uniquely deserving of an award designed to recognize the faculty member who "has made the greatest contribution to the welfare of the human race."



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