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Dear friends, colleagues, mentors, and supporters:

Happy Valentine's month! Read on for the February brief.



Monthly Research Brief

News

Earlier this month, we announced University of Oxford Perinatal Medicine Professor Dr. Jose Villar as the 2024 recipient of the March of Dimes Agnes Higgins Award in Maternal-Fetal Nutrition. Dr. Villar, who is also Co-director of the Oxford Maternal and Perinatal Health Institute, led the development of international standards for fetal growth, newborn size at birth, and postnatal growth of preterm and term infants. He's an expert on the benefits of calcium supplementation to prevent preeclampsia and preterm birth. March of Dimes will present the award to Dr. Villar on May 4 at the annual meeting of the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) in Toronto, Canada. [Read the press release and learn more about Dr. Villar.](#)

Grants

March of Dimes will open the Request for Applications (RFA) for the Basil O'Connor Starter Scholar Research Awards on February 29. These awards support outstanding researchers embarking on their independent research careers. [More information about the RFA and other grants is in our award portal.](#)

Podcast

Our first podcast of 2024 features March of Dimes President and CEO Dr. Elizabeth Cherot discussing the Innovation Fund, our venture philanthropy initiative that invests in early-stage companies creating innovative solutions to improve outcomes for moms and babies. [Listen to this month's episode.](#)

Blog

This month's blog is on the second-ever large-scale Genome-Wide Association Study (GWAS) on preterm birth and gestational duration, conducted by scientists at the March of Dimes Ohio Prematurity Research Center (PRC). The study found new genetic links to preterm birth and showed, for the first time, that there exists a complex, sophisticated, and elegant relationship around birth timing between a woman and the fetus she's carrying. [Learn more about our Ohio PRC's study in our blog.](#)

Presentations

After being named the 2024 winner of the March of Dimes Richard B. Johnston, Jr., MD Prize for her work on imprinted genes, University of Pennsylvania researcher Dr. Marisa Bartolomei will be presented with her award at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Reproductive Investigation (SRI) in Vancouver, British Columbia on March 16. [Learn more about Dr. Bartolomei in our research blog.](#)

Also at the SRI meeting, March of Dimes Chief Scientific Officer Dr. Seli will present twice—once on the organization's research priorities and grant mechanisms, and then on improving basic and translational science to reduce preterm birth risk. Both presentations will occur at the annual [PREBIC](#) (Preterm Birth International Collaborative) global meeting on March 13. March of Dimes Senior Director of Research Operations Jonathan Cherry will also be on site at SRI, meeting with in-training attendees at a mentor-connection event. Jonathan also opened the Preterm Labor Forum at the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM) Annual Meeting in Maryland earlier this month.

Publications

[Adherence to different forms of plant-based diets and pregnancy outcomes in the Danish National Birth Cohort: A prospective observational study](#)

[Large-scale proteomics in the first trimester of pregnancy predict psychopathology and temperament in preschool children: an exploratory study](#)

That's it for February. See you next month!

Dr. Emre Seli
Chief Scientific Officer
March of Dimes

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