



**BROWN**  
Alpert Medical School

**Clinical Psychology Training Programs at Brown: A Consortium of the  
Providence VA Medical Center, Lifespan, and Care New England  
Postdoctoral Fellowship Training Program  
Postdoctoral Fellowship Description: RESEARCH FOCUS**

**Title:** Postdoctoral Fellowship in Interdisciplinary Mindfulness and Meditation Research

APA-accredited: \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ X \_\_\_ No

**Site:** Brown University

**Supervisor(s):** Willoughby Britton, Ph.D., Primary Supervisor  
Jared Lindahl, Ph.D., Secondary Supervisor  
Ethan Moitra, PhD, Clinical Supervisor

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**Description of Site**

**Clinical and Affective Neuroscience Laboratory (CLAN Lab):** The CLAN lab is directed by Drs. Willoughby Britton and Jared Lindahl and provides an outstanding environment for interdisciplinary research across the biomedical, social sciences, humanities, and public health. The CLAN Lab is located in the Biomedical Center on Brown's main campus and is affiliated with departments and centers in Brown's Medical School, School of Public Health, and undergraduate college. Specifically, the lab is affiliated with the Medical School's Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior (DPHB), and the School of Public Health's Mindfulness Center, and Department of Behavioral and Social Sciences, and the undergraduate college's Religious Studies Department and Contemplative Studies Initiative.

Through collaborations within and beyond Brown, the CLAN Lab investigates contemplative practices like meditation and mindfulness from multiple disciplinary perspectives, including clinical neuroscience and psychophysiology, cross-cultural psychiatry, cognitive science of religion, medical anthropology, history of science, and history of religions. Ongoing research focuses on practice-specific effects, moderators of treatment outcome, mechanisms of action, and adverse effects with a special emphasis on individual differences and contextual factors. The lab has two ongoing projects: A mindfulness dismantling trial and the Varieties of Contemplative Experience (VCE) study. The dismantling trial is a NIH-funded clinical trial which investigates practice-specific effects, moderators of treatment outcome, mechanisms of action, and adverse effects associated with Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy in a clinical setting. Outcomes include psychophysiology (EEG, ERP, EKG), standard psychological measures, and qualitative data about participants' experience. The VCE study is a mixed methods study of mediation-related challenges, which combines qualitative and quantitative data (See Lindahl et al., 2017). This study features more than 3000 pages of interview transcripts. Ongoing and future qualitative analysis of these data will also be integrated with historical and cognitive scientific methods in a series of interdisciplinary papers. A third focus area in the CLAN lab includes the creation of safety guidelines for meditation and mindfulness programs both within and beyond clinical and research settings. This including the development of best practices for screening, monitoring and trauma-informed modifications.

**Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior (DPHB):** The Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior has a well-established history of research excellence. In 2004, it was ranked as one of the top 5

schools receiving substantial grant funding for psychiatry research by the Association of American Medical Colleges. Within the Brown Medical School, the DPHB participates in joint research and clinical training programs with other Medical School departments, including Family Medicine, Clinical Neurosciences, Medicine, and Pediatrics, as well as the campus-based Departments of Neuroscience, Psychology, Pharmacology and Biotechnology. Numerous forums provide networking opportunities, including Grand Rounds, research day, journal clubs, research seminars, grant writing workshops, special interest groups, and visiting professor luncheons. Research studies conducted by DPHB faculty include testing the efficacy of new therapeutic advances in the treatment of mood disorders, substance abuse, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and schizophrenia. The faculty's research interests also include issues related to a broad spectrum of the population, from infant development to the basic neurobiology of the aging brain. One of the greatest strengths of the Department is the collaborative work fostered across disciplines, as well as between clinicians and researchers. Some examples are in biological psychiatry, neuropsychiatry, neuropsychology, behavioral medicine, consultation/liaison psychiatry, and the study of combining pharmacologic and psychosocial treatment modalities. Research activities conducted by DPHB faculty include close to 200 ongoing studies funded by more than 50 external sources such as the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), National Cancer Institute (NCI), National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH) and the National Alliance for Research on Schizophrenia and Depression (NARSAD). Last year, the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior received over \$40,000,000 in external research funds including direct and indirect costs. Both Brown and DPHB make a strong commitment to support junior faculty to be successful Principal Investigators.

**Brown's School of Public Health** has 12 interdisciplinary research centers focused on (1) aging and health services research, (2) statistical sciences, (3) international health, (4) alcohol and addiction studies, (5) community health promotion, (6) population health and clinical epidemiology, (7) AIDS research, (8) environmental health and technology, (9) behavioral medicine and prevention (10) primary care and prevention (11) evidence-based medicine and, most recently, (12) mindfulness.

**The Mindfulness Center at Brown (MC@B)** was established in 2017, in collaboration with the Brown University School of Public Health, the Warren Alpert Medical School and the Contemplative Studies Initiative. Top leaders and academics in mindfulness research came together to address the need for methodologically rigorous research into mindfulness. Recently (September 2018), the Mindfulness Center expanded to include mindfulness classes and mindfulness instructor training. As a result, meditation researchers at Brown are at "ground zero" of the mindfulness movement, able to contribute to evidence-based policies and guidelines for the entire field. Examples of such guidelines include: Van Dam et al., (2017) Mind the hype: A critical evaluation and prescriptive agenda for mindfulness and meditation research, *Perspectives in Psychological Science*. The center was recently awarded a \$4.9 million collaborative infrastructure grant (UH2) from NIH's Science of Behavior Change (Britton, Loucks and King, Co-PIs) entitled "Mindfulness Influences on Self-Regulation: Mental and Physical Health Implications" (1UH2AT009145-01). Opportunities within MC@B include work and co-authorship on systematic reviews and meta-analyses of self-regulation targets engaged by mindfulness-based interventions, interfacing with the mindfulness instructor education leadership for improved instructor training, especially in regard to safety, trauma-informed and culturally-sensitive frameworks.

### **Fellowship Aims**

1. To provide the fellow with broad, interdisciplinary postdoctoral training in the areas of meditation research and mindfulness-based interventions and programs
2. To provide the fellow with a strong working knowledge of key issues involved in meditation research and mindfulness-based interventions and programs, including boundary conditions,

- individual differences, practice-specific effects, and contextual factors such as culture, non-specific effects, experimenter allegiance, and conflict of interest, among others.
3. To provide the fellow with research training and experience in preparation for a research career in meditation research or other related areas that benefit from or require strong interdisciplinary training.
  4. To actively participate in research, including grant writing; data collection, management and analysis; and writing peer-reviewed manuscripts, book chapters and best practice guidelines.

### **Fellowship Timeline**

The duration of the fellowship is 2 years, with renewal after the first year contingent upon satisfactory progress. The anticipated start date is July 2022.

### **Research Activity Plan (90%)**

The fellow will be exposed to various aspects of meditation and mindfulness research via participation in the following activities:

**Data analysis (25%)**: The fellow will collaborate with Drs. Britton, Lindahl and other members of the lab to analyze data from a recent clinical trial of mindfulness-based interventions and/or qualitative data from interview-based studies.

**Manuscript preparation and submission (25%)**: The fellow will be first author and co-author on manuscripts, book chapters, and poster submissions at national conferences. Individually tailored goals will be established in this area.

**Grant writing (10%)**: The fellow will be given the opportunity to develop a grant idea to advance their independent research interests and to submit the grant proposal by the end of the fellowship term. This activity is optional. If the fellow does not write a grant during the fellowship, this time can be allocated to manuscript preparation or involvement in other relevant research studies affiliated with the CLAN lab.

**Mindfulness Center (10%)**: The fellow may choose to work on the systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which may include article data extraction, data synthesis and manuscript writing, and attending monthly research meetings. The fellow may also decide to help draft best practice guidelines for mindfulness instructor training related to safety, trauma-informed and culturally sensitive modifications, and participant in trainings and/or serve on the Center's Diversity Committee. This activity is optional. If the fellow does not choose this option during the fellowship, this time can be allocated to other relevant research studies activities with the CLAN lab.

The fellow will be required to participate in weekly research meetings conducted at the Biomed building or via Zoom.

**Independent Research and Clinical Activity (20%)**: Opportunities for additional research or clinical experience will be included among research activities in position. The fellow has at least 20% of their time allocated to independent research, which is currently included in the categories above. If the fellow desires clinical experience, a number of opportunities exist, and will be covered by the fellowship, but will be part of the 20% time allotted for independent work. Clinical experience includes interning during mindfulness programs or trials at Brown's Mindfulness Center.

### **Clinical Activity Plan (12.5%, included in fellows' independent time)**

Opportunities for additional clinical experience will be provided as part of the position, included within 20% of time allocated to independent clinical or research activities on the part of the

fellow. Settings for clinical activities include the CLAN lab at Brown University and the Cheetah House RI nonprofit organization, which serves individuals who experience mental health challenges associated with meditation and mindfulness. Activities will include skills- and didactics-based provision of support through information sessions, group, and individual support. These clinical activities will be supervised by Dr. Ethan Moitra.

§ Treatment services: Yes

§ Clinical assessment: Yes

Path toward licensure: YES  X  NO \_\_\_\_\_

Planned activities should result in eligibility for licensure after 2 years.

### **Didactics (10%)**

Postdoctoral Seminars: The fellow will participate in the following post-doctoral seminars through the Brown Postdoctoral Training Program.

Mandatory Didactics:

Core Seminars (1 per month)

DPHB Academic Grand Rounds (1 per month)

Academic Friday – Grantsmanship seminars,

Special Topics in Statistics and Research Methods

Clinical Ethics – if intending to sit for licensure (1 per month)

### **Supervision and Evaluation**

Dr. Britton will serve as the overall primary supervisor and mentor. Supervision will be provided in the form of weekly individual supervision sessions with Dr. Britton, and when pertinent with Dr. Lindahl and Dr. Moitra. Every 6 months, for the duration of the fellowship, the fellow and the supervisors will provide formal evaluations and evaluations of the program relative to the goals and learning objectives of the fellowship.

### **Resource Requirements**

Fellow will be provided with the following resources:

- Access to space to complete research responsibilities
- A computer and project specific software
- Internet access
- \$500 per year toward the fellow's travel, as needed to present fellowship-related research at relevant scientific conferences

### **Reporting and approval**

This fellowship will be part of the RFP. The position has been discussed and approved by the RFP faculty.

Associate Director, Research Fellowship Program

Director, Postdoctoral Fellowship Training Program