

Kelly Baron, PhD, MPH, DBSM, receives over \$2 million in R01 funding for sleep study

Dr. Kelly Baron, PhD, MPH, DBSM, Associate Professor in the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine at the University of Utah, received R01 funding totaling \$2,124,939 from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health for a project period starting February 1, 2019 and going until December 31, 2023.



Baron's project titled, "Circadian and Sleep Pathways to Cardiometabolic Disease Risk: Role of Neurobehavioral Processes," will help to examine how sleep loss and disruptions in the body's circadian rhythms affect obesity risk. Baron will be conducting a five year study to examine how individuals' habitual sleep duration and alignment of their circadian rhythm predict metabolic health and appetite regulation. Participants will be tracked over a one year period to examine how sleep and circadian alignment predict changes in sleep and weight.

It has been almost a decade since Baron began working on studies, projects, and additional awards that have led to this grant. This project is continuing a series of studies that she began as a postdoctoral fellow at Northwestern University, Feinberg School of Medicine and then followed with a K23 Mentored Patient-Oriented Career Development Award spanning from 2011-2015.

"The best part of putting this project together was sitting down to look at the big picture from the last project, then assembling a team of experts from various areas to help ask the next question," Baron said.

Baron notes that there is much to come, but there are several things she is excited for as this project moves forward.

"In this project, we are asking some questions that I'd really like to know the answer to," Baron said. "Such as, 'How do morning larks and night owls differ in morning versus evening appetite regulation?' and 'How does an individual's habitual sleep duration and circadian timing interact to predict risk for cardiometabolic disease risk factors?'"

She also stated that a challenging and rewarding aspect of this study will be evaluating changes in sleep, circadian timing, and weight over one year.

Results of this study will advance knowledge of the complex relationship between sleep/circadian rhythms and probe how sleep contributes to the neurobehavioral mechanisms of obesity, thus providing the basis for new behavioral interventions.

"This is my first grant where I am considered an independent researcher. I am grateful to working with fantastic collaborators from Rush University and University of Michigan who have worked together with me on this submission," Baron said.