

John R. Weisz

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Harvard University

James McKeen Cattell Fellow Award

John Weisz has committed his scientific career to improving the lives of children and adolescents who have serious emotional and behavioral problems. His research focuses on promoting youth mental health through evidence-based intervention. Through his deployment-focused model and his own research, he has promoted the idea that both interventions and intervention science are enhanced when treatment development and testing are carried out in the clinical care contexts for which the interventions are ultimately intended.

While on the clinical psychology faculty at University of California, Los Angeles, Weisz and his students conducted extensive research on treatment process and outcome in everyday clinical practice. They carried out randomized controlled effectiveness trials of cognitive behavioral therapy for clinically-referred youths struggling with depression and anxiety, with treatment provided by community clinicians trained by his team, based in the clinics where those clinicians were employed.

Weisz's work at UCLA continued and expanded when he became a professor at Harvard in 2005. As director of Harvard's Laboratory for Youth Mental Health, his research now encompasses a network of community mental health clinics and schools, with continuing support from the National Institute of Mental Health, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and the Norlien Foundation.

Weisz's research team conducts randomized effectiveness trials, developing and testing strategies for implementing evidence-based treatments in clinical and educational settings for children and adolescents. Included in much of this work is a network of colleagues from multiple disciplines —

including psychology, pediatrics, anthropology, social work, sociology, and biostatistics — as well as policymakers and parents of children who have received mental health services. In addition, an active network of former students — “Weisz Lab Grads” — carries on related projects as faculty members in two dozen universities in the United States and beyond.

The Weisz lab’s treatment development and randomized trials research is complemented by ongoing meta-analyses of the evidence base from hundreds of youth psychotherapy trials. In this series of meta-analyses, Weisz and his colleagues have characterized and critiqued the state of knowledge in the field, proposing numerous ways of strengthening treatments and treatment research.

Through his treatment research and meta-analyses, Weisz serves as a model for clinical researchers. His work brings science and practice together to improve youth mental health care, enriching both the rigor and the relevance of intervention science.