

Healthy Future

Call for Interdisciplinary research projects for funding under the UvA IP

The Healthy Future theme includes mental and physical health in relation to cultural factors, behavior, participation in society, and the realization of equal opportunities. Two sub-themes have been identified: (1) Towards a healthy diet for all and (2) Stress & the intergenerational transmission of health and (un)healthy behaviors: understanding and breaking the cycle. These sub-themes can provide a direction for the project proposals for seed grants and Instrument II.

Sub-theme: Towards a healthy diet for all

A healthy diet is an essential prerequisite for human health. However, our current food system delivers food that is costly when aiming for a healthy diet, subsequently leading to diseases such as obesity and diabetes type 2. Furthermore, our current food system causes environmental devastation and an unfair demand on developing countries. Thus, an essential condition for a healthy future is a healthy and sustainable food system. However, little progress has been made to date. The physical food environment has become increasingly unhealthy and a powerful 'food culture' circulated through a variety of media shapes this food environment and people's food choices. Therefore, when it comes to stimulating a healthy diet, there is no single solution. The required changes are more complex than adjusting individual parts of the system (for example, offers in the supermarket) or alleviating symptoms (for example, online marketing) and are anchored in the history, culture, economic, social, institutional, and regulatory structures, goals, and values of the system. This sub-theme aims to better understand the drivers and barriers to accessing healthy food, and to investigate what policy solutions are needed for a healthier food environment.

Sub-theme: Stress & the intergenerational transmission of health and (un)healthy behaviors: understanding and breaking the cycle

A small proportion of families bear a disproportionate accumulation of mental and metabolic health issues, such as depression, anxiety, addiction, conduct problems, diabetes, obesity, and dental issues, that together represent a huge patient burden and high costs for society. Regarding their societal context, some problems of these families, like job and income insecurity, are related to class, gender and race (and potentially classism, sexism and racism). Notably, these conditions often also influence each other; e.g. discrimination can cause stress, which can subsequently lead to unhealthy behaviors. Poor health conditions per se appear not only closely related to unhealthy behavior patterns under adverse circumstances, they also tend to persist within families, and are often even transmitted over generations. These poor health conditions appear closely related to unhealthy behavior patterns in adverse circumstances, including structural class, gender, and racial discrimination, and they tend to persist within families via which they are transmitted over generations. To break this intergenerational cycle of patient suffering (with associated costs), we need to better understand the (early) risk factors and underlying mechanisms via which interwoven (mental) health issues and unhealthy behavior patterns arise and how they can be transmitted over generations. This sub-theme aims to investigate the risk factors and mechanisms of intergenerational transmission of health and health behavior within families with high cumulative risk and to research effective interventions.

Specific information

Applicants and co-applicants for proposals for the Healthy Future theme may not be members of the steering group.