

# The Friedman Brain Institute

## 2026 FBI Research Scholars

On behalf of the Philanthropic Leadership Council of The Friedman Brain Institute, we are pleased to announce the 2026 recipients of The FBI Research Scholars Awards.

### Joseph and Nancy DiSabato Research Scholar Award



**Scott Russo, PhD**

Professor, Neuroscience, Psychiatry, Immunology & Immunotherapy



**Rachel Fremont, MD**

Assistant Professor, Psychiatry & Neuroscience



**James Murrrough, MD, PhD**

Adjunct Associate Professor, Psychiatry



**Zahi A Fayad, PhD**

Director, Molecular & Interventional Radiology, Medicine, Cardiology & Artificial Intelligence & Human Health



**Priti Balchandani, PhD**

Professor, Diagnostic, Molecular & Interventional Radiology, Neuroscience, Psychiatry & Artificial Intelligence & Human Health

### Non-Invasive Mapping of Brain-Immune Clearance in Depression with CSF-STREAM

The brain's glymphatic system clears waste and regulates immune signaling by shuttling cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) through perivascular spaces. Disruption by aging, sleep disturbance, or chronic stress may promote neuroinflammation and mood symptoms. Patients with major depressive disorder (MDD) show evidence of glymphatic impairment and an enlargement of perivascular spaces, especially in those with a history of trauma. Preclinical studies link stress to lymphatic dysfunction, allowing peripheral immune factors to enter the brain and exacerbate depression-like behavior, yet human evidence remains correlational. We propose a one-year pilot using CSF-specific MRI to dynamically assess CSF flow and test reversibility of clearance deficits in MDD. We hypothesize that impaired CSF mobility is associated with a biologically distinct MDD subtype, particularly in individuals with elevated trauma or inflammation.



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