

Updates on OADR-ORWH

July 17, 2026
12 p.m. EST

Victoria Shanmugam, MBBS, FRCP, FACR, CCD, Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Autoimmune Disease Research in the Office of Research on Women's Health (OADR-ORWH), opened the meeting with approximately 30 minutes of remarks.

Moment of Reflection

Before starting the meeting proceedings, Dr. Shanmugam guided a moment of reflection featuring [Flare-Up](#), an exhibit at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston by artist duo [Goldin+Senneby](#). The installation focuses on autoimmune disease, particularly the experience of living with multiple sclerosis. The reflection encouraged attendees to think beyond the terms typically used to explain autoimmune diseases. Dr. Shanmugam described the exhibit's use of **pine resin** as a metaphor for the immune system: protective in moderation but toxic in excess. She also highlighted additional artistic pieces exploring illness, ecology, and immune complexity. In addition, the exhibit incorporated small Lego-based pedometer devices into the exhibit, reflecting MIT's engineering perspective.

Information About the Office

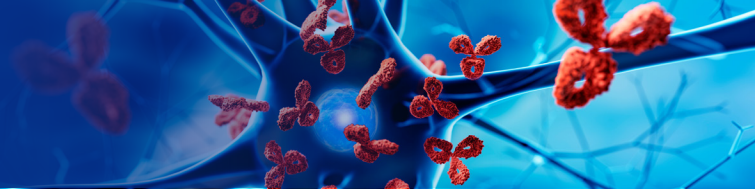
Dr. Shanmugam introduced the OADR-ORWH Program Officers (Xinrui Li, Ph.D, and Carmen Ufret-Vincenty, Ph.D) and explained the work of the office. OADR-ORWH was created by congressional mandate in alignment with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine's 2022 report titled [Enhancing NIH Research on Autoimmune Disease](#), which highlighted the need for greater coordination across NIH regarding autoimmune disease efforts. In the [Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023](#) (Public Law 117–328), Congress directed the creation of OADR in the Office of Research on Women's health (ORWH) to:

- Coordinate the development of a multi-Institute and Center (IC) strategic research plan
- Identify emerging areas of innovation and research opportunity
- Coordinate and foster collaborative research across the ICs
- Annually evaluate the NIH autoimmune disease research portfolio
- Provide resources to support planning, collaboration, and innovation
- Develop a publicly accessible central repository for autoimmune disease research

The work of OADR-ORWH dovetails with that of other NIH Institutes and Centers, helping coordinate efforts to advance autoimmune disease research.

Dr. Shanmugam discussed the [autoimmune disease research portfolio](#), which comprises over 140 diseases and conditions (click [here](#) for a printer-friendly, text searchable version of the full portfolio).

Prevalence and Impact of Autoimmune Diseases



Autoimmune diseases and conditions result from the immune system mistakenly attacking the body's own tissues. They can be serious, lifelong, and difficult to diagnose. A major global health issue, their increasing incidence cannot be explained by genetics alone. In the United States (U.S.), autoimmune diseases affect between 23.5 and 50.0 million Americans (at least 7% to 8% of the population). The exact prevalence of autoimmune diseases in the U.S. is unknown due to a lack of longitudinal data repositories. Nearly 80% of people diagnosed with an autoimmune disease are women, but men with autoimmune diseases tend to have more severe disease and, in some cases, a higher risk of dying from their disease. Some people live with one autoimmune disease, while others develop more than one.

Autoimmune diseases affect more Americans than many widely recognized conditions such as coronary artery disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, Alzheimer's Disease, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), and most cancers. Autoimmune disease research has been historically underfunded relative to prevalence and disease outcomes, which can be severe and persistent.

Strategic Planning (Congressional Directive 1)

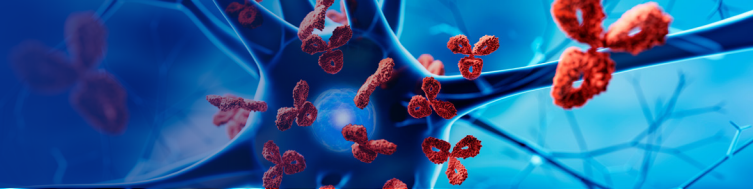
In July 2025, the [inaugural NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for Autoimmune Disease Research Fiscal Years 2026-2030](#) was launched. For its development, OADR-ORWH and the NIH-wide Autoimmune Disease Research Strategic Plan Working Group collected and collated input from scientific literature; portfolio analysis; a public request for information; community roundtables; NIH Institutes, Centers, and Offices (ICOs) Directors; and subject matter experts.

The strategic plan's mission is to coordinate and advance efforts to support rigorous, high-priority, innovative, and collaborative autoimmune disease research. One key priority is to advance understanding of the autoimmune prodrome, meaning the period when autoantibodies or immune activation become detectable but full disease is not yet obvious. This period is important because recognizing risk earlier could help speed diagnoses and treatments and even prevent some cases from becoming severe. Exposome research, the study of various exposures experienced throughout people's lives, is also a key priority. This could help elucidate how exposure mixtures over the life course impact the incidence, severity and outcomes of autoimmune diseases.

Dr. Shanmugam shared OADR-ORWH's vision for strategic plan implementation. Through leveraging a strong foundation from existing programs and research and creating a unified approach for accelerating progress through research and partnerships, this effort can lead to bold ideas and a healthier future for people living with or at risk of autoimmune disease.

To learn more:

- [NOT-OD-24-049: Request for Information: Inviting Input on an NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for Autoimmune Disease Research](#)
- [Request for Information: Summary of Responses](#)
- [Strategic Planning for Autoimmune Disease Research at NIH](#) – NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for Autoimmune Disease Research Fiscal Years 2026-2030, an inaugural video, and supplemental materials (for example, [one-page overview of strategic plan](#))



- [The Inaugural NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for Autoimmune Disease Research \(Fiscal Years 2026–2030\) - Publication](#)
- [NIH Highlighted Scientific Topic: Celiac Disease-specific](#) – NOW LIVE
- [NIH Highlighted Scientific Topic: Autoimmune Disease-specific](#)
- [NIH Highlighted Scientific Topic: Hidradenitis Suppurativa \(HS\)-specific](#)

Congressional Directive 2 -Identifying Emerging Areas and Opportunity

OADR-ORWH wants to update the community on the following events and publications:

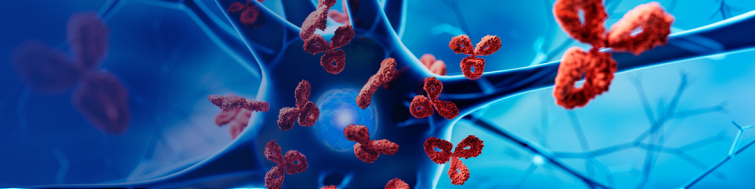
- Since restarting on 12/12/2025, [Updates on OADR-ORWH](#) are held virtually on a quarterly basis. The goal is to exchange information and engage with people living with or at risk for autoimmune diseases, advocacy groups, researchers and community.
- Translational Autoinflammatory Research Network (TARN)-NIH 3rd annual Symposium: [“Celebrating Autoinflammation: On the Shoulders of a Giant”](#): The April 16-17, 2026 event convened scientists, clinicians, people living with autoimmune disease and advocates to discuss research and new therapies.
- The publication [NIH–Wide Workshop: Impact of Diet on Mucosal Immunity and Immune-Mediated Inflammatory Diseases of the Gastrointestinal Tract](#) summarizes the proceedings of a 2024 Nutrition Workshop at NIH that focused on the state of nutrition science, knowledge gaps and life experiences of people living with autoimmune disease.
- A workshop on Complex Multisystem Disorders scheduled for September 23-24, 2026, brings together leading researchers, clinicians, and people with lived experience to discuss a range of themes and advance our collective understanding of complex multi-system disorders: [From Mechanisms to Medicine: Rethinking the Discovery-to-Care Continuum in Multi-System Disorders](#).
- Examples of past Community Engagement:
 - [2024 ScienceTALKS series](#)
 - [OADR-ORWH at Congressional Briefing to launch the NIH-wide Strategic Plan for Autoimmune Disease Research](#) (presenter: Dr. Victoria Shanmugam; host: Autoimmune Association; July 22, 2025)

Congressional Directive 3. Coordinate and Foster Collaborative Research Across the ICs

Dr. Shanmugam highlighted the broad breadth of catalytic OADR-ORWH funding during Fiscal Years 2023 through 2025 and explained how it provided coverage across autoimmune diseases and NIH Institutes and Centers (ICs), both for NIH-based research and research across academic institutions. Since integrated approaches are critical to advance autoimmune disease discoveries and translate them into better care, OADR-ORWH focused on efforts to support scientific collaboration.

Congressional Directive 4. Annually Evaluate the NIH Autoimmune Disease Research Portfolio

Dr. Shanmugam described portfolio analysis efforts at OADR-ORWH. Autoimmune disease research touches every NIH IC while remaining underfunded relative to its prevalence and impact.



NIH uses Research, Condition, and Disease Categorization (RCDC) categories to track and categorize funding. NIH-wide RCDC updates in fiscal year 2025 that improve OADR-ORWH portfolio analysis capabilities and benefit autoimmune disease research are:

- The RCDC category for “Autoimmune Disease” was revised to more accurately reflect the Autoimmune Disease Portfolio.
- “Sjogren’s Disease” was added as an RCDC category.

RCDC data for autoimmune disease research as of fiscal year 2025 is now live. To view:

- [Access this link](#) – a default category comes up
- In the “Filter Research/Disease Areas” field, type “autoimmune disease”

- Click on the “autoimmune disease” row that appears on the table below. This will refresh the graph to show autoimmune disease research data.

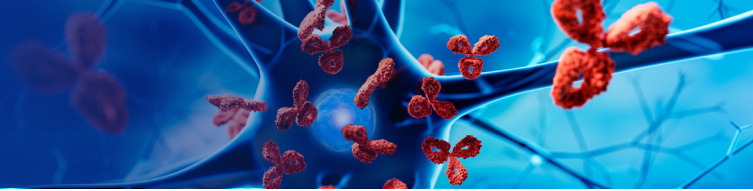
Research/Disease Areas (Dollars in millions and rounded)	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2024 US Mortality ¹⁴	2024 US Prevalence SE ¹⁴
Autoimmune Disease ⁵	883	934	888	988	1083	1021	1079	1054	1016	1155	-	-

Sjogren’s Disease was added as a RCDC category in FY2025, and several other autoimmune diseases have their own RCDC categories.

Congressional Directive 5. Provide Resources to Support Planning, Collaboration, and Innovation

Dr. Shanmugam reported that OADR-ORWH has demonstrated progress on all strategic plan priorities in 2025-2026, including progress in key investments and partnerships. The [NOURISH Autoimmunity Challenge](#) is a noteworthy example. This community ideation competition (Fall 2025–Spring 2026) aimed to generate bold ideas integrating diet and nutrition into autoimmune disease research. On March 30th, 2026, [Winning Concepts](#) were announced. Four major themes emerged:

1. **Effectiveness of Dietary Interventions in Autoimmune Disease:** Including submissions for interventional studies testing specific dietary patterns or therapeutic diets.
2. **Microbiome, Immune, and Multi-Omics Mechanisms:** Submissions focused on mechanistic and biomarker-driven approaches linking diet, the gut microbiome, and immune activity.
3. **Personalized, Data-Driven and Predictive Nutrition:** Concepts and submissions that propose the use of innovative data-driven methods for personalization, diet optimization, and real-world, real-time data capture and modeling to improve lived experience for people living with autoimmune diseases.
4. **Community Voice, Landscape Assessment, and Patient-Centered Frameworks:** Submissions proposing patient centered frameworks that bring lived experience to the forefront of the research paradigm.



These themes illustrate that nutrition is an emerging topic of interest for the autoimmune disease community. Further study, careful trial design, and close collaboration with patients is required to help advance the field's understanding of the impact of nutrition on autoimmune disease outcomes.

Visit the [Nourish Challenge](#) website to learn more and watch a recording of the Winners Presentation Webinar.

Other investments and partnerships highlighted by Dr. Shanmugam include:

- [EXposome in Autoimmune Disease Collaborating Teams PLANning \(EXACT-PLAN\)](#)
- [Accelerating Medicines Partnership® Autoimmune and Immune-Mediated Diseases \(AMP® AIM\) Program](#) – Importantly, an [AMP-AIM expansion has added scleroderma](#), broadening efforts to find common and unique disease pathways across autoimmune conditions.
- [Autoimmunity Centers of Excellence \(ACE\)](#)
- [NEXUS: Network for Exposomics in the U.S. Coordinating Center](#)

Congressional Directive 6. Develop and Oversee a Repository for Autoimmune Disease Research

OADR-ORWH has established the Autoimmune Disease Analysis Platform Testing Space (ADAPTS) in collaboration with the National Library of Medicine (NLM). This federated data platform will facilitate autoimmune disease analysis while still respecting ownership, privacy, and oversight. ADAPTS is a federated data platform that:

- provides a single, unified view across multiple data sources
- allows different datasets to function like one database without moving the data
- reduces the need for complicated data transfer pipelines
- supports governance, privacy, and speed

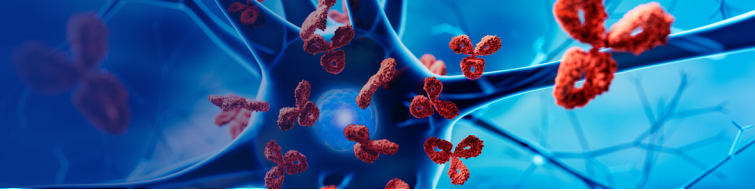
Highlighted benefits include:

- one access point to distributed datasets
- near real-time access
- data stewards retain control
- stronger governance, protection and security
- lower storage and analysis costs

The goal is to include distributed datasets such as:

- ImmPort
- NIH Intramural Data (collected through NIH-based research)
- other phenotypic, molecular, and clinical data

Dr. Shanmugam highlighted OADR-ORWH support during fiscal year 2026 of NIH-based research collaborations using ADAPTS. The collaborative projects focus on discovery of autoimmune disease endotypes, identification of biomarkers, and the mapping of shared mechanistic targets to advance therapeutic development. Additionally, OADR-ORWH continues to support efforts to create Common Data Elements (CDEs) for Autoimmune Disease research.



Communications and Outreach

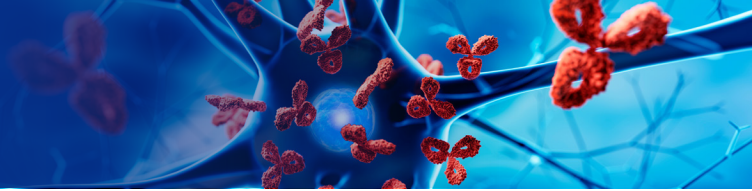
- Dr. Shanmugam presented at the [National Scleroderma Foundation](#) Inaugural Patient Advocacy Summit in Bethesda, MD, on 4/26/2026.
- Dr. Shanmugam, in addition to other NIH leadership, met with the [Autoimmune Association](#) when they visited the campus on 5/20/2026.
- Dr. Shanmugam presented at the [American College of Rheumatology](#) (ACR) Board of Directors meeting in Washington, DC, on 5/31/2026.
- The OADR-ORWH Team attended the [Federation of Clinical Immunology Societies](#) (FOCIS) 2026 Annual Meeting on June 8-12, 2026.
- [Dr. Shanmugam was interviewed by The Autoimmune Wellness Podcast on 6/15/2026](#), where she led a discussion focused on the future of autoimmune disease research.
- Dr. Shanmugam presented at the [Rheumatology Research Foundation](#) meeting on 6/25/2026.
- Dr. Shanmugam shared an update of the [NIH-Wide Strategic Plan for Autoimmune Disease Research](#) at a Congressional Briefing hosted by the [Autoimmune Association](#) on 7/22/2026.
- Highlighted media mentions:
 - [Boom Times For Autoimmune Disease Therapies](#)
 - [Could This New NIH Initiative Finally Change The Trajectory Of Autoimmune Disease?](#)
 - [Innovative center focuses on autoimmune disease prevention](#)
 - [How Federal Research Funding Is Advancing Celiac Disease Science](#)
 - [Stem cells banish severe autoimmune disease for 15 years](#)

Featured Funding Opportunities

- [PAR-25-450: Clinical Trial Readiness for Rare Diseases, Disorders, and Syndromes \(R21 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)
- [PAR-25-122: Pilot Projects Investigating Understudied Proteins Associated with Rare Diseases \(R03 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)
- [PAR-27-082: NIAID Investigator Initiated Program Project Applications \(P01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)
- [PAR-27-083: NIAID Resource-Related Research Projects \(R24 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)
- [PAR-27-074: Limited Competition: Small Grant Program for Mentored Research Career Development Award Recipients \(R03\) \(Clinical Trials Not Allowed\)](#) – Limited to NIAMS K awardees
- [PAR-27-037: Predoctoral to Postdoctoral Transition Award \(Parent F99/K00 - Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#) - Limited to graduate students as they complete their doctoral research training and transition into mentored postdoctoral career development opportunities.

Latest NIH Funding Policy Updates

- Replacement of Notices of Special Interest with [Highlighted Topics](#)
- [Achieving NIH's Mission: Leveraging Funding Policies](#) (effective January 2026 Council round)



- Implementation of Changes for Basic Experimental Studies with Humans: [NOT-OD-26-067](#)
- Reminder Definition of Foreign Components: [NOT-OD-26-084](#)
- Updated Elements of an NIH Data Management and Sharing Plan: [NOT-OD-26-046](#)
- Removal of Letters of Intent requirements and pre-approval for unsolicited applications requesting \$500,000+ in direct costs: [NOT-OD-26-019](#)
- Implementation of common forms for bio-sketch and current/pending support for due dates on or after January 25, 2026: [NOT-OD-26-018](#)
- Funding opportunities are now accessed through [grants.gov](#)
- [Notices of Policy Changes](#)

Community Roundtable

A community roundtable invited brief, structured input from attendees on research, care, and organizational updates relevant to autoimmune disease. Participants asked questions related to a range of topics, including if or when the autoimmune disease portfolio could be updated, potential reasons for the increase in autoimmune diseases, and if environmental factors (for example, wildfire smoke) have already been identified as drivers of autoimmunity. In addition, participants provided comments, including representatives from constituency and consulting organizations and scientists. Community members shared updates and perspectives on patient needs. OADR-ORWH encouraged ongoing engagement, questions, and suggestions, and directed participants to the strategic plan and resources on the [OADR-ORWH](#) website.

Closing

Dr. Shanmugam thanked everyone for sharing their comments and encouraged participants to [sign up for OADR-ORWH emails](#). The meeting concluded after approximately 60 minutes.