EBERHARD KARLS
UNIVERSITÄT
TÜBINGEN

Public Relations Department

Christfried Dornis
Director

Michael Pfeiffer
Press Officer

Phone +49 7071 29- 76782
michael.pfeiffer[at]uni-tuebingen.de

presse[at]uni-tuebingen.de
www.uni-tuebingen.de/aktuell

Press Release

Research award for early detection of mental health crises in children and adolescents

Dr. K. H. Eberle Foundation recognizes unique work by Tübingen University Hospitals project investigating both risks and protective factors

Tübingen, 26.11.2026

This year's Dr. K. H. Eberle Foundation Research Award at the University of Tübingen goes to the interdisciplinary team led by Dr. Katharina Allgaier, research group leader at the Department of Paediatric Psychiatry, Psychosomatics and Psychotherapy at the University Hospitals. In the project "JUNO – Children and Adolescents in Psychiatric Emergency Situations," Allgaier and her team are using a database they have compiled themselves to investigate which combination of risk factors can contribute to mental health crises in young people, and which protective factors can prevent them. The goal is to identify such developments early and to develop targeted prevention programs. Their database is the only one of its kind in Germany. The Research Award is endowed with 100,000 euros.

"Mental health crises are not usually caused by a single catalyst. In most cases, various personal, family, or school-related stresses operate together - sometimes combined with challenges arising from social developments," says Allgaier. She says there has so far been little understanding of which risk factors lead to a crisis and which factors can protect against one. "If we better understand these critical combinations of factors, support can be provided earlier and tailored more precisely to the needs of children, adolescents, and their families," Allgaier says.

"What we invest in young people today determines what we can expect from our future," says Dr. Alexandra Zoller, a member of the Dr. K. H. Eberle Foundation board. "This award-winning project meets important criteria set by our foundation: It is highly relevant to society, innovative, and helps raise the University of Tübingen profile."

Unique data sets

The project draws on a database compiled since 2020 from information from more than 2,800 participants. It comprises clinical data and surveys

of children and adolescents who are referred to Tübingen's Paediatric Psychiatry, Psychosomatics and Psychotherapy due to a mental health crisis. Patients receiving routine treatment and schoolchildren from the general population serve as comparison groups. The data collected includes diagnoses, stressful events, personality, sleep, family environment, and school activities. Using data collected over six years, the team is also investigating whether changes in the frequency and nature of crises are linked to wider developments such as the COVID-19 pandemic or armed conflicts.

Using machine learning methods, in collaboration with the Hector Institute of Education Science at the University of Tübingen, the team aims to analyze complex relationships between these factors and identify particularly relevant risk constellations. The team seeks to gain robust insights on which to develop preventive measures.

Prize money to support data collection and analysis

The prize money will be used to fund a number of important efforts: data collection at the hospital and in schools, quality assurance and data analysis, and publishing the results. The funds will further support project management, research staff, and student assistants. The team also plans to establish collaborations with other child and adolescent psychiatric institutions to enable multi-site analyses in the future.

"This project underscores the University's interdisciplinary strength, combining clinical experience in psychiatry and psychotherapy with expertise in psychology, education research, informatics and data science," says University President, Professor Dr. Karla Pollmann. "Tübingen is providing a boost for science-based and responsible prevention of severe mental health crises among children and adolescents," she added.

The Prize has been awarded annually to an innovative research project at the University since 2017. The foundation, based in Lörrach, Baden-Württemberg, was established by entrepreneur Dr. Karl-Helmut Eberle; it promotes research and innovation.



Dr. Katharina Allgaier and her interdisciplinary team receive the Dr. K. H. Eberle Foundation Research Prize for their project on the prevention of mental health crises in young people.
Photo: Christoph Jäckle / University of Tübingen



Left to right: Vice-President Katja Schenke-Layland, Foundation board member Dr. Alexandra Zoller, Dr. Katharina Allgaier und Dr. Daniela Hagmann (both on the JUNO project team) with Professor Ekkehart Meroth (board member), Baron Dr. Georg von Schönau (deputy board chairman) and Professor Theodor Sproll (board member) of the Dr. K. H. Eberle Foundation.
Photo: Christoph Jäckle / University of Tübingen

Contact:
Dr. Katharina Allgaier

Department of Paediatric Psychiatry, Psychosomatics and Psychotherapy
University Hospitals
Phone +49 7071 29-61940
Email: katharina.allgaier@med.uni-tuebingen.de