



A Proposal to Establish:

The Rieger Center for Mental Health

at the Amir School of Medicine

**Addressing Israel's Unique Mental Health Challenges
in the Aftermath of October 7th**





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The devastating Hamas attack on October 7th has triggered a surge in mental health issues across Israeli society, including depression, anxiety, and PTSD. These challenges extend beyond the survivors and soldiers directly affected, impacting children, families, and potentially future generations. To address these unique post-war mental health challenges, Israel must develop tailored interventions that consider the complex interplay between trauma, cultural factors, and the ongoing security situation.

The University of Haifa, with its proven track record in implementing longitudinal, national mental health initiatives, is uniquely positioned to tackle these growing challenges. Today, we seek to partner with the Rieger Foundation to establish the **Rieger Center for Mental Health** in the new Amir School of Medicine.

Our **mission** is twofold:

1. Retool mental health training in Israel, producing a new generation of highly skilled physicians equipped to address increasingly complex mental health challenges.
2. Implement innovative, evidence-based practices that break the cycle of suffering and foster resilience—recognizing the crucial importance of tailoring interventions to the needs of Israel's diverse communities, including Arabs, Druze, and ultra-Orthodox Jews, and ensuring that each group receives culturally sensitive and effective support.

Through these efforts, we aim to set a new standard for mental health care, creating a model that can be replicated nationally and internationally.

The University of Haifa's new **Amir School of Medicine** is poised to empower the next generation of Israel's doctors to tackle the nation's evolving healthcare challenges. Our comprehensive 6-year program will equip physicians to thrive in the dynamic healthcare landscape. Central to this achieving this mission is our partnerships with **Clalit Health Services (HMO)** and **Kaiser Permanente** in Pasadena.

Clalit's extensive network of facilities—including our partner hospital the **Carmel Medical Center**, community clinics, home care services, and telemedicine capabilities—offers an exemplary teaching environment for healthcare professionals. The Kaiser Permanente model emphasizes integrated care, focusing on preventative medicine and a strong doctor-patient relationship.

By combining international best practices from Kaiser Permanente with Clalit's local expertise and infrastructure, the University of Haifa's School of Medicine will prepare a new generation of physicians uniquely equipped to lead and innovate in Israel's evolving healthcare system.

In the Aftermath of October 7th: Urgent Need to Address Israel's Mental Health Challenges



The October 7 attack and subsequent war have had a profound impact on the mental health of Israelis, particularly children and teenagers. According to a recent study conducted by the Israeli Pediatric Association more than 83% of Israeli children have been experiencing emotional distress since the outbreak of the war on October 7. The situation is particularly severe for children residing near the Gaza border or those who have been displaced from their homes, with 93% of them reporting emotional distress.

For teenagers, the trauma may be compounded by disruptions to their education, social lives, and future plans. Mental health professionals are reporting a surge in demand for services, with many children and adolescents requiring immediate intervention and long-term support to cope with the psychological aftermath of the attack and ongoing war.

As for their parents, the situation is dire as well. 36% of them reported dealing with emotional distress, and 39% with feelings of anxiety. Another alarming statistic reveals that only 14% of parents reported seeking any form of support, and even if they desired help, it is uncertain whether there are resources available.

War's Invisible Wounds: The Mental Health Impact on Israeli Soldiers

The ongoing conflict has significantly impacted the mental health of Israeli soldiers and reservists. Official data indicates that by the end of 2024, approximately 10,000 soldiers are expected to face psychological crises, with many already experiencing severe emotional distress since the war began on October 7. The Israeli Ministry of Defense reports that 30% of the 7,209 wounded soldiers have developed psychological issues, with 60% of these cases primarily involving psychological trauma. Additionally, around 30,000 soldiers have sought help through mental health hotlines, with 85% returning to active duty after receiving treatment. Common mental health issues among soldiers include panic, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and difficulties in adapting and communicating.

Here at the University of Haifa, 800 of our student-soldiers reached out to our Psychological Counseling Unit for assistance in coping with the challenges of military service.

Focus on Mental Health for Young Adults

Adolescents and young adults, aged 15-24, comprise 16% of the global population. This pivotal stage of development is marked by various psychosocial, environmental, and biological factors that can significantly impact mental wellbeing. Recent studies highlight a concerning uptick in diagnosed mood and anxiety disorders among youth, a trend further exacerbated by the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

To address this issue, a primary goal of the Rieger Center will be to highlight the urgency for innovative, youth-friendly mental health services. The Center will emphasize:

1. Early and effective assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental health conditions and common comorbidities.
2. Utilization of digital approaches, which are increasingly recognized as crucial for early detection, intervention, and monitoring of youth mental health issues, offering scalable and accessible solutions.
3. Implementation of artificial intelligence and integrated datasets, identified as priority technologies.

The Rieger Center will pay special attention to identifying and implementing new evidence-based approaches for self-harm and suicide prevention in young people. These efforts will include accessible youth mental health care, school-based initiatives, community responses, and technological solutions.

Goals and Objectives: Our Unique Blueprint

The Rieger Center will take a comprehensive approach to mental health, integrating education, training, clinical services, and research. Working together with our partners, we will create a holistic model that will increase access to effective prevention and early detection services within the community.

- Establish a diverse team of expert leaders to **shape mental health education and practice** in post-war Israel.
- Design and implement a **novel training model** emphasizing service learning and competency-based techniques. The model will incorporate insights from recent events in Israel to maximize effectiveness.
- Create a **hub for interdisciplinary collaboration** within the University and the broader community.
- Training in the use of **digital screening and triage** to stepped-care.
- Develop innovative and new collaborative ways of **working with communities**, integrating mental health screening, early intervention and prevention into all settings of care using a policy-community participatory research model.
- Promote short-term **evidence-based practices** and monitor multiple individual and community-level outcomes as well as the efficiency and equity of services and implementation costs and access to care rates, **leveraging advancements in AI** and other health technologies.
- Conduct **joint research initiatives** to advance knowledge and inform evidence-based practices.

We plan to expand our existing academic collaborations with **Dr. Milton L. Wainberg, Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at Columbia University**, who has expressed interest in co-developing the curriculum. Dr. Wainberg is Co-Director of the Division of Translational Epidemiology and Mental Health Equity and Director of the Mental Wellness Equity Center and Global Mental Health Research.

- **Ensure long-term success** by serving as a **national model** for how we educate and train healthcare workers who provide care directly or through other systems. Create a template that can be adapted by other countries facing similar crises.
- Central to our mission is **addressing the unique challenges children and young adults face** during their developmental phase, prompting us to pioneer innovative, youth-centric mental health interventions.

Clalit Health Services is **Israel's largest health service organization** and one of the largest healthcare providers globally. Founded in 1911, it has been at the forefront of medical care and health innovation in Israel for over a century.

Membership: Clalit serves over 4.7 million members, representing more than 52% of Israel's population and 75% of the population in the North.

Healthcare Network: The organization operates 14 hospitals, including general, psychiatric, and rehabilitation facilities. It also manages over 1,300 primary care clinics across the country. Notably, in northern Israel, 80% of the community clinics are part of the Clalit network.

Services: Clalit provides a wide range of medical services through its outpatient clinics, including women's health, pediatric health, and specialized medical centers.

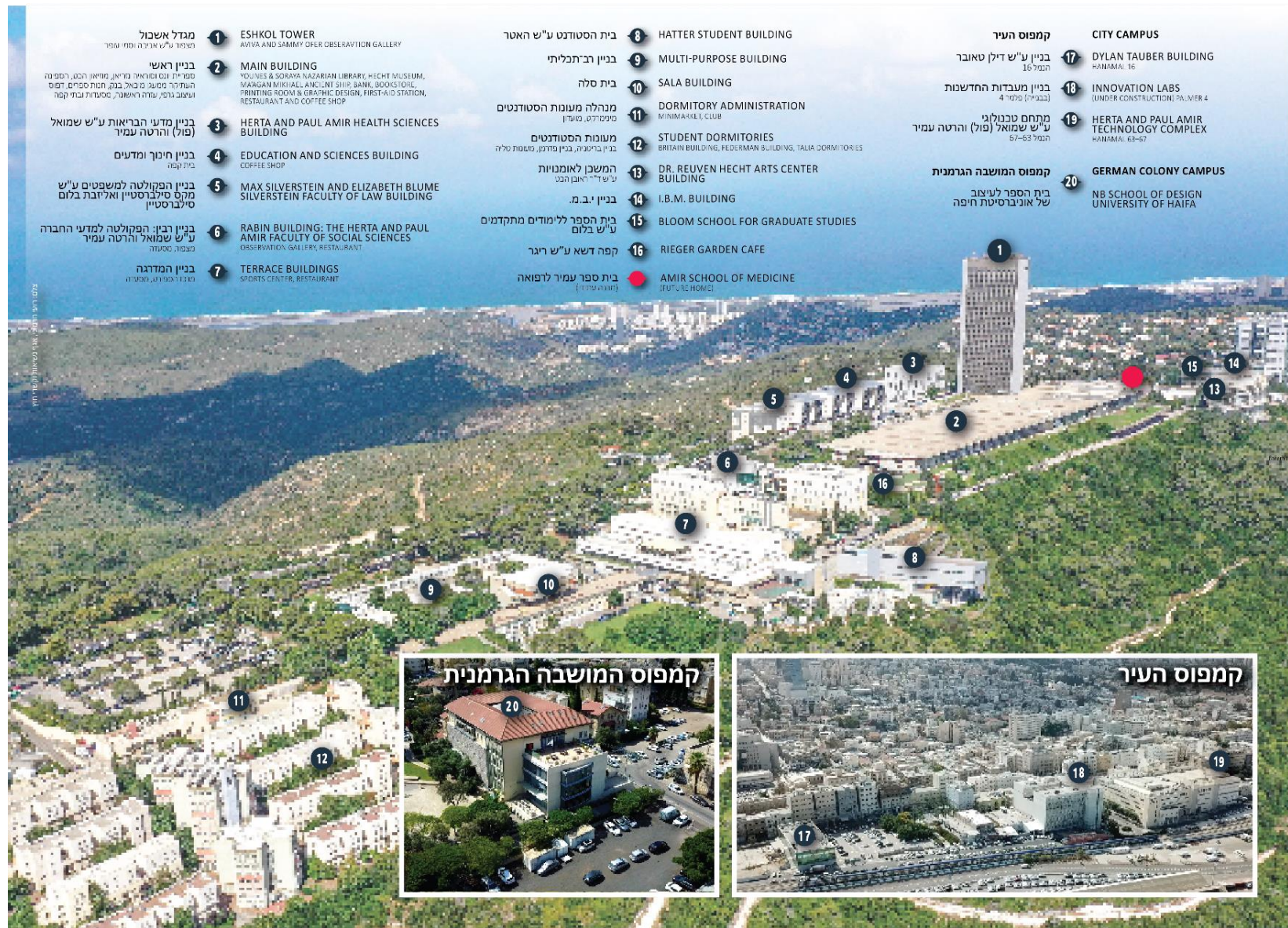
Innovation: Clalit Innovation, a division of the organization, focuses on integrating over 25 years of medical data and expertise into innovative insights and digital health tools. This initiative aims to provide proactive, predictive, and personalized medical care at scale.

Technology Adoption: Clalit is an early adopter of health information technology, with substantial investments in electronic health records. In response to growing demand, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, Clalit implemented a robust video appointment system that currently manages more than 1,500 video calls per day.

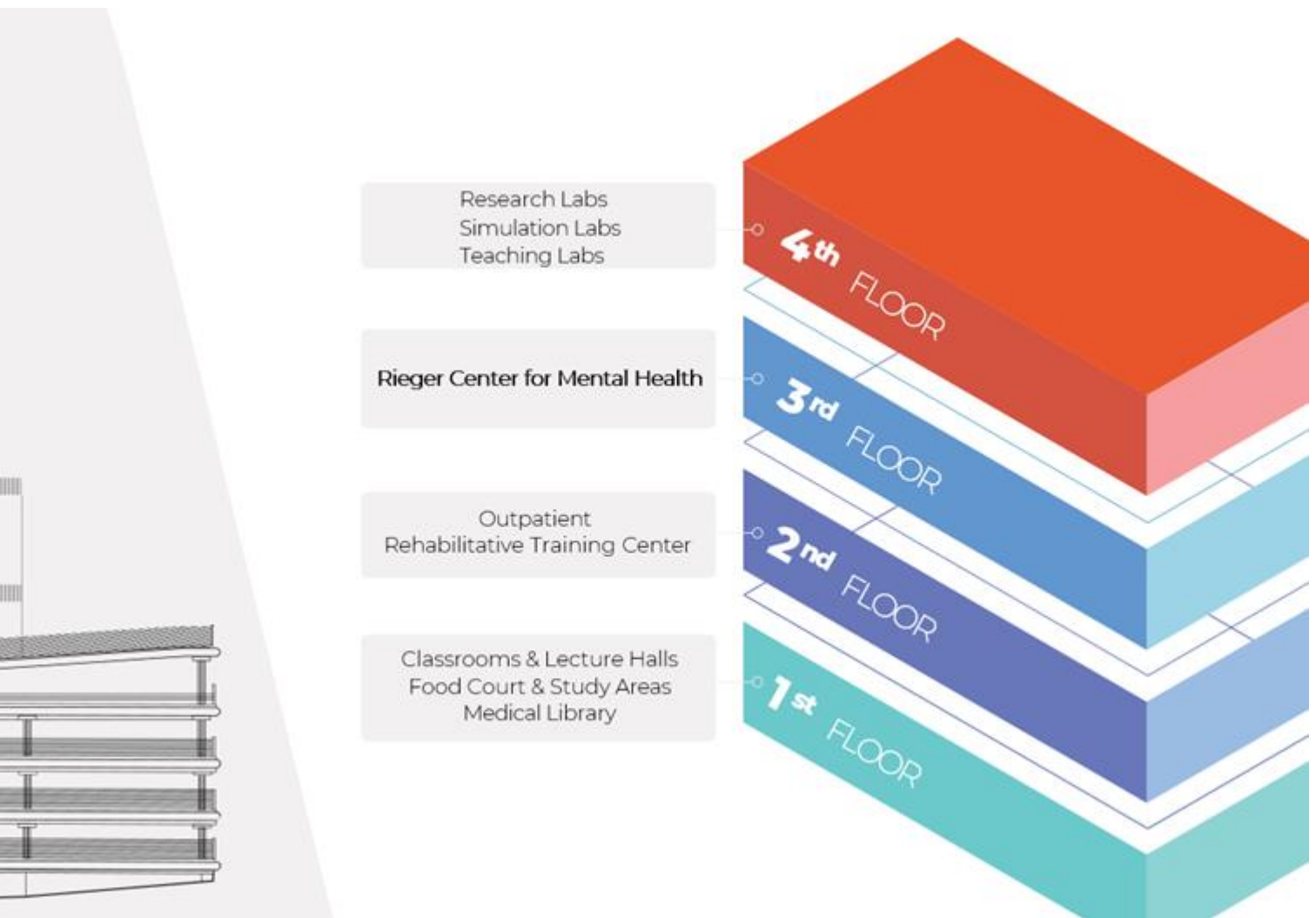


Clalit Carmel Medical Center: UofH's Partner Hospital

The New Amir School of Medicine – Location on Campus



Rieger Center for Medical Health – Location in the Amir School of Medicine



Academic Leadership



Prof. David Roe, a licensed clinical psychologist, will lead the Rieger Center for Mental Health. Currently heading the Department of Community Mental Health at the University of Haifa, he also holds an affiliation as professor at Aalborg University, Denmark.

Prof. Roe's research focuses on the psychosocial processes of recovery from serious mental illness, stigma, Patient Reported Outcome Measures and the implementation and evaluation of interventions and services. His research has received funding from various local and international sources, including NIMH, Israeli Science foundation, The Israeli Ministry of Health, The Israel National Institute for Health Services Research and Health Policy, the Israeli National Insurance Institution and the Tauber and Rich Foundations.

Request for Support

We invite you to partner with us in this groundbreaking endeavor. The Rieger Center for Mental Health will initiate a transformative shift in addressing mental health challenges — especially those faced by children and adolescents. Through early intervention and evidenced-based practices, the Rieger Center will set a new standard of care for mental health wellness and champion a holistic approach to mental health that resonates globally.

- **A very generous gift of \$5 million** will enable the University of Haifa to dedicate the **Rieger Center for Mental Health** at the University of Haifa School of Medicine in your honor.

Item	Amount (USD)
Construction	3,000,000
Endowed Rieger Chair, Prof. David Roe	1,000,000
Digital tools and equipment	1,000,000
Total:	\$5,000,000

Donor Recognition

In recognition of this visionary donation, the Mental Health wing will be named in memory of Dr. Norbert and Charlotte Rieger, whose lifelong commitment to improving access to mental health services has inspired us all. The Rieger Foundation's name will also be prominently featured on the School of Medicine's Founders Wall, serving as an enduring symbol of your profound generosity and leadership. In addition, research published by the Center will prominently acknowledge the Foundation's support.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this proposal.



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