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**Rutgers Institute for Health names Mariana Figueiro Director for New Center for Healthy Aging**

*Lighting and health expert will also serve as chair of new Division of Sleep and Circadian Medicine in the Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School Department of Medicine*

New Brunswick, N.J. (July 1, 2020) – The [Rutgers Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research](#) and [Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School](#) (RWJMS) today announced Mariana Figueiro, PhD, has been appointed to lead two new programs focused on aging and on sleep and circadian research.

Figueiro, a professor of Architecture and Biological Sciences at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, is a renowned researcher in the field of lighting and health and the director of the Lighting Research Center. On Sept. 1, she will take on her new roles at Rutgers as director of the new Center for Healthy Aging at the Institute for Health and chief of the new Division of Sleep and Circadian Medicine in the [RWJMS Department of Medicine](#).

The new programs bridge Figueiro’s research focusing on the use of lighting in real-world environments to improve health and well-being, particularly through its effects on circadian rhythms and sleep and in the treatment of conditions such as diabetes and dementia in older adults.

“I’m looking forward to joining the Rutgers community and new opportunities to expand our aging research and our clinical work on sleep and circadian rhythms,” Figueiro said. “Our focus has always been specifying and applying light as non-pharmacological treatments, and it will be exciting to incorporate more detailed patient studies and broader research areas.”

“We are delighted to welcome Dr. Figueiro and to launch the Center for Healthy Aging,” said [XinQi Dong, MD, MPH](#), director of the Institute for Health. “Dr. Figueiro brings a multidisciplinary and translational approach that will be essential to the center’s success. Aging research will be even more critical as the United States’ population continues grow older, and the center will put Rutgers at the forefront.”

The new center will catalyze innovative research and synergistic collaborations between experts, clinicians, caregivers, patients, the lighting industry and others, to develop evidence-based care strategies that will improve the lives of older adults. The center will also bring together experts in sleep and circadian rhythms from across Rutgers.

“The creation of the Division of Sleep and Circadian Medicine will allow us to unite our existing sleep experts under the leadership of an international sleep researcher,” said [Fredric E. Wondisford, MD](#), chair of the Department of Medicine. “Just as important, Dr. Figueiro will serve as an outstanding mentor to junior faculty who will benefit from her years of experience navigating NIH funding.”

The clinical evaluation of sleep disturbance continues to evolve, where many sleep studies are currently performed at home. As this continues, the role of on-site sleep studies will need to be better defined and this division will be well placed to establish these guidelines. Rashmi N. Aurora, MD, will serve as medical director of the new division.

Figueiro has a bachelor's degree in architecture and urbanism from the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil. She has a master's in lighting and a doctorate in multidisciplinary science from Rensselaer.

Figueiro has received several awards for her work and was elected a fellow of the Illuminating Engineering Society in 2013. Currently she is the principal investigator of eight federally funded grants and various industry-funded projects. In addition to more than 100 scientific articles, Figueiro authored the AARP-sponsored publication, *Lighting the Way: A Key to Independence*, and presented a [TEDMED Talk](#) about the importance of lighting.

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*Rutgers [Institute for Health, Health Care Policy and Aging Research](#) advances health and well-being through meaningful, rigorous and impactful research in the critical areas of behavioral health, health services, health disparities, health policy, health economics, pharmacoepidemiology, and aging research.*

*Since its 1985 founding, the Institute has become nationally renowned for interdisciplinary and translational research. The Institute's 57,000 square foot facilities are home to six members elected to the National Academy of Medicine and 150 members representing over 30 schools, institutes, and units with adjunct members from 29 national and international universities.*