

The Hormel Institute

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



The Hormel Institute Researchers Lead the Charge With Multiple Papers Published and Grants Received

March and April have seen a flurry of publications from and grants for researchers at The Hormel Institute, University of Minnesota, showing that science and progress happen here in Austin.

In early March, the lab of Assistant Professor Dan Xu published a groundbreaking study in *Cell Metabolism*, a highly prestigious scientific journal. The paper, entitled [“Isoform Usage as a Distinct Regulatory Layer Driving Nutrient-Responsive Metabolic Adaptation.”](#) reveals how the presence or lack of nutrients can shape how variations in some gene products (gene isoforms) are used — independently of gene expression. This newly discovered regulatory layer plays a crucial role in metabolic adaptation, offering new insights into obesity and metabolic-related disorders. This research project, co-led by Dr. Xu and Dr. Lei Sun, PhD (Duke-NUS Medical School, Singapore), could pave the way for RNA-based therapies targeting metabolic diseases like obesity and type 2 diabetes.

Most recently, Professor Leena Hilakivi-Clarke, PhD, authored a paper in the scientific journal *iScience* titled [“Aromatics from fossil fuels and breast cancer.”](#) In a review of existing scientific literature, researchers identified links between exposure to benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylene (BTEX) aromatics and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) from fossil fuels and breast cancer risk in humans.

On the grants side of things, Associate Professor Jarrod French recently received a [yearlong grant totaling more than \\$140,000](#) from the University of Minnesota Office of Discovery and Translation. The grant will support the continued research and development of a novel therapeutic that could enhance the body’s immune system response and offer solutions to some of the challenges raised by drug-resistant strains of fungi and bacteria, potentially saving countless lives.

Additionally, Assistant Professors David Guinovart and Eric Rahrmann are the recipients of a [two-year, \\$100,000 Data Science Initiative \(DSI\) Seed Grant from the University of Minnesota](#). Their funded project, MOOBI: Multi-Omics Optimization-Based Integration for Enhanced Cancer Research Datasets, aims to tackle key challenges in integrating multi-omics data for more precise breast cancer diagnosis and therapeutic targets.

[Be sure to stay up to date on all the Latest News at The Hormel Institute.](#)



Dozens Discover Science at The Hormel Institute

On Saturday, April 5, The Hormel Institute welcomed dozens of community members to learn about the fascinating and exciting world of research at the annual Discover Science Together event.

From elephant toothpaste to sticky bubbles (not to mention the chance to be strolling through the colon), the Institute is always excited to show off how much fun

science can be.



Wellness on Wheels Seeks Input to Enhance Services from Rural Community Members

Community members from rural Mower County are asked to complete a survey and provide their input on how Wellness on Wheels (WOW) can serve the community better and enhance preventive healthcare services.

While the survey is completely anonymous, providing your email or phone number means you will be kept up to date on WOW events and services, and will make you eligible to win one of three \$50 gift cards for completing the survey.

Visit z.umn.edu/UMASH_Survey to take the survey and make your voice heard. Surveys must be completed by May 1, 2025, to be eligible for the gift card drawing.

WOW is a joint project between The Hormel Institute, University of Minnesota, and Mower County Public Health that helps people take control of their well-being to live longer, healthier lives regardless of their health insurance coverage. As a mobile service, WOW makes preventative healthcare screenings more accessible for all – from libraries to community events, WOW comes to where you are. The WOW rural community survey is funded by a grant from The Upper Midwest Agricultural Safety and Health Center.



Bowling for the Battle Raises More Than \$500,000 for Prostate Cancer Research

In March, the Austin community took to the lanes for the annual Bowling for the Battle fundraiser to help support prostate cancer research at The Hormel Institute. This year's event brought in \$62,500, bringing the total amount of money raised over Bowling for the Battle's 10-year history to \$533,000, meeting the event organizers' goal and ensuring progress continues to thrive at the Institute.



BOWLING FOR THE BATTLE
2025 TOTAL: \$62,750
11-YEAR TOTAL: \$533,000



Calling All Educators: Experience Science Like Never Before

Are you a teacher looking for a hands-on, real-world science experience to bring back to your classroom? The Teacher Externship Program at The Hormel Institute is your chance to step into the lab, work alongside researchers, and develop engaging curriculum, all while earning a \$1,200 stipend.

This immersive program offers hands-on lab time, curriculum development, and access to a fully stocked science lending library for your students. Join us this summer to gain new skills, collaborate with fellow educators, and inspire the next generation of scientists.

[Learn more and apply to the Teacher Externship Program.](#)



High Schoolers: Summer is for Science

Hey, high schoolers, have we got a scienced-filled-summer for you! The Hormel Institute is excited to bring you two opportunities to spend time learning about biomedical research, career development, and how you can change the world this June and July with either the [BioDiscovery Internship](#) or the [Summer Health Experience in Oncology](#).

[The BioDiscovery Internship](#) is for students who've completed grades 9 through 11 and want to explore the cutting-edge field of biomedical research. You'll get to dive into hands-on lab experiences, connect with experts, and discover what it's like to work in a real research setting. Applications for the BioDiscovery Internship must be received by May 2, 2025.

The [Summer Health Experience in Oncology](#) is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for 10th, 11th, and 12th grade students ready to dive into the fascinating world of cancer research, prevention, and treatment. This two-week, online program will connect you with leading cancer experts from The Hormel Institute, Masonic Cancer Center, Mayo Clinic, the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Medical College of Wisconsin, and the University of Iowa, and more. Applications for the Summer Health Experience in Oncology must be received by May 15, 2025.



Participants Wanted: Smoking and Alcohol Study

The Hormel Institute needs participants for the Smoking & Alcohol Study. The goal of this research is to identify specific types of DNA damage that might be caused by smoking

cigarettes and drinking alcohol. There is compensation for participants of up to \$175 if all parts of the study are completed.

[Learn More and Sign up for the Smoking and Alcohol Study](#)



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