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125 NMRI 14th Annual Workshop, April 2016, Final Summary Report
Network of Minority Health Research Investigators

History and Mission

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) recognized the need to increase the number of minority health researchers who succeed in accessing grants and contracts for NIH research. The Office of Minority Health Research Coordination at the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) established a communication network of current and potential biomedical research investigators and technical personnel interested in minority health research, including individuals from traditionally underserved communities—including African American, Hispanic American, American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian, and other Pacific Islanders—to address that need.

The primary mission of the Network of Minority Health Research Investigators (NMRI) is to encourage minority health investigators to be researchers in fields of interest to the NIDDK, including diabetes, endocrinology, metabolism, digestive diseases, nutrition, kidney, urologic, and hematologic diseases. An important component of this network is the promotion of two-way communication between network members and the NIDDK. Through the NMRI, the NIDDK elicits recommendations for strategies to enhance opportunities for, and support of, underrepresented population groups and others in biomedical research. The NMRI strives to advance scientific knowledge and contribute to the reduction and eventual elimination of racial and ethnic health disparities.

More than 300 researchers have participated in NMRI workshops in the past decade, and approximately 100 are active members of the Network. The success of the NMRI, a network that is “owned” by its members and supported by the NIDDK, begins with the dedication of senior investigators who mentor and serve as role models for junior investigators. The participation of active members and the recruitment of new members is a primary reason for the Network’s success in the past and the reason for confidence that it will continue to grow in the future.
NIDDK Executives

Griffin P. Rodgers, M.D., M.A.C.P.

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Dr. Griffin P. Rodgers was named Director of the NIDDK—one of the 27 NIH Institutes and Centers—on April 1, 2007. He had served as NIDDK’s Acting Director since March 2006 and had been the Institute’s Deputy Director since January 2001. As the Director of the NIDDK, Dr. Rodgers provides scientific leadership and manages a staff of more than 600 employees and a budget of $2.0 billion.

Dr. Rodgers received his undergraduate, graduate, and medical degrees from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. He performed his residency and chief residency in internal medicine at Barnes Hospital and the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis. His fellowship training in hematology/oncology was in a joint program of the NIH with the George Washington University and the Washington Veterans Administration Medical Center. In addition to his medical and research training, he earned a Master’s degree in Business Administration, with a focus on the business of medicine/science, from Johns Hopkins University in 2005.

As a research investigator, Dr. Rodgers is widely recognized for his contributions to the development of the first effective—and now U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved—therapy for sickle cell anemia. He was a Principal Investigator in clinical trials to develop therapy for patients with sickle cell disease and also performed basic research that focused on understanding the molecular basis of how certain drugs induce gamma-globin gene expression. He was honored for his research with numerous awards, including the 1998 Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Foundation Award, the 2000 Arthur S. Flemming Award, the Legacy of Leadership Award in 2002, and a Mastership from the American College of Physicians in 2005.

Dr. Rodgers has been an invited professor at medical schools and hospitals in France, Italy, China, Japan, and Korea. He has been honored with many named lectureships at American medical centers; has published more than 200 original research articles, reviews, and book chapters; has edited four books and monographs; and holds four patents.

Dr. Rodgers served as Governor to the American College of Physicians for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from 1994 to 1997. He is a member of the American Society of Hematology, the American Society of Clinical Investigation of the National Academy of Sciences, the Association of American Physicians, and the Institute of Medicine, among others. He served as chair of the Hematology Subspecialty Board and is a member of the American Board of Internal Medicine Board of Directors.
Dr. Lawrence Y.C. Agodoa graduated from the Cornell University Medical College, New York, in 1971. He completed internship and residency training in internal medicine at the University of Washington Hospitals in Seattle and 3 years of training in clinical and basic research in nephrology and renal pathology.

Dr. Agodoa served as Chief of the Nephrology Service at the Madigan Army Medical Center, Tacoma, Washington, from 1976 to 1981. He subsequently completed 2 years of clinical and research training in rheumatology and immunology from 1981 to 1983. In 1983, he was assigned to the Walter Reed Army Medical Center as Assistant Chief of the Nephrology Service and the Nephrology Training Program, and also appointed to the faculty of Medicine at the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences (USUHS), Bethesda, Maryland. In 1985, he was appointed Director of the Military Medical Research Fellowship at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research.

In 1987, Dr. Agodoa was appointed Director of the Clinical Affairs Program in the Division of Kidney, Urologic, and Hematologic Diseases at the NIDDK in Bethesda, Maryland. He also was an intramural research scientist in the NIDDK’s Laboratory of Cell and Molecular Biology from 1987 to 1992. Currently, he is Professor of Medicine at the USUHS F. Edward Hebert School of Medicine, and a Program Director at the NIH. His current duties include serving as Director, Office of Minority Health Research Coordination, NIDDK; Director of the Minority Chronic Kidney Disease and End-Stage Renal Disease Programs in the NIDDK Division of Kidney, Urologic, and Hematologic Diseases; and Co-Project Officer of the end-stage renal disease (ESRD) renal database, the United States Renal Data System (USRDS).
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Research Interests
My research is focused on understanding the molecular mechanisms that are responsible for cardiovascular complications in diabetes. We have specifically focused on the role of altered insulin signaling, autophagy, and mitochondrial oxidative stress.

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Research Interests
My research interests are to (1) refine a critical thinking methodology for behavior change among low-income individuals; (2) develop evidence-based obesity prevention programs suitable for community outreach, information dissemination, and public health education, tailoring these programs so that they are culturally appropriate to minority and other audiences; and (3) make significant contributions toward understanding and decreasing health disparities among underserved (rural and low-income) and minority (African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders) populations.
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Research Interests
My current research focuses primarily on elucidating signal transduction pathways in the kidney that are involved in the physiology and pathophysiology of renal hemodynamics. We utilize an integrative approach—including techniques drawn from cell and molecular biology, physiology, and pharmacology—to investigate regulatory proteins, ion channels, and G protein–coupled receptors that regulate renal vascular and glomerular functions.

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Research Interests
My research interests include the developmental origins of type 2 diabetes, specifically fetal programming of the pancreatic beta cells.
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Research Interests
My research has focused on identifying the intracellular signaling mechanisms underlying the renal tubular cell response to obstructive nephropathy. My ongoing research focuses on elucidating the roles of receptor- and nonreceptor tyrosine kinases, integrins, phospholipase A2, arachidonic acid, and heterotrimeric G proteins in mediating mechanical stretch-induced cytokine and chemokine gene and protein expression in renal proximal tubular cells, particularly relating to unraveling the linkage to these regulatory proteins and signal transduction pathways in mediating the effects of mechanical stretch on renal cell death, proliferation, and inflammation. Cyclic mechanical stretch represents a unique model to mimic transient increase in intrarenal pressure resulting in tubular mechanical stretch accompanying obstructive nephropathy and a mechanism to stimulate cytokine/chemokine gene and protein expression. This work may provide novel data in the pathophysiology of obstructive nephropathy.

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Research Interests
My research interests include obesity, energetics, and the effects of variations in energy metabolism, food intake, body composition, and energy expenditure on longevity. I also have an interest in research methods, research integrity, and research reproducibility—especially as they apply to the fields of nutrition and obesity. My research ranges from basic science investigations with animal models through clinical trials, epidemiology, and public policy.
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Research Interests
My research interests focus globally on the epidemiology and prevention of cardiovascular disease. Specific areas of ongoing projects include different measures of subclinical atherosclerosis, the associations of body composition and inflammation with cardiovascular disease, the relationships between calcified atherosclerosis and both hypertension and kidney function, and the potential effects between neighborhood characteristics and cardiometabolic health. I collaborate significantly with the Women's Health Initiative, Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis, and the Hispanic Communities Health Study/Study of Latinos.

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Research Interests
My overall research interest is driven by infectious disease conditions that are overrepresented in minorities. Specifically, I am interested in improved HIV testing and in using technology to improve care. I am building an HIV care cohort in a new HIV clinic in El Paso, Texas. I also am interested in hepatitis C virus (HCV) in minorities, including education, testing, and treatment that help to improve the differential outcomes for minorities with HCV. I hope to use my activity within the informatics sphere to tie my clinical research interests together.
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Research Interests
My research interests include health disparities in type 2 diabetes, regional fat distribution, metabolic abnormalities, and screening, prevention, and the pathophysiology of type 2 diabetes in Asian American and Pacific Islander populations. I am the Principal Investigator of the University of California, San Diego Filipino Health Study—a longitudinal study of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and osteoporosis among Filipino men and women—and co-investigator of the Rancho Bernardo Study, where I lead research on ethnic health disparities among Caucasian, Filipino, and African American women (Health Assessment Study of African-American Women).

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Research Interests
Fibrosis is a leading cause of organ failure worldwide, in which normal tissue is replaced with an excess of connective tissue. Recent studies have provided new evidence for an association between low serum Vitamin D and cardiovascular disease risk factors, as well as other medical conditions, such as stroke; prostate, colon, and breast cancer; multiple sclerosis; tuberculosis; and other infections. The goal of my research is to establish whether vitamin D exerts an anti-fibrotic phenotype in specific cell lines and in selected animal models of tissue degeneration, suggesting that supplementation with vitamin D could be used as an anti-fibrotic strategy in therapeutic treatment of such chronic diseases as renal, cardiac and lung fibrosis. I also am interested in the role of Vitamin D in cardiac and skeletal muscle cell differentiation.
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Research Interests
I am a structural biologist with diverse interests. My current focus is structure-based drug design and the use of crystallography, biochemistry, and other methods to understand and develop new treatments in diverse systems, including hookworm infection, enteric parasites, cancer, and gut bacterial infections. I also am interested in diseases of poverty that affect predominantly minority populations.

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Research Interests
My research interests include the study of the polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS); insulin action in adipocytes; the role of the adrenal in hyperandrogenic disorders; the nonclassic adrenal hyperplasias (NCAH); the genetics of hyperandrogenic disorders, including PCOS and NCAH; the treatment of hirsutism; and the regulation and physiology of adrenal androgens. Leadership development, academic administration, and organizational management are additional interests.
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Research Interests
I am a psychiatric epidemiologist and health educator with research and teaching experience. My research applies community engagement across the translational research spectrum. This includes understanding diverse communities’ willingness to participate in research and determining the best approaches to provide underrepresented populations a voice in the research process, including using community-based participatory research and community-partnered participatory research. I am the founder of the Minority Women Research Network. The network’s mission is to promote CPER conducted by minority women scientists interested in research collaborations, academic scholarship, innovation, and dissemination. In addition to these endeavors, I serve as the Principal Investigator or co-investigator on several international, national, and local community-engaged research studies focused on diverse communities with the goal of increasing health equity.
Research Interests
I am a nephrologist with advanced training and expertise in extracorporeal therapies, the use of highly specialized techniques for blood purification. My clinical responsibilities include providing care for patients focusing on prevention and treatment of chronic kidney disease, and using specialized blood purification techniques, such as therapeutic apheresis to treat renal, neurological, and hematological disorders. My areas of interest in clinical research have included examination of outcomes (morbidity and mortality) in older dialysis patients (“geriatric nephrology”) with clinical depression, especially. I am currently involved in trials looking at novel blood purification techniques that are promising for acutely ill patients who have kidney and liver failure.
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Research Interests
My research interests focus on physical activity, sedentary behaviors, and obesity prevention in children and adolescents. I am particularly interested in home- and community-based environmental interventions that incorporate both physical activity and nutrition to achieve healthy outcomes and to decrease racial/ethnic health inequalities. An area of research I am beginning to explore is how factors within the home activity and food environments interplay with individual and interpersonal factors to contribute to overweight and obesity in children, adolescents, and their families. I have been the Principal Investigator of grants from the General Mills Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and NIH Building Interdisciplinary Careers in Women's Health program and Co-Investigator on several NIH R01 grants.

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Research Interests
My research interests include shared decision making in the bleeding disorder (hemophilia) community and virtual simulation and technology development.
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Research Interests
My major research interests are in elucidating the mechanism(s) involved in salt-induced hypertension and in the role of eicosanoids in health. I am particularly interested in understanding the vasculopathic effects of one of the major culprits associated with the reninangiotensin-aldosterone system, aldosterone, which is significantly elevated following high salt administration in Dahl rats. Other research interests of my laboratory pertain to better understanding the role of the glucocorticoids on vascular structure and function in the progression of metabolic syndrome in Zucker obese rats. Hypercholesterolemia and hypertension may precipitate one another, resulting in significant vascular remodeling and end-organ damage.

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Research Interests
My research interests and activities include (1) using brain functional magnetic resonance imaging to define the neural correlates of obesity in American Indians; (2) using a rodent model to study the neurobiology of reward-based appetitive behavior; (3) investigating satiety and changes in incretin hormones within the context of differing macronutrient paradigms in pre- and post-gastric bypass surgery patients longitudinally; (4) using community-based participatory research methods to examine the effects of improved food availability on incidence rates of diabetes and obesity in American Indians; and (5) using such holistic methods as traditional Indian medicine, cross-cultural healing methods, and storytelling to improve health disparities in American Indians. My NMRI work is funded by the NIH/NIDDK K23.
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Research Interests
I am a community and social/health psychologist, and my primary research focuses on the psychological, interpersonal, and behavioral experiences of adults living with sickle cell disease. My current program of research explores the clinical implications of sickle cell disease stigma, and I am initiating another line of inquiry that examines the relations among physical activity, eating behavior, and metabolic syndrome risk in sickle cell disease.

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Research Interests
In general, I am interested in determining factors associated with health disparities and development of interventions to reduce racial/ethnic and socioeconomic disparities in health and disease outcomes. I am interested in health care quality improvement (QI) as a means of improving health outcomes in minority and low-income populations and the impact of QI on health disparities. Primarily, I am interested in chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, obesity, and chronic kidney disease.

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Research Interests
My research focuses on clinical and translational investigations of the mechanisms by which diabetes in pregnancy may promote subsequent maternal cardiovascular disease risk. My research efforts have been funded by the NIH/NIDDK, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program Award, and the Massachusetts General Hospital Multicultural Affairs Office and Executive Committee on Research Physician Scientist Development Award.

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Research Interests
My research interests include obesity and depression in African American women. I am investigating the use of faith-based institutions to prevent and reduce the health risks associated with obesity. By providing culturally relevant health education programs in the community of the church, African Americans are empowered to change health behaviors and, ultimately, to reduce health disparities.
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Research Interests
In the United States, disparities in health care delivery and access are apparent between different racial and ethnic groups. Minorities, including African Americans, often suffer unreasonably from chronic diseases compared to Caucasians. The relative contributions of genetic and environmental factors to this susceptibility are not yet well understood. In the field of organ transplants, such as kidney and liver, access to transplantation, both from deceased and living donors also is restricted in many minority populations, and graft survival is often inferior. Disparities have been identified as a problem, and this could be due to barriers in early screening and treatment choices. Analysis of the explanations is complex because of the many confounding cultural, social, and economic factors. I am very interested in addressing these barriers to increase cultural awareness by physicians; steps then can be made to reduce health care disparities.

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Research Interests
I am interested in researching the effects of vitamin D deficiency on multiple sclerosis (MS) patients. MS is a severe demyelinating disease of the central nervous system, affecting young adults by producing a progressive neurological dysfunction. A high number of MS patients have vitamin D deficiency/insufficiency.
L. Ebony Boulware, M.D., M.P.H., FACP

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Research Interests
I am a general internist and clinical epidemiologist committed to improving quality and equity in the health and health care of patients affected by such chronic illnesses as chronic kidney disease, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. I have studied the influence of medical, social, community, and health care system factors on these conditions. My research program seeks to improve health through practical strategies that are informed by patient and community needs. I also am dedicated to training the next generation of researchers who seek to improve quality and equity in health and health care.

Lynda M. Brown, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research focuses on sex differences in diet-induced obesity, especially the role of ovarian hormones, and in central and peripheral inflammation through the life cycle. My long-term research goal is to understand the mechanisms involved in the anti-inflammatory effects of ovarian hormones and their neuroprotective actions. An emerging area of interest is to study multigenerational effects of obesity, specifically, if maternal high-fat diet during development alters brain circuits in pups to favor obesity.
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**Research Interests**
My research focuses on health behavior change for chronic disease prevention. Specifically, I examine the effectiveness, implementation, and reach of weight-management lifestyle interventions designed to reduce the incidence and burden of chronic diseases—such as type 2 diabetes—among adults at high risk. For example, I seek to develop and test theory-based patient engagement strategies for lifestyle programs in real-world health care settings, with a focus on serving women from racial and ethnic minority groups. I am a licensed clinical psychologist and completed my doctoral degree at Boston University, generalist clinical training at the San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and postdoctoral research fellowship at the Stanford University School of Medicine. My experience includes conducting original quantitative and qualitative research, directing and providing consultation for behavior change interventions within large randomized clinical trials, evaluating patient-engagement strategies, collaborating with clinical leaders, systematically evaluating fidelity to intervention protocols, and recruiting and retaining diverse research samples. The objectives of this program of research are to apply the theory and practice of behavior change within health care delivery systems to promote chronic disease prevention at a population level.

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**Research Interests**
My research interests include (1) global gene regulation of *Vibrio vulnificus* pertaining to pathogenesis; (2) antibacterial properties of surfactants, nanoparticles, and Mexican herbal plants; (3) analysis of health disparities between diabetic Hispanics and Caucasians in effects of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* colonization on amputation rates; and (4) DNA repair in enteric bacteria and the evolution of general repair mechanisms throughout bacterial families. My laboratory trains graduate students, undergraduates, and a select few gifted high school students.
**Natasha L. Burke, Ph.D.**

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**Research Interests**  
Broadly, my research interests include the prevention of disordered eating and obesity in children and adolescents. Specifically, I am interested in the complex interplay among weight status, demographic characteristics, psychological comorbidities, and associated risk factors, with a special interest in underserved groups.

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**Sherri-Ann M. Burnett-Bowie, M.D., M.P.H.**

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**Research Interests**  
My research is focused on defining the physiology of the mineral metabolism hormone, FGF23; defining the relationship between vitamin D deficiency and insulin resistance; and studying novel therapies for osteoporosis.
Jarrett D. Cain, D.P.M., M.Sc., FACFA

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Research Interests
I am an active basic science and clinical researcher. Along with publishing scientific papers and presenting at numerous academic meetings, I serve as a peer reviewer for various foot and ankle journals, review abstracts at scientific/research meetings, and serve on various organization committees. My research focuses on foot and ankle disorders, diabetic bone healing/limb salvage, biomechanics, and clinical epidemiology.

Kirk Campbell, M.D.

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Research Interests
Kidney podocytes are the target cells for injury in human glomerular disease, a significant cause of end-stage kidney failure. Primary and secondary pathogenic processes affecting podocytes account for 90 percent of end-stage kidney disease, at a cost of $20 billion per year in the United States. A reduction in podocyte number (podocytopenia) directly correlates with the progression of several proteinuric kidney diseases, including focal segmental glomerulosclerosis, IgA nephropathy, and diabetic nephropathy. Despite significant advances in the characterization of the molecular architecture of podocytes, the mechanisms underlying their survival, injury, and loss remain poorly understood. Validated therapeutic targets are scarce, and there are no podocyte-specific drugs commercially available. The overall goal of our research program is to enhance the pipeline of putative therapeutic targets available to tackle human glomerular disease by elucidating the details and functional significance of key signaling pathways that regulate podocyte injury and survival. We utilize cell-based assays and rodent models to identify and characterize key mediators of glomerular disease progression.
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Research Interests
Most of my work has been centered at the clinical level. My research interests include factors that relate to solid organ dysfunction and transplantation science. Replacing dysfunctional organs in humans requires careful selection of candidates and careful application of multidisciplinary medical knowledge. This maximizes the function of the organ and the quality of life of the individual. Clinical trials and research are indispensable to consistently perfect what can be done for each individual patient and to do this in a safe and cost-effective way. Over the last decade, clinical transplant science has excelled at understanding how to achieve good short- and intermediate-term results. However, we now are trying to decipher what is necessary to attain better long-term outcomes.

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Research Interests
My research centers broadly on identifying and addressing factors associated with the development of diabetes and its vascular complications. I have a particular interest in understanding racial differences in glycemic markers and how these differences contribute to the development of cardiovascular and renal complications in minority populations. I have experience with several large observational cohort studies and have published on a range of social, clinical, and lifestyle factors related to the occurrence of diabetes and its vascular complications.
D. Roselyn Cerutis, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
The focus of my laboratory is lysophosphatidic acid (LPA) as a mediator in oral wound healing and inflammation. LPA is a potent, simple phospholipid mediator made by many cell types. LPA is a pleiotropic molecule with hormone- and growth factor-like properties. It binds to and activates its cognate G protein-coupled receptors (LPA1-6), each of which can signal through Gi, G12/13, and Gq and/or couple to the elevation of cAMP. Using an in vitro oral wound healing model, we have provided the first evidence that LPA controls the regenerative responses of human gingival and periodontal ligament fibroblasts. The present focus of our research is to understand the biochemical and molecular regulation of the LPA receptors on these cells, and to define the contribution played by each receptor subtype in controlling these “healing” responses, with emphasis on how these are altered under “diabetic” high-glucose conditions. We employ a combination of cellular, biochemical, and molecular approaches to investigate these changes. Other interests include adrenergic, purinergic, and serotonergic receptor pharmacology and adipokines.

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Research Interests
I am Associate Professor of Medicine in the Department of Internal Medicine at Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science, Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of Medicine at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and co-leader of the Education and Training Core at the UCLA Clinical and Translational Science Institute. My area of expertise is modulation of visceral pain. Currently, I serve as Executive Editor of *Journal of Autacoids and Hormones* and Editor-in-Chief of *International Journal of Research in Nursing*. 
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Research Interests
My research interests include the clinical and epidemiological study of insulin resistance
and cardiovascular disease risk factors among adult Native Hawaiians and Hawai‘i’s other
multiethnic populations. Our current work involves a patient-centric, web-based diabetes
program to improve glycemic control and reduce diabetes complications.

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Research Interests
I am Professor of Pediatrics in the Department of Pediatrics at the University of Minnesota,
Division of Pediatric Nephrology and Clinical Research Medical Director for the Department
of Pediatrics. My clinical research interests are cardiovascular disease in children with kidney
disease; kidney transplants; pediatric dialysis, and pediatric kidney transplantation.
Glenn M. Chertow, M.D.

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Research Interests
My research interests broadly address fundamental issues in acute and chronic kidney disease, using techniques of clinical epidemiology, health services research, decision sciences, and clinical trials. Active NIH-sponsored research projects on which I serve either as Principal Investigator or a member of the Executive or Steering Committee include the Frequent Hemodialysis Network study, the U.S. Renal Data System Special Studies Center in Nutrition, the Chronic Renal Insufficiency Cohort (CRIC) study, and the Systolic Pressure Intervention Trial (SPRINT) and SPRINT MIND.

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Research Interests
I am interested in health disparities research related to diabetes complications among adults and children, as well as among adults and children with disabilities, including intellectual and developmental disabilities. I also am interested in mental health disparities, obesity, and cardiovascular disease within this population.
Leonor Corsino, M.D., M.H.S., FACE

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Research Interests
I am an Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Endocrinology, Metabolism, and Nutrition at Duke University School of Medicine. My goal as a clinician-scientist is to prevent and improve obesity, diabetes, and related conditions in minority populations. I have approached this interest through a diverse array of research studies: (1) community engagement projects in obesity; (2) implementation studies; (3) intervention studies; and most recently (4) studies to increase our understanding of biological factors contributing to these disparities in obese patients treated with bariatric surgery.

Deidra C. Crews, M.D., Sc.M., FASN

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Research Interests
My core area of research addresses disparities in the care and outcomes of chronic kidney disease. I have examined the contribution of social determinants of health, including poverty and access to healthful foods, to disparities in kidney disease. My work in end-stage renal disease includes studies of the optimal timing and setting of dialysis initiation among vulnerable groups, and patient preparation for the start of renal replacement therapy.
Luis Angel Cubano, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research focuses on development of natural compounds and training of under-represented populations in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Sam Dagogo-Jack, M.D., Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My interests include the interaction of genetic and environmental factors in the prediction and prevention of prediabetes and diabetes, and the regulation of leptin in humans. I am Principal Investigator of the Pathobiology and Reversibility of Prediabetes in a Biracial Cohort Study (PROP-ABC); Diabetes Control and Complications Trial/Epidemiology of Diabetes Interventions and Complications (DCCT/EDIC); and Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP)/DPP Outcomes Study (DPPOS).
Clarissa Jonas Diamantidis, M.D., M.H.S.

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Research Interests
My research interests involve promoting engagement in kidney disease care by individuals at high risk for the incidence or progression of chronic kidney disease (CKD), with a focus on engagement by ethnic and racial minorities. Using relatively ubiquitous information technology tools, such as websites and mobile health apps, my research goals include improvement of awareness of CKD by those at risk; reduction of adverse patient safety events in CKD, such as medication errors; and facilitation of adherence to CKD care.

Alejandro Diez, M.D., FASN

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Research Interests
My main area of interest is kidney transplantation. My current research focuses on recipient clinical outcomes following living kidney donation and transplantation of difficult-to-match recipients requiring kidney transplantation.
Karen Tabb Dina, Ph.D., M.S.W.

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Research Interests
My current research investigates the relationship between diabetes and depressive symptoms during pregnancy and post-delivery outcomes for mothers and infants. In addition, I am conducting mentored research as an Early Career Investigator on the Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos, a multisite epidemiological study on depressive symptoms and diabetes among adults.

Michael B. Duncan, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
The goal of my research program is to determine the functional role of the extracellular matrix (ECM) in liver disease and cancer. My long-term interests are aimed at developing novel diagnostic and therapeutic options for treating advanced liver disease and cancer based on targeting remodeling events involving the ECM. We are particularly focused on determining the interaction between an important liver ECM molecule, type XVIII collagen, and hepatocyte integrins. We have found that this interaction is critical for cell survival. We are hopeful that our studies will yield important information regarding how the ECM modulates cellular phenotype during the injury response and the complex milieu of the tumor microenvironment. Additionally, we have initiated a project that seeks to establish the role of tumor-associated macrophages in angiogenesis and vessel remodeling during hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). The aims for this project are to identify robust markers and the genetic signature of pro-angiogenic macrophages in the HCC tumor microenvironment and, ultimately, to validate this cell population as a target for therapeutic interventions. In order to conduct our studies, my group relies on genetic and chemically induced mouse models of liver injury and HCC, as well as modern techniques in tissue imaging, cell biology, biochemistry, and molecular biology.
O. Kenrik Duru, M.D.

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Research Interests
I am a general internist and health services researcher interested in promoting physical activity and medication adherence among older minority adults, including those with diabetes. I hope ultimately to develop and implement interventions that improve outcomes among these patients. I have conducted and published several studies showing that clinical care strategies, such as diabetes registries, are not linked to reductions in black-white disparities in diabetes outcomes, while patient-level factors such as depression and medication adherence play a larger role. I also am interested in faith-based approaches to initiate and maintain physical activity among African American women with diabetes and those at risk for developing the disease.
James Dzandu, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research interests are in health disparities using the sickle cell disease model at several levels of analysis, including cells, proteomics, genomics, community, and individuals. I was one of the early graduate students at Wayne State University Comprehensive Sickle Cell Center in Detroit, Michigan. As part of my formal training in biochemistry, I spent several years studying the structure, functions, and interactions among molecules of life: proteins, nucleic acids, lipids, and carbohydrates. Part of my original research centered on a search for a unified theory of sickle cell disease, with membrane red cell abnormality as a central piece. Our work at Wayne State University School of Medicine benchmarked abnormal membrane protein phosphorylation in sickle cell disease. The test of time continues to highlight the importance of protein kinases as clever molecular control devices that drive many processes in health and disease states. Our earlier work focused on changes in red cell membrane structure (transmembrane signaling) in sickle cells as predictor variables for adhesion and/or red cell fragmentation. In 2009, we published studies on how fetal hemoglobin may be regulated through the effect of transcription factors, including Stat3 and GATA-1, with clues about the role of specific kinases. My current research interests are focused on hemoglobin A1C as a diagnostic marker for diabetes and prediabetes in emergency department patients. Beyond the diagnostic utility of A1C, I am interested in the identification of predictor variables of A1C. What factors determine A1C disparities among ethnic groups, gender, age, etc.? Because there are hundreds of thousands of human proteins, what are the effects of glycation on these proteins? What will be the effect of glycation on kinases, receptors, antibodies, and structural proteins, etc.? These ideas should drive basic research initiatives far into the future. Our current plan will establish the relationship between A1C and clinically meaningful patient outcome variables such as morbidity and mortality. As manager of clinical research at our level 1 trauma center and surgery residency program, I am actively involved in developing research agendas in areas of geriatric trauma, general surgery, robotic surgery, quality improvement efforts, and critical care issues. I continue to mentor medical students and surgery residents.
Research Interests
As the human body continues to expand and fuel the epidemic of type 2 diabetes, novel approaches to the treatment of metabolic diseases will be needed. My research interest involves the development of imidazoline compounds as therapeutic agents to treat metabolic diseases, such as type 2 diabetes. Some of these compounds currently are in clinical use as antihypertensive agents, and I am exploring the possibility of developing imidazoline compounds as single-agent therapy for diabetics with hypertension. I also am studying the cross-talk between insulin and imidazoline receptor signaling pathways.
Leonard E. Egede, M.D., M.S.

Chief, Division of General Internal Medicine and Director, Center for Patient Care and Outcomes Research
Medical College of Wisconsin

Research Interests
I am a general internist and a tenured Professor and Chief, Division of General Internal Medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin. I am also the Director, Center for Patient Care and Outcomes Research at the Medical College of Wisconsin. I have Master’s degree in clinical research and completed a fellowship in health services research. I have led research projects designed to understand the interplay between socio-demographic and psychological factors in health outcomes and test behavioral interventions to reduce health disparities. I am currently funded for two research projects: (1) an NIH/NIDDK R01 (R01DK098529), a randomized clinical trial to test the efficacy of a technology-intensified diabetes education/skills training (TIDES) intervention in African Americans with poorly controlled type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM); and (2) an NIDDK K24 (K24DK093699), which provides protected time for mentoring. I have authored more than 220 original publications in peer-reviewed journals. I was a standing member of the NIH scientific review study section (the Dissemination and Implementation Research in Health Study Section) and a member of the National Advisory Council of the Robert Wood Johnson Physician Faculty Scholars Program for several years. I currently am Deputy Editor for the Journal of General Internal Medicine.
Mayra L. Estrella, Ph.D., M.P.H.

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Research Interests
I earned a Master of Public Health (M.P.H.) in Biostatistics from the University of Puerto Rico, and a doctoral degree in Community Health Sciences from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) School of Public Health. My experience includes collaborating with Hispanic/Latino communities in Chicago addressing a range of public health issues (e.g., diabetes and access to health care among adolescents and adults). Currently, I am a postdoctoral fellow in the T-32 Training Program in Cardiovascular Disease (CVD) Epidemiology and Related Chronic Diseases in Minority Populations at the University of Illinois at Chicago Institute for Minority Health Research. In general, I am interested in exploring the persistent burden of CVD and related chronic conditions among Hispanics/Latinos using data from the landmark Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos (HCHS/SOL).

More specifically, I am interested in the investigation of factors associated with favorable cardiovascular health among Hispanic/Latino adults and adolescents. I am examining the prevalence of volunteering (a social capital indicator) and its association with low cardiovascular risk among Hispanic/Latinos. Finally, I am also interested in exploring the interrelationships of multiple factors (e.g., neighborhoods, psychosocial, and behavioral) that contribute to disparities in the high burden of CVD risk factors between Puerto Ricans and other Hispanic/Latino groups. In the long term, I would like to focus on better understanding the neighborhood-level factors that influence disparities in CVD risk factors among Hispanic/Latinos to inform the development of multilevel interventions.
Tolulope Falaiye, M.D., M.S.C.I.

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Research Interests
I have a strong clinical interest in taking care of pediatric patients with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). I am interested in pediatric inflammatory bowel disease, specifically issues of transition of care to adult gastroenterology and outcomes research. I established the pediatric IBD clinic and the pediatric IBD transition clinic at The Penn State Hershey Medical Center. Establishing the clinic involved recruiting personnel, including a nutritionist, social worker, and clinical psychologist, to participate routinely in the clinic. These clinics serve as a resource for patients and the pediatric gastroenterology providers, as well as a source for IBD research patients, including an enrollment area for the Improve Care Now network (an international pediatric IBD consortium). I have been trained in methods of clinical investigation and apply that knowledge to designing and implementing studies in this population. Currently, I am studying factors that affect pediatric IBD transition to adult IBD care. In addition, I am part of the Rising Educators Academics and Clinicians Helping IBD (REACH-IBD) committee for the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation of America.
A. Celeste Farr, Ph.D., M.P.H.
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Research Interests
My goal and passion remains to encourage health care equity and eliminate health disparities among African Americans. My research goal is to reduce obesity and diabetes in the African American community, first through prevention of diabetes in women, and later through teaching the women how to affect the health of their families through lifestyle changes, such as diet changes, increased exercise, and improved nutrition. Because both obesity and diabetes transcend socioeconomic status, I plan to begin my work with women who are a bit more resource-rich by working with suburban, predominantly African American churches, and with graduate chapter sorority members. Eventually, I would like to work with more resource-challenged women and help them navigate their situations to successfully reduce obesity and diabetes. Obesity and diabetes are increasing rapidly within the African American community, but clearly both can be prevented. I want to be among those who show people how to protect and improve their health.

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Research Interests
Our research is focused on diabetes mellitus and its complications, the endocrine sequelae of childhood cancer, and growth disorders in children.
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Research Interests
My research interest is the effects of physical activity/exercise on different physiological variables, such as cardiorespiratory function (including hemodynamics), anthropometric measures, and quality of life in clinical populations. Specifically, I have worked with end-stage renal patients, diabetes patients, cardiovascular patients, and breast cancer survivors.

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Research Interests
My research interest is in the area of energy metabolism. In particular, I am interested in studying animal models that can help us understand obesity, diabetes, and food intake. I study mammals that hibernate because they undergo dramatic body mass cycles that are primarily based on fat storage and utilization. In addition, I work on hormone cell signaling in fat and muscle cells, because this is an important part of how nutrients are used.
Michelle T. Foster, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My long-term goal is to identify and understand how adipose tissue contributes to the development, progression, and perhaps resistance to metabolic disease. Previous research focused on the role of visceral adipose tissue and its relation to insulin resistance. More specifically, we investigated the contribution of visceral-derived free fatty acid delivery in metabolic dysregulation via alterations in adipocyte expansion and fatty acid retention in the visceral bed. These studies focused on visceral fat-liver interactions and utilized surgical interventions (transplantation or removal of adipose tissue) and molecular techniques. The next step in the development of this research objective is to examine how extrinsic communication and concomitant adipocyte function of the visceral adipose depot are altered following energy storage perturbations. Extrinsic factors, such as neural regulation and the lymphatic system, can influence adipocytes and thus contribute to the behavior of adipose tissue depots. We postulate that these extrinsic factors not only play an important role in central/visceral obesity-mediated metabolic impairments but also in establishing the intrinsic characteristics of adipocytes in central adipose tissue depots. This research will provide new insight into how visceral adipose tissue contributes to obesity-mediated dysregulation.

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Research Interests
My research interests include excitation-contraction coupling in cardiac muscle and the effects of pharmacological interventions on the electrophysiology of isolated atrial muscle and the movement of calcium within the tissue. However, I have not been involved in research for many years, instead focusing my efforts toward association management and science policy.
Brandi E. Franklin, Ph.D., M.B.A.

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Research Interests
The incidence of type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) has increased rapidly in youth subsequent to the rise of childhood obesity. Progress in this field has been hampered in three ways: (1) a small, unevenly dispersed pediatric endocrine workforce relative to its growing patient base; (2) the lack of U.S. Food and Drug Administration–approved pharmacotherapies for treatment; and (3) scant empirical evidence for pediatric lifestyle and disease management. Specifically, I am interested in understanding how current care delivery systems can be enhanced to support youth in managing their diabetes without the need for continuous intervention by pediatric endocrinologists; in finding new therapeutic options for youth with chronic conditions such as T2DM; and in reducing barriers that hinder engagement in healthy lifestyle practices and diabetes self-management, especially for racial/ethnic minority youth. These three areas form the core of my current research program and my future research plans.

Through doctoral and postgraduate training, I have mastered a cadre of advanced statistical and pharmaco-economic methods that I incorporate into my research, including cost-effectiveness analysis and decision modeling, comparative effectiveness, and categorical and longitudinal data analysis. For the next 3 to 5 years, I have planned research projects that will evaluate medication use and outcomes, factors influencing disease severity and decline, and novel systems that support disease self-management in youth with T2DM. Longer term, my primary research goal is to develop and disseminate targeted, theory-driven interventions to enhance lifestyle behaviors in youth with chronic conditions like T2DM.
Amanda Mae Fretts, Ph.D., M.P.H.

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Research Interests
I am most interested in observational and interventional research aimed at improving the cardio-metabolic health of American Indians. For the past 9 years, I have been actively involved with the Strong Heart Study, a longitudinal study of cardiovascular disease and its risk factors in 13 American Indian communities. To date, my research efforts have primarily focused on the association of physical activity, diet, a healthy lifestyle, or gene-diet interactions with diabetes-related phenotypes. I currently am working on a project to better understand the social determinants of physical activity, diet, and cardio-metabolic health among American Indians, and to develop a culturally appropriate and targeted pilot intervention to improve the cardio-metabolic health of American Indians.

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Research Interests
My research interests include diabetic cardiomyopathy and the effects of enzymatic protein glycosylation (O GlcNAc) in type 2 diabetic mouse hearts and their influence on cardiac function. Also, I conduct studies related to the expression of O-GlcNAcase (GCA), an enzyme that removes excessive O-GlcNAc modification and protection against cardiomyopathy. Furthermore, the abnormal calcium transients occurring in type 2 diabetic hearts are examined using transgenic animals.
Cheryl L. R. Gaddis, Dr.P.H., M.P.H., CHES

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Research Interests
My research interests include health promotion, determinants affecting the health of underserved populations (particularly children), and minority and rural health disparities. I have conducted and published works in community-based interventions and research on physical activity engagement among elementary school children and food access and security issues among underserved populations, as well as asthma disparities among children living in rural communities. My goal is to promote a healthy, more active lifestyle among children and to encourage them to engage in and maintain adequate levels of regular physical activity to prevent the onset of chronic illnesses such as asthma, obesity, diabetes, and heart disease later in life; issues which seem to be at the forefront of the public health battle. Ultimately, I strive to promote health care equity and eliminate health disparities among African Americans, particularly children.

Crystal A. Gadegbeku, M.D., FAHA, FACP, FASN

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Research Interests
My research interests include hypertension and vascular biology in kidney disease, chronic kidney disease, and health disparities in kidney disease.
Research Interests
Over the past 15 years, my research has focused on (1) exploring the traditional and nontraditional risk factors associated with the development of prediabetes, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease (CVD), and cognitive impairment; and (2) community diabetes education programs. My studies have focused on differences in metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance, and its correlates in African Americans and white Americans. I am currently investigating the role of high-density lipoprotein cholesterol (HDL-C) (quantity/function) and its associated proteins (Apo A1, ApoE, and paraoxonase enzyme [PON1]) in the development of these diseases. In this context, HDL circulates in blood in different particle sizes (small, medium, and large) with varying metabolic and vascular properties that differ among ethnic/racial populations. I am interested in developing culturally specific lifestyle intervention studies that examine the role of HDL and other nontraditional risk factors in the prevention and management of prediabetes, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and dementia. I believe understanding the role of HDL functionality and its subtypes on the vasculature (structure and function) could provide new insights into the mechanisms of the athero cardioprotective effects of HDL and the potential to develop novel and therapeutic armamentarium to improve HDL as a nontraditional approach to preventing CVD, type 2 diabetes, and dementia in African Americans. I also am interested in community-based diabetes self-management and support for African Americans. I have demonstrated that patient-centered models are effective in lowering A1C in inner-city African Americans who have never attended a formal diabetes self-management and education program.
Courtney E. Gamston, Pharm.D., Sc.M.

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Research Interests
My current research focuses on establishing, improving, and maintaining sustainable ambulatory care services in a pharmacist-led primary care clinic. Areas of focus include prediabetes, diabetes, obesity, dyslipidemia, and hypertension. My research is focused not only on the provision of medication therapy management but also on patient education services that improve self-care behaviors and overall health. Another facet of this work is improving the education of pharmacy and Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) students in the realm of patient education and disease state management in the ambulatory care setting. The goal of this research is twofold: (1) to establish models of ambulatory care practice for implementation in a variety of settings; and (2) to enhance the education and experience of pharmacy and DO students in order to prepare them to operate independently in an ambulatory care setting.

Senta K. Georgia, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My laboratory investigates how pancreatic beta cells differentiate during organogenesis, how they increase their cell numbers during normal growth and in response to metabolic stress, and how they can be regenerated as a cellular therapy for diabetic patients. I am specifically interested in how DNA methylation mediates tissue-specific gene expression patterns that define beta cell identity.
Nasra Giama, D.N.P., R.N., P.H.N.

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Research Interests
My primary research interests center around health promotion, research participation and inclusion, and determinants affecting the health of minority communities. Specifically, I am involved with research studies about hepatitis B and hepatitis C and liver disease among immigrant and refugee communities and identifying opportunities to intervene at the individual, community, and system level. I also am interested in adolescent health and examining the relationship between educational attainment and health.
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Research Interests
I am a board-certified endocrinologist, cross-trained in diabetes and cardiovascular disease epidemiology. My research interests center around (1) identifying endocrine risk factors associated with the development of diabetes and cardiovascular disease; (2) examining mental health complications of diabetes and the biological, hormonal, and behavioral factors that explain these associations; (3) examining the association of endogenous sex hormones with atherosclerosis and insulin resistance in post-menopausal women; (4) understanding and eliminating diabetes health disparities; and (5) implementing and evaluating systems interventions to improve patient safety and quality of care in hospitalized patients with diabetes.

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Research Interests
My research interests include (1) the pathophysiology of chronic kidney disease (specifically the biology of fibrosis-inducing signaling cascades in renal tubule cells and in the renal mesangium); (2) the evaluation and management of cardiovascular comorbidities in patients with chronic kidney disease; and (3) the pathophysiology of renal malignancies.
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Research Interests
My research focuses on identifying and addressing modifiable factors to improve the health of patients with chronic kidney disease and to narrow ethnic/racial disparities in clinical outcomes. I am specifically interested in improving the care that primary care providers deliver to patients with chronic kidney disease and improving awareness and knowledge of chronic kidney disease among ethnic/racial minorities.

Absalon D. Gutierrez, M.D.

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Research Interests
My clinical and translational research focuses on the effects of glucoincretin hormones and peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor gamma agonists on the development of cardiac and hepatic steatosis. I am also very interested in the effects of antioxidants on the progression of atherosclerosis in type 2 diabetic patients.
Arthur Gutierrez-Hartmann, M.D.

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Research Interests
The main focus of my laboratory is to determine the role of Ras/MAPK signaling and Ets transcription factors in epithelial cell development and tumorigenesis, with a focus on pituitary and mammary model systems.

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Research Interests
I am a geriatric nephrologist, and my studies involve the use of administrative data and qualitative methodology to develop preliminary data to inform the design of interventions that improve quality of care and quality of life in older adults with advanced kidney disease. I am particularly interested in the mechanisms of functional decline and how it informs dialysis decision making in older adults. Additional areas of interest include health disparities, nursing home management of end-stage renal disease patients, and fracture prediction and management in older adults with kidney disease.
B. Michelle Harris, Ph.D., M.P.H., R.D.

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Research Interests
Through a resident-led Health Committee initiative, I am engaged in collaborative relationship-building with the University of the District of Columbia, the District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA), and various health-related agencies across the District of Columbia to encourage the active participation of DCHA residents in conducting research and surveillance that will contribute to reducing health disparities, especially in the area of obesity-related diseases. I will continue to explore the metabolic syndrome and will examine various approaches to reducing its negative impact on the health of minority populations. I am working to expand research opportunities among undergraduate students in the areas of nutrition and related sciences. My past research includes a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Active Living Research-funded project titled, “The Availability of Healthy Foods, BMI, and Dietary Patterns in Urban Adolescents.” In this project, we examined the associations among adolescents’ perceived and objective availability of healthy foods, the physical environment, and body mass index. I also completed a study titled “The Relationship of Low Birth Weight and Current Obesity to Diabetes in African-American Women.”
Marquis Hawkins, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
The title of my doctoral dissertation was “The Relationship Between Physical Activity and Chronic Kidney Disease/Kidney Function.” Using data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey and the Strong Heart Study, I investigated whether physical activity can prevent the onset and/or slow the progression of chronic kidney disease (CKD). We showed that physical activity, specifically activities of light intensity, was independently associated with kidney function. We also showed that physical activity was associated with lower odds of rapid progression of kidney disease. Currently, I am part of a team that is conducting a pilot study investigating the impact of a lifestyle (diet, physical activity, and weight loss) intervention on cardiovascular risk factors in individuals with CKD. Given the complex dietary regimens of individuals with CKD, we hope to create an intervention that simplifies behavioral monitoring for this population. My future research goals are to investigate what factors mediate the relationship between physical activity and CKD progression.
Research Interests
My research interests encompass three investigational areas related to the effects of physical activity training on (1) metabolic syndrome (MetSyn) and insulin resistance; (2) cognitive function; and (3) cytokines and neurotrophic factors. I currently am evaluating the effects of exercise training with or without pharmacological treatment on selected metabolic markers (lipids, glucose, cytokines, and growth factors), obesity, lifestyle behavior, and cognitive function. I am constantly designing behavioral treatments for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases targeting adults with mild cognitive impairments, MetSyn, and disabilities such as chronic tetraplegia. My research interests include establishing phenotypes for inherited forms of neurodevelopmental and neurodegenerative disorders and identifying preclinical stages of Alzheimer’s disease by biobehavioral, genetic, and neuroimaging markers. I have been involved in several international academic programs and scientific meetings. In December 2006, my research was featured in the most popular Argentinean newspaper, La Nacion, after I delivered a keynote lecture at the Sixth Neuropsychological Argentinean Congress. My meta-analysis study is recognized as the Number One Top 25 SciVerse ScienceDirect: Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Hottest Article.
Alethea Hill, Ph.D., M.S.N., ANP-BC

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Research Interests
My research interests are prediabetic states and type 2 diabetes as a risk equivalent for cardiovascular disease. In addition, I am interested in the gender and racial/ethnic differences that exist when predicting the risk of type 2 diabetes and prediabetic states among African American women. I began my research career working with community and faith-based organizations focusing on diabetes self-management education and risk awareness projects. I plan to expand my research interest to investigate the associations between sleep duration/hygiene, dyslipidemia, and diabetes among African American populations.

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Research Interests
I completed my Dr.P.H. from The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UT Health), School of Public Health and postdoctoral experiences from UT Health, McGovern Medical School. I am the Assistant Research Director of the Department of Emergency Medicine at UT Health McGovern Medical School, the sixth largest medical school in the United States. I have published 21 papers in reputable journals, including nine first-authored, peer-reviewed publications in diverse areas with a common theme of addressing health disparities among disadvantaged minority populations, particularly young adult, African American women.
Jonathan Himmelfarb, M.D., FASN

Joseph W. Eschbach, M.D., Endowed Chair in Kidney Research
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Research Interests
My research interests involve metabolic complications of kidney disease, including chronic kidney disease, end-stage renal disease, and acute kidney injury. In particular, I have focused on understanding how the loss of kidney function contributes to increased oxidative stress, inflammation, insulin resistance and endothelial dysfunction; and ultimately, cardiovascular risk in kidney disease. I have also been involved in creating statewide, community-based research into health care disparities related to chronic kidney disease and evaluating novel approaches to renal replacement therapies.

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Research Interests
I focus on advancing the mission of the American Society of Nephrology (ASN) to lead the fight against kidney disease by educating health professionals, sharing new knowledge, advancing research, and advocating the highest quality care for patients. Through a collaboration with leading workforce investigators from George Washington University, ASN is conducting research on the nephrology workforce and an analysis of the current job market, including a survey of fellows and their perceptions of the job market and the specialty of nephrology.
Princess Imoukhuede, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
I aim to advance our cellular and molecular understanding of receptor regulation through systems biology. I have extensive training in bioengineering and biophysics; as such, my laboratory leads efforts to sense, model, predict, and ultimately tune angiogenesis by both mapping cellular heterogeneity and integrating these parameters through computational modeling. I have recently pioneered a novel quantitative fluorescence approach for sensitive cell isolation and mapping of angiogenic receptor surface distributions. I have applied this technology to both animal models of breast cancer and ischemic disease. I incorporate these molecular and cellular data into multi-scale computational models. Such models have recently predicted the efficacy of anti-angiogenic therapeutics and identified novel drug targets and treatment schemes. My advancement of this bimodal, experimental, and computational paradigm accelerates discovery into the signaling cues mediating vascular growth and development.
Claire Townsend Ing, Dr.P.H.

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Research Interests
My research interests focus on addressing health disparities in Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders using a social determinants of health framework using a community-based participatory approach. I am committed to working with communities to continue to develop partnerships, which will examine determinants of health at multiple levels, enable communities, researchers, and policy makers to effectively address them, and result in improved health for all residents of Hawai’i. My current research focuses on the dissemination and implementation of evidence-based, culturally relevant healthy lifestyle interventions (e.g., weight loss and diabetes self-management) across Hawai’i and the U.S.-Affiliated Pacific Basin Jurisdictions. Additionally, I am interested in identifying multilevel determinants of hypertension and cardiovascular disease disparities in Native Hawaiians and using a community-based participatory research approach to develop, test, and disseminate multilevel interventions to address these disparities.

Carlos M. Isales, M.D.

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Research Interests
Our laboratory is working to understand the impact of nutrients in stem cell division and regeneration and how this is impacted by the aging process. Our focus is translational for clinical applications for stem cell use.
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Research Interests
Focusing on the epidemiology, prevention, and control of obesity and type 2 diabetes, my past work highlighted the potential for health information technology to improve diabetes care, as well as racial/ethnic differences in overweight/obesity trends within levels of educational attainment, and obesity-related mortality. As a postdoctoral research fellow at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, I am investigating the role of suboptimal diet and lifestyle as modifiable contributors to the disproportionate obesity and diabetes risk experienced by traditionally under-resourced populations. By centering my research objectives on modifiable, social determinants of obesity and diabetes, I plan to contribute to the translation of epidemiologic findings into interventions and policies that address structural macro-level, as well as individual-level, barriers to achieving and maintaining a healthy weight.

Cynthia Ann Jackson, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My area of research interest is renal physiology, focusing on understanding how the heterogeneity segments of the kidney regulate various parameters involved in water and electrolyte balances. Presently, I have two major ongoing projects in my laboratory. My first project is identifying urinary protein markers associated with various pathophysiological diseases, specifically sodium-induced hypertension. My second and most recent project involves investigating signal transduction pathways and biomarkers involved in cell proliferation of renal carcinoma.
Cheedy Jaja, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.N., R.N.
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Research Interests
My long-term career goal is to make substantial contributions to sickle cell disease analgesic pharmacogenetics by developing a robust pharmacogenetic research program centered on the clinical translation of inherited genetic variants that would foster the development of algorithms for appropriate selection of analgesics for pain management in sickle cell disease patients. My current NIH/National Institute of Nursing Research-funded study investigates incidence of suboptimal prescribing of analgesics and association between suboptimal prescribing, deficient cytochrome P450 (CYP2D6, CYP2C9, and CYP2C19) metabolic enzymes, frequent acute care visits, and quality of life in adult sickle cell disease patients.

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Research Interests
My current research focuses on the effect of interleukin-1 receptor-associated kinase 3 (IRAKM) genetic deletion on lung adenoma and adenocarcinoma. My research also is focused on single-immunoglobulin interleukin-1 receptor-related (SIGIRR) signaling during lung adenocarcinoma and the role of transient receptor potential cation channel, subfamily V, member 4 (TRPV4) in lung adenocarcinoma EMT. I hope to utilize this research to protect and advance public health and to disseminate scientific knowledge to the public.
Stacy Jolly, M.D., M.A.S.

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Research Interests
My research interests are in chronic kidney disease epidemiology and outcomes, with a particular focus on American Indians and Alaska Natives. I also am interested in chronic kidney disease knowledge and awareness, development of educational interventions, and use of technology or systems changes to improve the care of people with chronic disease. I have an NIH K23 Career Development Award.

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Research Interests
My research interests include perceived stress, women's health, midlife women's issues, stress reduction, aging, symptom experience, and long-term health outcomes. My research uses mixed-methods to understand the unique stressors affecting midlife women and the effects of chronic stress on long-term health outcomes, symptom expression, and aging. I am interested in the clinical expression of stress as demonstrated by physiological and genomic biomarkers and symptom experience. Recent publications include “Bladder Symptoms in the Early Menopause Transition,” published in the Journal of Women's Health (2016) and “A Qualitative Understanding of Midlife Sources of Stress and Support in African American Women,” published in The Journal of the National Black Nurses Association (2016). I have recently concluded another descriptive study of the stress and stressors affecting midlife African American women in Cincinnati with plans for publication and continued research based upon the findings. My clinical experience, expertise, and interests include primary care, health promotion, community health, and vulnerable populations.
Research Interests

Despite its emergence more than 50 years ago, no vaccine is available for HIV. Numerous factors play a role in this lack of vaccine development: One is the infected host’s immune system does not elicit antibodies necessary to prevent HIV replication and/or clear the virus from the host’s body, a stark contrast to the flu virus, in which vaccines that were developed are effective and the host can clear the virus. Understanding the behavior of HIV and how the immune system responds is a critical step towards HIV vaccination. My role/research interest is characterizing pertinent immune cells in the context of infected humans, with the goal of deciphering where/how we can interrupt or stimulate key signals that ultimately leads to induction of key antibodies.

Research Interests

My research interests center around the identification and elimination of factors contributing to disparities in liver disease, liver transplantation, and hepatocellular carcinoma. My population of interest is comprised mainly of blacks and Hispanics, because the incidence of hepatocellular carcinoma is increasing in these populations for different reasons. My current work uses qualitative methods to assess perceptions of liver disease, hepatitis B, and hepatocellular carcinoma, as well as barriers to care among blacks with and without chronic hepatitis B.
Arion Kennedy, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research focuses on the impact of nutrients on immune cell function and ultimate impact on obesity and associated metabolic disorders. Nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH) has become a common disorder associated with obesity and diabetes. Currently, my research focuses on understanding the role of hepatic T lymphocytes in the development of NASH under obese and hyperlipidemic conditions.

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Research Interests
My principal interests are in chronic disease management, continuing medical education, quality improvement, and providing health care to underserved populations. My research activities include cardiovascular disease risk factors in chronic kidney disease (CKD) patients, health literacy assessment, the impact of modifying patient education programs on health outcomes, and the effect of modified clinical visits on health outcomes and access to health care. As health care payment models change, implementation of chronic care management teams will play an integral role. I am interested in studying the impact of patient-centered medical homes on care delivery and reduction of health disparities in CKD patients.
Research Interests
I direct the Division of Translational Neuroscience and Population Studies, and the Masters of Science in Clinical Research Program, and was appointed to the panel for the *Eighth Report of the Joint National Committee on Prevention, Detection, Evaluation, and Treatment of High Blood Pressure (JNC 8)*, and the work group for the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Clinical Guidelines for Cardiovascular Risk Reduction (Global Risk Assessment). I currently serve on the Evidence Rating Committee of the American College of Cardiology American Heart Association (AHA) Clinical Practice Guidelines (Hypertension) and chair the Oversight Committee for AHA Strategically Focused Research Network on Hypertension. Much of my research interest involves the population risk assessment of cardiovascular disease, stroke, and hypertension. I served as the Principal Investigator (PI) for the NIH-funded Black Pooling Project assessing the disparities in cardiovascular diseases and hypertension, and subcontract PI for “Impact of Nativity on Cardiometabolic Syndrome Factors” in the Reasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS) study. For more than two decades, I worked closely with the late Professor David Barker on the fetal and early life origins of high blood pressure and hypertension-related outcomes. I am the President of the World Hypertension League and Deputy Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Clinical Hypertension*. 
Joseph Larkin III, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
Our laboratory’s primary focus is directed toward better understanding the balance between the immune system’s ability to effectively eliminate pathogenic microorganisms and cancers, while remaining nonresponsive to self-tissues and commensal microorganisms. In general, the immune system is highly effective in limiting self-tissue damage; however, aberrant immune responses can result in the onset of the autoimmune diseases rheumatoid arthritis, type 1 diabetes, multiple sclerosis, and lupus. Recently, a subset of immune system cells, known as regulatory T cells, has been shown to be critical in moderating immune responses. We have recently shown that a cytokine inducible, intracellular protein, suppressor of cytokine signaling-1 (SOCS1), has a significant role in the regulation of Treg functions. As an extension of these findings, we are currently examining the role of SOCS1 in the regulation of immune cells, particularly Tregs, during lupus onset and progression (funded by the Lupus Research Institute). In separate research, partially supported by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Institute, we also are examining the capacity of gut bacteria composition to modulate immune system functions that promote type 1 diabetes onset.

Mark Andrew Lawson, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
We are investigating the molecular mechanisms of hormone action in the pituitary, with a special emphasis on factors controlling reproductive function. Current studies are focused on understanding the role of hormone action in regulating translation initiation and mRNA utilization. We also are interested in the mechanism of endocrine diseases affecting reproduction, such as polycystic ovary syndrome and type 2 diabetes. Our long-term interest is in understanding the integration of multiple hormone signaling pathways in the regulation of endocrine cell function.
Tennille S. Leak-Johnson, Ph.D., M.S.

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Research Interests
I aim to contribute to the understanding of the epigenetics and molecular epidemiology of diabetic nephropathy in high-risk populations. Previous research interrogated regions of the human genome for associations with type 2 diabetes and type 2 diabetes-associated end-stage renal disease in populations of African ancestry. My most notable findings, published in Annals of Human Genetics, include the identification of a novel locus, ELMO1 gene associated with type 2 diabetic nephropathy in two large African American case-control cohorts.

More recently, I embarked upon the next stage of my career by becoming the Associate Director of Systems Reforms at the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI). At MPHI, we house the Region 4 Midwest Genetics Collaborative funded by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the Health Resources and Services Administration, Genetic Services Branch, where we are tasked to strengthen and support the genetics and newborn screening capacity of the states, to improve the availability, accessibility, and quality of genetic services and resources for individuals having, or at risk for, genetic conditions and their families across the lifespan. Additionally, I have a passion for improving human health, addressing health disparities in minority populations, and promoting outreach and education efforts to improve health.

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Research Interests
My research interests focus on childhood obesity and the development of cardiovascular disease and diabetes in this population. I am interested in pre-diabetes and cardiac autonomic dysfunction in obese youth. I welcome the opportunity to network with seasoned minority researchers. I am interested in acquiring knowledge and expertise from senior researchers with similar research interests to become a successful biomedical researcher.
Shaye K. Lewis, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research interests include the molecular characterization of normal and abnormal male genitourinary tract development, including the prostate, in order to define the etiology of congenital defects and prostate disease progression. Genetic, environmental, and hormonal insults sustained in utero are associated with congenital and adult-onset diseases, even with apparently successful medical interventions. Genome-wide association studies can identify genetic variations to explain complex human diseases. I have identified chromosomal structural variations resulting in de novo copy number duplications and deletions in patients diagnosed with combined hypospadias and cryptorchidism. I hypothesize that these subtle chromosome aberrations affect dosage-sensitive genes in these regions that are critical for genitourinary tract development. Subjects with combined hypospadias and cryptorchidism displayed distinct regions affected by submicroscopic chromosome duplications or deletions not detected in normal pregnancy-proven fertile controls or in the Database of Genomic Variants (http://projects.tcag.ca/variation/). Novel, candidate genes identified by aCGH may be required for normal genitourinary tract and male external genitalia development and function. Identification of such genes will improve patient diagnosis and perhaps treatment. Long term, I hope to develop more sensitive assays that, when utilized from a systems biology approach, result in a better understanding of the roles and interrelatedness that genomic, environmental, and hormonal insults have on genitourinary tract development. Ultimately, these will improve prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of diseases associated with genitourinary tract development and prostate disease progression in humans.
Zeenat Lila, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research interest is to investigate the involvement of DNA in glycoxidation reactions having implications in diseases such as diabetes, mutation of DNA, synthesis of proteins such as insulin, and cancer. It is widely believed that DNA is involved in complications arising out of obesity, diabetes, and other age-related diseases. Initial experiments were designed to identify uniquely modified DNA nucleosides (CMdA and CMdC) from in vitro reactions, followed by experiments to detect the presence of the same in calf thymus and human serum DNA. Our work describing detection of carboxymethyl-2'-deoxyadenosine (CMdA) and carboxymethyl-2'-deoxycytidine (CMdC) was already reported. Our current research is to develop a method for quantification of modified DNA nucleosides using spectrophotometer, HPLC, and LC-MS/MS spectroscopy. These results will indicate the severity and age/obesity dependency of DNA modification in relation to diabetes and other age-related diseases. We hope that continued research in this area will lead to the discovery of a biomarker for diseases that result from complications in diabetes, such as blindness, renal failure, and coronary heart and Alzheimer’s diseases.

Mary Frances Lopez, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research is focused on studying the role of insulin-like growth factor action-II (IGF2) in obesity and cancer. Obesity often is associated with substantial complications, including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and death. I currently am performing gene expression studies to determine the mechanisms by which IGF2 regulates hepatic lipid metabolism. Since obesity is a significant risk factor for several types of cancers, I also am interested in determining the molecular basis of the connection between IGF2 and cancer.
Jesús M. López-Guisa, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
Our group focuses on primary immune deficiency disorders (PIDDs). There are more than 140 of these complex conditions. People with PIDDs are born with immune systems that are not working properly or that are missing needed parts. This makes them more open to serious infection and illness. Our laboratory offers the newest and most thorough testing to identify these disorders and their causes. This allows us to use what we learn to provide the most advanced care for people with PIDDs, developing a one-stop screening panel for all known immunodeficiency genes—including the 20 or so genetic defects that cause severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID) and a few hundred more that result in other immunological problems.
Alicia Mangram, M.D.

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Research Interests
Many complications of diabetes, particularly those requiring surgical procedures, may be avoided or reduced in young individuals if effective early detection and management protocols are implemented. With regards to type 2 diabetes mellitus, initially my primary research focus was to identify undiagnosed type 2 diabetes among young individuals in order to reduce long-term diabetes-related complications. Therefore, my research goals are to (1) develop a clinical paradigm/protocol specifically designed to identify diabetes and prediabetes, particularly in patients requiring surgical procedures; (2) develop a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach to diabetes care in order to address the plethora of medical and psychosocial needs of the young individual with diabetes and/or pre-diabetes; and (3) provide an opportunity for training minority physician residents with an interest in developing a clinical research career and to network with a critical mass of other minority research investigators. The research design and method is based on a current prospective observational cohort study of patients admitted to the Emergency Department with a general surgery or trauma admission. A1C is determined at the time of admission, and fasting plasma glucose measurements are taken after patients are stable the following morning. Anthropomorphic data, prior medical and surgical histories, body mass index, alcohol use, and smoking status are abstracted from medical records and then analyzed.

Vanessa Marshall, Ph.D., M.A.

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Research Interests
My research interests include health disparities, health services research, community-based participatory research, clinical trials, interventions, quality improvement, evaluation, and implementation science.
**Darius Mason, Pharm.D., BCPS**

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**Research Interests**

My research interests consist of describing and measuring the influence of chronic kidney disease management interventions on vitamin D and phosphorous metabolism. Specifically, my interest is focused on determining molecular mechanisms (i.e., cardiovascular and immunological) and pathways that are modified by these therapies.

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**Marjorie K. Leimomi M. Mau, M.D., M.S.**

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**Research Interests**

My research interests are diabetes health disparities, especially among Native Hawaiians, Pacific Island peoples, and other Native populations of the United States; as well as community-engaged research as an effective approach to conduct translational research in metabolic syndrome, obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.
Research Interests
My research has focused on workforce diversity and community-based behavioral modification projects aimed at decreasing health care disparities. This work has resulted in international and national presentations followed by peer-reviewed publications. For example, partnership with Greta Winbush, Ph.D., Professor of Psychology and Gerontology at Central State University, a Historically Black University located in Wilberforce, Ohio, and The Ohio State University Department of Family Medicine research faculty led to successful NIH funding of a 5-year project titled, “Closing the Health Disparity Gap: Impact of Health Empowerment Technologies on Elderly African American’s Health Provider Relationships.” Responding to health and digital inequities among older African Americans, a customized web-based mobile health information intervention was developed for this vulnerable group and their doctors as part of the Health Empowerment Technologies (HET) Project. The belief is an empowered patient-doctor relationship leads to better health outcomes than patient empowerment alone. Using health information technology to empower both older African Americans and their doctors by increasing health literacy and computer capacities of both was the major HET study aim. Initial findings were reported at several national conferences and it was recognized as the top translational research study during the April 2015 NIDDK Network of Minority Research Investigators conference in Bethesda, Maryland. The Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council was impressed with research findings and funding was obtained to tailor the HET intervention for women enrolled in the Triple Jeopardy Project: African American Women with Disabilities. The research is in progress.
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Research Interests
I have two main research interests. The first is to study E6/E7 proteins of the high-risk human papillomaviruses that are associated with more than 95 percent of anogenital cancers. E6/E7 oncoproteins are consistently expressed in cervical cancer, and continued expression of E6/E7 is necessary for the induction as well as the maintenance of the transformed state. The main thrust of our studies is to determine chromosome instability and DNA repair mechanisms that are associated with E6/E7 protein's influence on cancer. A second interest of the laboratory is to delineate the function of genetic factors involved in diabetes, obesity, and kidney tumors.

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Research Interests
Our research interest involves investigating the mechanism of action of imidazoline compounds in the treatment of insulin resistance, hypertension, and metabolic syndrome X.
Tesfaye Mersha, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My overall research interest and goal includes the use of population genomics and quantitative and statistical genetics methods to understand human genome variation; and utilizing this information to dissect complex diseases, particularly allergy disorders, through approaches and methods ranging from linkage, association, admixture mapping, and transcriptional profiling analysis. Complementary to statistical analysis, I also frequently apply biological pathways and functional commonalities analysis to uncover co-regulation of gene expression across the genome, data mining, and bioinformatics techniques for candidate gene prioritization procedures from linkage and expression studies. My long-term goals are to reduce childhood morbidity and mortality associated with metabolic and allergic disorders and to eliminate the significant racial disparities in asthma and asthma-related outcomes. To enhance my analytical skills for verifying statistical properties of biological problems as applied to admixed populations—such as ancestry inference, disease gene localization, evolutionary relationship, patterns of molecular diversities, and population structure in disease genetics—I will be actively involved in the Network of Minority Health Research Investigators program.
**Nia S. Mitchell, M.D., M.P.H.**

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*Research Interests*

My career goal is to identify, evaluate, and facilitate the adoption of effective weight loss programs in underserved populations, specifically low-income and minority populations, who have been disproportionately affected by the obesity epidemic. Weight loss programs fail underserved populations for at least three reasons: (1) they are too expensive; (2) they are not geographically available; and (3) they do not help participants with long-term weight loss maintenance. My research is focused on addressing these issues.

My current research involves Take Off Pounds Sensibly (TOPS), a low-cost weight loss program with a national infrastructure. I am using the RE-AIM (Reach, Effectiveness, Adoption, Implementation, and Maintenance) framework to evaluate TOPS using its national database. I also have successfully piloted the program among older African American women in the Denver metropolitan area in the Senior Wellness Initiative and TOPS Collaboration for Health (SWITCH) project.

**Jennifer Molokwu, M.D., M.P.H.**

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*Research Interests*

My overall research interest is in women's health and includes health education, health literacy, and chronic disease management. Currently, I am working on improving cervical cancer screening rates and HPV vaccination rates in Hispanic females. I also am working on a patient-centered medical home model for delivery of hepatitis C care, focusing on primary care physician education and community awareness of screening and treatment.
Darren D. Moore, Ph.D., LMFT

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Research Interests
My research, teaching, and clinical focus is the systemic examination and treatment of obesity, weight loss, eating disorders, and related addictions, with a special focus on men, African American families, and other marginalized populations. My research interest includes examining barriers to treatment, psychological and psychosocial aspects, and couple and family relational dynamics regarding obesity, weight loss, eating disorders, and related addictions. My dissertation, “Life after Bariatric Surgery: Men's Perspectives on Self-concept, Intimate Relationships, and Social Support,” explored the relational dynamics inherent when significant weight loss occurs in male-patient, female-spouse dyads. I am currently conducting a study titled “Health Disparities in Obesity and Bariatric Surgery Among African-American Men,” which is focused on exploring the perceptions of weight loss surgery among an African American male sample. My teaching includes training Master’s-level marriage and family therapy students and medical students in a family systems and collaborative approach to health care. Likewise, I focus on the history of obesity, the epistemology of obesity, obesity education, and intervention development. As a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, my clinical work includes providing general mental health treatment to individuals, couples, and families, with a concentration in working with patients who are struggling with mental health, psychosocial, and relational aspects of obesity, weight loss, and eating disorders, including such topics as anorexia, bulimia, binge eating disorder, body dysmorphic disorder, negative body image, pre- and post-bariatric surgery, depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder, among others.
**Stacey D. Moore-Olufemi, M.D.**

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**Research Interests**  
My research focus is directed at pediatric intestinal failure, with a focus on gastroschisis-related intestinal dysfunction. I currently am using animal models to help elucidate the pathophysiology of intestinal dysmotility and shortened intestinal length seen clinically and in our model of gastroschisis. We also are interested in amino acid metabolism in intestinal failure and adaptation.

**Evangeline Motley, Ph.D.**

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**Research Interests**  
The goal of my research is to delineate the signal transduction pathways that are involved in the development of such cardiovascular diseases as hypertension and atherosclerosis. I have studied various signaling pathways in my career, including alpha-1 receptor signaling in the vasculature and angiotensin II signaling. I currently am studying protease-activated receptor (PAR) signaling in endothelial cells and how it regulates endothelial nitric oxide synthase phosphorylation and nitric oxide production. In previous studies, my collaborators and I have shown that PAR-1 and PAR-2 differentially activate eNOS by different signaling pathways. We would like to further delineate the role of other PARs, such as PAR-3 and PAR-4, in the signaling pathways that lead to vascular inflammation, cell migration, and proliferation in cardiovascular diseases. Understanding the signaling pathways involved in these diseases will allow therapeutic agents to be developed at the molecular level.
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Research Interests
Currently, my research interest is twofold: (1) to engineer more potent oncolytic viruses (OVs) that selectively target liver cancer cells and strategies to improve the delivery and efficiency of OVs; and (2) to study the molecular mechanisms controlling the initiation and growth of liver cancer using whole exome sequencing, CRISPR Cas9-mediated genome editing and patient-derived xenografts cancer models.

Susanne Nicholas, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H.

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Research Interests
My research interest is primarily in the area of diabetic kidney disease. My basic science work involves investigating and assessing the pathophysiologic mechanisms and morphometric analyses of diabetic kidney disease, with the goal of finding novel biomarkers and therapeutic targets. My research projects involve (1) the delivery of a novel agent using vault nanocapsules for the treatment of diabetic kidney disease and other kidney diseases; (2) a genetic clinical study to identify susceptibility genes responsible for diabetic kidney disease and their linkage relationships in ethnic populations; and (3) the identification of biomarkers for the early diagnosis and management of patients at risk for the development and progression of diabetic kidney disease. Some of our studies include the use of animal models of human diabetic kidney disease and morphometric analysis by light and electron microscopy to accurately assess structural changes related to disease progression in the kidney.
Keith C. Norris, M.D., Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research interests include the prevention and early intervention of chronic kidney disease (CKD) and CKD risk factors/complications in African American and Latino populations. I also have interests in the role of vitamin D in CKD, hypertension, and cardiovascular risk factors; and the interplay of social determinants of health and biologic mediators in health disparities, especially CKD and CKD risk factors.

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Research Interests
My research focus is on diabetes mellitus, obesity, growth hormone, and vitamin D physiology. I am the Principal Investigator on a randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled trial of adjunctive metformin therapy on glycemic control in children and adolescents with double diabetes. I am a Review Editor at *Frontiers in Endocrinology* and sit on the Editorial Board of *PREP Endocrinology*, as well as several other scientific journals.
Diana N. Obanda, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research interests include the role of botanical compounds as complementary medicine for type 2 diabetes; specifically, the underlying cellular mechanisms by which natural compounds from botanical sources improve insulin sensitivity and reduce inflammation in type 2 diabetes and obesity. I am currently studying bioactives of Artemisia species and blueberries. I also study sphingolipid metabolism and its effect on insulin sensitivity in skeletal muscle and adipose tissue. I focus on how insulin resistance results from disruption of pathways of sphingolipid synthesis and metabolism.

Olorunseun O. Ogunwobi, M.D., Ph.D.

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Research Interests
The overall goal of my laboratory is to elucidate the mechanisms of metastasis in solid organ cancers. Ongoing studies include examination of the role of circulating tumor cell biology and epigenetics in the metastasis of solid organ cancers. Also, my laboratory is investigating the biological mechanisms underlying the racial disparities in specific solid organ cancers. The cancer models we are currently using in our studies are hepatocellular carcinoma, pancreatic cancer, colon cancer, and prostate cancer.
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Research Interests
My current line of work is a large study on adults with cerebral palsy who were evaluated as children, to study the epidemiology of epilepsy in these patients (especially after transition to adulthood, and the effects of aging on epilepsy). I also am studying the secondary health outcomes (cardiovascular, metabolic, and cognitive) of such a combination (cerebral palsy plus epilepsy) in this population.

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Research Interests
My research interests include type 2 diabetes mellitus, obesity metabolism, and race/ethnicity.
Abdul Oseini, M.D.

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Research Interests
The focus of my research is understanding the mechanisms involved in the infection, disease progression, and eventual malignant transformation of liver cells caused by hepatitis B viral integration. We are exploring the role that certain genes (mainly in the Wnt/B-catenin pathway) play, as well the host immune response, in this malignant transformation of infected liver cells.

Minnesota is home to a large African—and to a lesser extent, Asian—immigrant community, which is disproportionately affected by hepatitis B virus and hepatitis C virus infection and its disease burden. By working with these communities through education, screening, and improved access to medical care, we are helping to bridge the health disparity gap that separates these communities from the rest of the population in Minnesota.

Born in Western Africa (Ghana), I obtained my medical degree from Istanbul University (Cerrahpasa), before completing my residency in internal medicine at the Michigan State University/McLaren Program in 2007. After board certification, I went into basic research as a research fellow under an NIH/National Cancer Institute minority supplement at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. I currently perform clinical duties in hospital medicine within the Mayo Clinic Health System and at the same time continue my basic research at the main campus under my mentor, Dr. Lewis Roberts. Our laboratory is part of the NIH-sponsored Mayo Clinic–University of Minnesota Clinical Center Consortium of the Hepatitis B Research Network.
Orhan K. Öz, M.D., Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research interests include the regulation of bone mass and metabolism by gonadal steroids; the application of in vivo nuclear imaging to study the expression and function of specific molecules; and disease pathogenesis, including diabetes and neoplasms.

Eric Patterson, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
I am interested in vascular pathology associated with atherosclerosis and (re)stenosis of organs, such as the heart and the kidney. I would like to understand what role nutrition, specifically appropriate levels of vitamin D, plays in protecting major organs from the development of chronic diseases, such as atherosclerosis, and subsequent pathologies, such as restenosis. More specifically, I am interested in the effect of vitamin D on the immune cells, such as the monocyte/macrophage, and the role it plays in inflammation and resolution of injury in the vasculature. Long term, I am interested in the impact of poor diet and lack of physical activity in the development of such chronic diseases as atherosclerosis, hypertension, and renal failure.
Yvette C. Paulino, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My mission is to help communities achieve health equity, with a special interest in research workforce development in underserved populations. I am interested in the epidemiology of chronic disease (including oral cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity) risk in underserved populations. I focus on a variety of exposures, including areca (betel) nut chewing, alcohol, tobacco, diet, physical activity, sleep, and stress. I use the results of my studies to refine health messages and develop appropriate intervention strategies. My most recent intervention is the Betel Nut Intervention Trial funded by the National Cancer Institute. The trial will test a cessation program on helping betel nut chewers to quit chewing. My other program, recently funded by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, will help to establish the baseline of a generational epidemiologic cohort to study the burden of cardiometabolic diseases in Guam and Pohnpei. The program will be sustained through the institutionalization of the research into the curriculum of the public health programs at both the University of Guam and the College of Micronesia-FSM.

Eribeth K. Penaranda, M.D.

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Research Interests
I have a strong commitment to a cancer control career from the primary care standpoint. I am interested in investigating innovative strategies of cervical cancer screening, such as self-sampling for human papillomavirus (HPV), as well as strategies to increase HPV vaccination rates in the community. I also am interested in investigating strategies to treat and prevent obesity.
Michelle Penn-Marshall, Ph.D.

Chairperson, Associate Professor
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Research Interests
I am an experienced academician with a strong background in teaching, research, and community outreach. Through my research in childhood obesity, diabetes, and health promotion, I have worked with undergraduate science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) students to develop strategies to increase the number of minorities participating in research from communities, public school systems, and faith-based organizations. My primary research interests include the prevention of chronic disease through the study of obesity, nutrition education and exercise; the study of epigenetics and obesity; and the retention of students. I currently serve as the Principal Investigator (PI) for the Washington Baltimore Hampton Roads Alliance-Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation grant, to increase the number of underrepresented minorities who choose careers in STEM. In addition, I have served as the PI of pilot grants to study the effects of nutrition, exercise, and education with rural elementary school-age children and as the Co-PI of a National Library of Medicine Environmental Health Information Partnership Outreach Award. My students and I have disseminated health information to the lay community on health promotion and prevention programs regarding behavior and lifestyle changes affecting the school-age population experiencing health disparities.
Rocio I. Pereira, M.D.

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Research Interests
My research focuses on the prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes and obesity among Latinos. I am the Program Director for a community-based Diabetes Prevention Program for Latinos and conduct research on clinical program implementation. I am also interested in mechanisms for insulin resistance and adipose tissue dysfunction.

Ariana Pichardo-Lowden, M.D.

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Research Interests
My current research focuses on the implementation and evaluation of a systems-based intervention using electronic health records to address barriers to the management of diabetes and dysglycemia in the hospital setting. Dysglycemia is a common problem among hospitalized patients and it is associated with poor clinical and economic outcomes. Despite evidence of effective strategies for diabetes care in the hospital, various domains of its management remain suboptimal. This translational research work also incorporates qualitative research and a multisystem approach for quality improvement.
Manu Platt, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research bridges tissue remodeling and systems biology. Tissue remodeling involves the activation of proteases, enzymes capable of degrading the structural proteins of tissue and organs. The implications of the activation of these enzymes are applicable to many different diseases, and the Platt Laboratory targets sickle cell disease and cancer metastasis. Mathematical models used by the Platt Laboratory add value to experimental systems by explaining phenomena difficult to test at the wet laboratory bench and to make sense of complex interactions among the proteases or the intracellular signaling changes leading to their expression.

Tanjala S. Purnell, Ph.D., M.P.H.

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Research Interests
I am a health services researcher and social epidemiologist with primary interests related to promoting patient-centered care and addressing multi-level determinants of disparities in health care quality, shared treatment decision making, and disease self-management for patients with chronic kidney disease, diabetes, and hypertension.
F. Bridgett Rahim-Williams, Ph.D., M.P.H., M.A.

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Research Interests
As a biocultural applied medical anthropologist and a social and behavioral scientist, I investigate minority health and health disparities among individuals with chronic disease comorbidities. I have a specific interest in functional health status, symptom management, patient-centered health outcomes, and health-related quality of life among individuals with diabetes, HIV, gastrointestinal symptom disorders, and pain. I have research training as a Fellow of the Summer Institute on Aging Research, Fellow of the RAND Summer Institute on Aging Research, Fellow of the Health Equity Leadership Institute, and the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD) Health Disparities Summit. I am a Disparities Research and Education Advancing the Mission (DREAM) Fellow with the NIMHD. The DREAM is a (K22) Career Transition Award funded by the NIMHD. The award supports intramural and extramural career training and development in health disparities research.

Marina Ramirez-Alvarado, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
We are particularly interested in light chain amyloidosis, a misfolding disease characterized by the deposition of monoclonal immunoglobulin light chains as amyloid fibrils affecting several organs, causing dysfunction. Understanding the protein misfolding and aggregation mechanisms will help us to understand these diseases and will guide us in designing therapeutic strategies to overcome the amyloid phenomenon. By exploring the role of folding kinetics, misfolding pathways, and stability, it is possible to understand the mechanisms of amyloid formation in light chain amyloidosis, leading to the prediction of the behavior of other amyloid diseases, with the ultimate goal of intervening to prevent progression of the disease.
Victor E. Reyes, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research interests are in the area of gastrointestinal inflammation. Two major themes of my work are understanding the pathogenesis and immune evasion mechanisms used by Helicobacter pylori, and characterizing the regulatory mechanisms of the intestinal lamina propria stroma in the immunopathogenesis of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). For our efforts related to H. pylori, we have used human ex vivo systems and animal models to decipher mechanisms that are used by the bacterium to negatively affect protective T cell responses in order to establish chronic infection. For our work on IBD, we have used primary isolates of intestinal myofibroblasts, from individuals with IBD and controls, in coculture with naïve T cells to examine their influence on T cell phenotype and function as they correlate with the type of T cell responses in the IBD mucosa. To validate studies in the whole individual, we have used conditional mutant mice in which we can selectively ablate the expression of T cell co-stimulatory and co-inhibitory molecules on intestinal myofibroblasts.
Donato Rivas, Ph.D.
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Research Interests
The loss of skeletal muscle mass is observed in many pathophysiological conditions, including aging and obesity. The loss of muscle mass and function with aging has been defined as sarcopenia and is characterized by a mismatch between skeletal muscle protein synthesis and breakdown. The concurrence of obesity and sarcopenia, termed sarcopenic obesity (SO), increases the risk of metabolic impairments and physical disability more than either sarcopenia or obesity alone. Sarcopenia and obesity magnify one another as the loss of muscle reduces the mass of available insulin-responsive tissue, promoting insulin resistance, which, in turn, promotes the metabolic syndrome and obesity.

The plasticity and adaptability of skeletal muscle to contraction (i.e., exercise) is a fundamental physiological event leading to larger and more robust skeletal muscle. However, muscle growth in response to exercise, like other anabolic stimuli, is attenuated in older adults. The impaired ability of aged skeletal muscle to adapt to exercise may be a factor that contributes to SO. My laboratory is focused on the role of attenuated exercise/contraction on anabolic/insulin resistance in aged humans with a particular focus on post-exercise adaptation in skeletal muscle. The overarching hypothesis is that exercise training may reverse “anabolic/insulin resistance,” thus preventing the skeletal muscle atrophy that has been observed with advancing age and obesity.
Fatima Rivas, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research group discovers and uses natural products as chemical probes to identify, validate, and potentially treat biological targets in metabolic syndrome and chemo-resistant cancers. Our natural product screening campaigns generate lead matter and useful information against therapeutically relevant, yet challenging, biological targets. Our fundamental goals are the following: (1) identify unique natural products; (2) establish synthetic protocols for those molecules; (3) evaluate their structure activity relationship; and (4) identify their biological targets. Our natural and synthetic molecules are designed to provide basic mechanistic information regarding their mode of action, and eventually progress from hit to lead. For the past 4 years, we have worked on developing modular synthesis to the acoranes, which target the enzyme 11ß hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase type 1. We are using these compounds to better understand adipogenesis.

Lewis R. Roberts, Ph.D., M.B., Ch.B.

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Research Interests
Research in my group includes (1) laboratory studies of the molecular mechanisms of liver carcinogenesis; (2) development and evaluation of biomarkers and clinical tests to improve the diagnosis and treatment of liver, bile duct, and pancreatic cancers; and (3) epidemiologic, clinical, and translational studies focused on improving the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of hepatitis and liver cancer in sub-Saharan Africa and in minority and immigrant African and Asian communities in the United States.
Beatriz Rodriguez, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H.

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Research Interests
I am a physician-epidemiologist who has devoted my career to diabetes and cardiovascular disease epidemiology. After completing my training in public health and epidemiology at the University of Texas, I moved to Honolulu, where I have served as Co-Principal Investigator of the Honolulu Heart Program since 1991. I was Principal Investigator of the Intermap Study Center, the SEARCH for Diabetes in Youth Hawai‘i Center, an Established Investigator Grant from the American Heart Association (AHA), and several other projects. I am Co-Director of the National Children's Study of the Hawai‘i Center and have served as Co-Investigator of the Women's Health Initiative. I was President of the AHA Hawai‘i Affiliate and served on the National Board of Directors of the AHA. I am currently on sabbatical, working in Madrid, Spain.
Mayra Rodriguez, M.D.

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Research Interests
I am currently completing my fellowship in nephrology at Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York City, while also earning my Masters in Public Health. My research interests include investigating the social determinants of health in our underserved populations. Hispanics, in particular, have a very high prevalence of diabetes and kidney disease. It is debatable whether this is due to genetics, environment (meaning habits/lifestyle), or poor education and limited access to health care. My goal is to remain in academic medicine and develop as a specialist and clinical researcher with a focus on health care disparities and chronic kidney disease. I would like to study the Hispanic population, in particular, and help elucidate the predominant driving force behind the increasing morbidity in this population. Understanding the roles played by nature versus nurture in this rapidly growing population has implications for the development of ethnically driven guidelines, public health initiatives, and controlling and properly allocating health care spending.

Rudolph A. Rodriguez, M.D., FACP

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Research Interests
My research interests include the interaction of HIV and kidney disease, and the interaction of race, kidney disease outcomes, and geography. I hope to better characterize the renal health services provided in racially segregated areas. Despite similar insurance coverage, dialysis patients living in racially segregated areas seem to have different rates of transplantation, and the health services provided seem to differ in comparison to nonracially segregated areas.
José R. Romero, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My main interest is in cation transport dysregulation in cardiovascular diseases, including hypertension, sickle cell and diabetes. These studies have focused our research on two problems relevant to patients with diabetes and hypertension: (1) the role of cellular magnesium in the pathophysiology of cardiovascular disease; and (2) the role of aldosterone and mineralocorticoid receptor activation in vascular inflammation. My group has led the discovery of a novel mechanism for the rapid/non-genomic effects of aldosterone in vascular tissue using both in vivo and in vitro approaches. These studies show a prominent role for striatin, a caveolin-1 binding protein, in aldosterone-mediated oxidant stress and inflammation and formed the basis for our most recent NIH R01 grant award, “Aldosterone, Intracellular Leukocyte Magnesium and Inflammation in Diabetes.” This was an ancillary clinical trial that used a translational research approach to characterize the role of mineralocorticoid receptor activation in vascular inflammatory processes in patients with type 2 diabetes. A significant part of my professional activities is also devoted to mentoring junior faculty, fellows, and students at local, national, and international levels. I am a consultant for medical research and training institutes in Puerto Rico, Portugal, and Mexico. For my teaching and mentoring contributions, I was honored to receive the A. Clifford Barger Excellence in Mentoring Award at Harvard Medical School (HMS). I also direct a translational research summer program for medical students and recent medical graduates interested in minority health research and was humbled to receive the Harold Amos Faculty Diversity Award at HMS. These recognitions among the 11,000 HMS faculty members led to my appointment as a Scholar of The Academy at HMS, an institution established to advance excellence in education of physicians and scientists throughout Harvard, and my most recent recognition as a member of The Council of Mentors at Harvard, a group of distinguished faculty noted for their accomplishments and excellence in mentoring.
**Sylvia E. Rosas, M.D., M.S.**

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**Research Interests**

My primary research focus is on cardiovascular disease in patients with chronic kidney disease, including dialysis and renal transplantation. I am an ancillary study investigator for the Chronic Renal Insufficiency Cohort Study and the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis. In addition to cardiovascular epidemiology, I am interested in diabetic nephropathy. I am an investigator in the PERL study, which is a randomized trial of the effects of allopurinol on progression of diabetic nephropathy. My research has been funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, the NIDDK, and the Veteran's Administration.

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**Juan Sanabria, M.D., M.Sc., FRCSC, FACS, FAASLD**

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Vice-Chair and Scientific Director  
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**Research Interests**

My research interest revolves at the levels of basic, translational, and clinical research. We are exploring the chemical-induced pathways of liver regeneration through the inhibition of the PG cascade and its effects in wound healing. Our more recent results were published this year in Science. The translational aspect involves the metabolomic prints (metabolomics) and the glutathione species behavior as biomarkers in patients with and without cirrhosis with tumors for the early detection of liver cancer. We have to open randomized trials for the evaluation of stereotactic body radio surgery in the treatment of advanced liver tumors. Lastly, we have been involved in the study of high-output outcomes at the global level in an attempt to explain the changes in health issues. Our group’s work has been published this year in *The Lancet* and in *JAMA Oncology*. 
Virginia Sarapura, M.D.

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Research Interests
My research interests focus on autoimmune thyroid disease. During my training, I investigated the mechanism of expression of the alpha-subunit of thyroid stimulating hormone and the regulation of thyrotrope function and thyroid hormone receptor expression by thyroid hormone, and I also explored expression of the glycoprotein hormone alpha-subunit gene in solid tumors, specifically lung cancer. With my basic training in molecular biology research, I became interested in the genetic and epigenetic factors that predispose to autoimmune thyroid disease, which comprise a large part of my clinical practice as an academic endocrinologist. More recently, I have also established collaborations to study the immunological processes leading to the development of autoimmune thyroid disease.
Carmen Castaneda Sceppa, M.D., Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research program addresses three main areas of aging and health promotion: (1) to assess the efficacy of nutrition and physical activity/exercise interventions on chronic disease risk factors and health outcomes; (2) to translate evidence-based lifestyle interventions into “real world” settings; and (3) to develop sustainable strategies to promote health and reduce the burden of chronic diseases. My translational research contributes to our understanding of the molecular and physiological declines that may increase vulnerability in older adults and the role of strength training and physical activity in disentangling components of the disablement process (from acquisition of risk factors and pathology, impairment and functional limitations, to disease, disability and poor quality of life). Additionally, my research findings provide examples of multidisciplinary approaches used to implement and disseminate effective exercise and physical activity promotion interventions to underserved communities and populations.

I am an active member of the American Society for Nutrition, the Gerontological Society of America, the American Diabetes Association, and the American College of Sports Medicine.

Isabel R. Schlaepfer, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My long-term goal is to use my molecular and lipid metabolism training and apply it to investigate how prostate cancer cells use lipids for growth and survival. My current project focuses on the role of the CPT1A enzyme in prostate cancer growth. CPT1A functions as a gatekeeper, mediating the entry of lipid into the mitochondria for oxidation and growth. I am using clinically safe drugs from the cardiovascular/obesity field to target lipid oxidation and elucidate metabolic weaknesses that can be exploited in the clinic for more effective imaging and therapeutic combinations.
Veronica A. Segarra, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology at High Point University (HPU) in High Point, North Carolina. I completed my Ph.D. in Biophysics and Biochemistry at Yale University and my B.S. in Biochemistry at the University of Miami. My contributions to science have come in the form of research breakthroughs in the study of several yeast proteins that coordinate vesicular trafficking pathways, including clathrin, auxilin, and Atg27. I use budding yeast to investigate the cellular compartments and proteins responsible for trafficking specific lipid membranes and membrane-associated proteins within the cell, particularly in response to conditions of stress. My laboratory is particularly interested in the identification and trafficking of cargo molecules and adaptors involved in the cellular process known as autophagy, a cellular self-eating process that helps cells cope with starvation and cellular damage. This involves the biochemical and genetic manipulation of budding yeast and observation of fluorescent cargo proteins trafficking throughout the cell. My laboratory is located at HPU—a primarily undergraduate institution in High Point, North Carolina. My laboratory is not only the home base for my research program, but a place where undergraduate students receive one-on-one mentoring as they strive to develop their identity in science and research. At HPU, I primarily teach general education courses and upper-level cell biology courses with rigorous laboratory components. My research interests also include science pedagogy innovation and best practices. I am currently Co-Chair of the Minorities Affairs Committee of the American Society for Cell Biology.
Patricia Silveyra, Ph.D.
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Research Interests
My research focuses on the molecular mechanisms involved in the development and resolution of pediatric and adult inflammatory lung disease. My laboratory uses a combination of molecular biology, immunology, and endocrinology approaches to study sex differences and hormonal regulation of miRNA and gene expression in lung cells in response to oxidative stress triggered by ozone and hyperoxia.

Omar Sims, Ph.D.
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Research Interests
My program of research is focused on public health management and clinical management of liver disease caused by hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection in mono-infected and HCV/HIV co-infected patients. HCV is the leading cause of cirrhosis, hepatocellular carcinoma, and liver transplantation in the United States and in most of the western world. Likewise, liver disease caused by HCV is the leading non-AIDS cause of death among those with HIV infection.

The goal of my research in this arena is to publish clinical and translational research to help health professionals improve health outcomes and extend the lives of those burdened with chronic HCV-associated liver disease. I aim to accomplish this goal by focusing my research efforts on populations heavily burdened with HCV, but often under-researched or under-represented in liver research: HCV-infected persons with co-existing alcohol, substance use, and psychiatric disorders; HCV/HIV co-infected persons; and African Americans and other minorities living with HCV.
Ka-Chun (Joseph) Siu, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My primary research area is in both motor control and biomechanics, focusing on elderly populations and minorities. It includes fall prevention in aging, rehabilitation, and intervention. I am interested in studying the mechanism of human balance control and locomotion and have developed a training program for community-dwelling older adults. I am currently extending this research to minority populations. My second research area focuses on motor learning in human performance. It includes skill acquisition, medical education, simulation technology, and telemedicine.

Latasha Smith, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research examines disparities in physical and mental health and service use among populations of color. I am the Principal Investigator of the REACH Detroit Family Intervention, an NIDDK-funded, community-based, participatory research project, which aims at reducing disparities in type 2 diabetes through the use of community health workers among African American and Latino residents in Detroit. Currently, I am developing new community-based, participatory research projects among Native Hawaiians and am particularly interested in the integration of community health workers into primary care settings among Native Hawaiian patients with type 2 diabetes.

Jevetta Stanford, Ed.D.
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Research Interests
My research interest focuses on racial differences in the clinical progression of low-risk prostate cancer, especially the role of diet in slowing clinical progression of prostate cancer while using active surveillance to manage the disease. My long-term research goal is to understand the role specific nutrients have in preventing the clinical progression of prostate cancer in black men. An emerging area of interest is to explore the role of diet in preventing the clinical progression of other low-risk cancers.
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Research Interests
My research interests include the pathophysiology of cognitive impairment in hepatic encephalopathy and sleep disorders associated with cirrhosis.

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Research Interests
My laboratory uses a multilevel approach to resolve the role of glucocorticoid hormones in hippocampal synaptic deficits in leptin receptor-deficient mice, a rodent model of insulin-resistant diabetes. We also study rats with diet-induced insulin resistance, which more closely resemble the etiology of diabetes in humans. These models are being characterized with regard to glucocorticoid-mediated changes in plasticity in the hippocampus, with the eventual goal of targeting the hippocampal corticosteroid signaling cascade to attenuate cognitive impairment in individuals with insulin-resistant diabetes.
April J. Stull, Ph.D., R.D.

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Research Interests
My research interests are in nutrition, botanicals, and diabetes prevention. Most of my research has focused on botanicals and their impact on improving metabolic syndrome risk factors. Specifically, we have found that consuming bioactives in blueberries for 6 weeks improved insulin sensitivity (Journal of Nutrition, 2010) and endothelial function (Nutrients, 2015) in an obese population with prediabetes and hypertension. In addition, I am interested in studying the effects of other botanicals, especially anthocyanin-rich foods, on improving metabolic syndrome risk factors.

Jorge Suarez, M.D., Ph.D.

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Research Interests
I am investigating novel approaches to treat and cure heart failure. Among those approaches is cutting-edge, vector-based gene therapy. I discovered that a new protein called Sorcin is able to alleviate cardiac failure of mice with diabetic cardiomyopathy. In addition, I was able to rescue cardiac failure by over-expressing SER-CA2a in an inducible way in the heart of pressure-overloaded and diabetic mice, using a novel line of transgenic animals that I designed and engineered. More recently, my focus of research is the study of excessive enzymatic glycosylation of proteins in the diabetic heart. My interest is concentrated in the mitochondria of cardiac myocytes and the effects of excessive glycosylation of mitochondrial proteins and the mechanisms that lead to energetic inefficiency in the diabetic heart.
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Research Interests
I am an epidemiologist and biostatistician with expertise in health disparities of complex, chronic diseases. Ongoing research involves examination of fundamental assumptions regarding kidney disease, diabetes, and cerebrovascular disease measurement and etiology in American Indians, and associations with socioeconomic exposures and cognitive and quality of life outcomes. I was Lead Epidemiologist for the Strong Heart Stroke Study, an ancillary examination of MRI, cognitive, and clinical measures at the 20th and 25th years of the Strong Heart Study, a population-based cohort of 13 tribes across 3 regions of the United States. Current projects include description of vascular brain disease and cerebral atrophy in American Indians; examination of environmental metals and telomere shortening in relation to vascular brain injury and central brain atrophy; kidney function losses over time in relation to cognitive and quality of life changes; and measurement of Alzheimer’s Disease (AD) and AD-like dementia.

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Research Interests
The goals of my research are to understand how interactions between lymphatic endothelial cells (LECs) and canonical immune cells shape immune responses to infections, cancer, and chronic inflammation. The following three areas of interest aim to expand the field of stromal cells in immunity by understanding the function of the lymphatic endothelium across tissues and systems. First, my discovery that lymphatic endothelial cells in the lymph node have the capacity to hold onto antigens for long periods of time to educate memory T cells led me to become interested in how the lymphatic endothelium interacts with immune cells. My data suggest that antigens disappear from the lymph node on the order of 4 weeks post-immunization or -infection. Antigen-specific T cells continue to divide 6–8 weeks post-immunization or -infection in response to archived antigen. Thus, one of the remaining questions is how lymphatic vessels interact with immune cells outside of the lymph node in the tissue. As lymphatic vessels are also made up of LECs, it seems likely that there may be storage of antigen within the vessels in addition to antigen retention on lymph node LECs.

In addition to understanding the role of antigen retention by the LECs, we aim to understand the role the lymphatic vessels have in interacting with the immune system during breast cancer. Studies to evaluate the role of lymph node LECs within a tumor-draining lymph node as well as tissue lymphatics are currently underway in a collaboration with Traci Lyons, Ph.D., in the context of breast cancer and mammary gland involution. Our prediction is that increased lymphangiogenesis in Sem7a-expressing tumors affects not only tumor lymphatics, but also lymph node lymphatics.

Lastly, preliminary data—in collaboration with Matthew Burchill, Ph.D., and Hugo Rosen, M.D.—suggest there is a correlation between liver disease progression, lymphangiogenesis, and tertiary lymphoid structures. There is a significant gap in our understanding of both liver disease progression and the effect lymphangiogenesis has during liver disease. We found that there is an increase in the number of CD45+ lymphoid clusters from patients with liver disease and that these clusters are associated with increased disease severity as measured by increased fibrosis and clinical designation of liver function. Furthermore, these lymphoid clusters are highly associated with lymphatic vessels, and it seems likely that lymphatic vessels associated with tertiary lymphoid clusters are recruiting immune cells. Concurrently, it seems likely that the normal lymphatic vessels associated with the portal triad, which are important for lymphatic flow away from the tissue, may be damaged due to chronic inflammation caused by increased fat, cholesterol, or chronic infection.

Taken together, my work strives to answer questions regarding the role of the previously underappreciated lymphatic stroma in immune function. I expect the bridge between the lymphatic stroma and the immune system to be of utmost importance to future vaccine development, understanding of infection, cancer immunotherapies, and chronic diseases.
Jacqueline C. Tanaka, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research is focused on delineating the structure-function relationships of photoreceptor cyclic nucleotide-gated (CNG) channels. Mutations in the cone genes CNGA3 and CNGB3 are associated with achromatopsia in humans and daylight-blindness in dogs. I work with ophthalmic veterinarians to investigate the molecular pathophysiology of inherited mutations in dogs, and our work leads to insights about the structure, folding, subunit assembly, and function of these channels. As Director of a MARC U-STAR training program, I am engaged in mentoring undergraduate students from underrepresented backgrounds for competitive Ph.D. programs in biomedical and behavioral science. I work with colleagues at Cuttington University in Liberia to help build their science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education training, their faculty, and providing used laboratory equipment. In my role in the Professional Science Masters program, I teach a course on the ethics of biotechnology, encouraging students to analyze life cycle impacts of drugs and chemicals, considering long-term epigenetic and transgenerational effects of endocrine-disrupting hormones in particular.
Heather Tarleton, Ph.D., M.S., M.P.A.P.

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Research Interests
My research focuses on cancer epidemiology and cancer survivorship. Within cancer epidemiology, my interests are in gene-environment interactions that contribute to the development of gastrointestinal and gynecologic cancers. Within cancer survivorship, my research interests are in prevalent comorbidity among cancer survivors and behavioral interventions for chronic disease management. Currently, I am conducting a study titled, “IMPAACT: Improving Physical Activity After Cancer Treatment.” The IMPAACT study is a collaborative effort with my colleagues in the Department of Health and Human Sciences and is also a research training opportunity for upperclassmen preparing to enter the Allied Health professions. The study connects epidemiology, exercise physiology, nutrition, and rehabilitation science and recruits participants from the racially and ethnically diverse cities within Los Angeles County. The study was designed to examine the effects of a combined aerobic exercise and resistance training program on the body composition of cancer survivors and on reducing the risk of diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and osteoporosis among cancer survivors. The study also aims to improve cancer survivors’ overall capacity to engage in physical activity by addressing fatigue, balance, muscle health, cardiorespiratory fitness, neuropathy, and psychosocial barriers to motivation. In addition to my focus on cancer epidemiology and cancer survivorship research, I also am heavily invested in drawing undergraduates from underrepresented backgrounds and underserved communities into science, technology, engineering, and mathematics research. I am a faculty mentor for the McNair Scholars Program at Loyola Marymount University and a Councilor for the Health Sciences Division of the Council on Undergraduate Research.
Bolaji Thomas, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
Research in my laboratory is focused on three key areas: genetic deconvolution and population structure of sickle cell disease (including functionality of complement regulatory genes in sickle cell pathophysiology); metagenomics and expression profiling of *Leishmania mexicana* persistent parasitemia and chronic disease; and elucidation of the invasion mechanism driving *Plasmodium vivax* infection in Duffy-negative individuals. In addition, I am a faculty mentor for both the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology Maximizing Access to Research Careers (FASEB-MARC) Program and McNair Scholars Program at Rochester Institute of Technology. I also am a Board Member for the Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation, leading the effort to recruit and train minority undergraduate students in biomedical sciences.
Carolyn M. Tucker, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
I use an academic-community partnership research approach and a community-based participatory research model. My research focuses on (1) culturally sensitive health promotion and health care to prevent and reduce obesity, hypertension, type 2 diabetes, and colorectal cancer; (2) the integration of health promotion into medicine; and (3) community health empowerment to reduce health disparities that affect racial/ethnic minority and economically disadvantaged communities. My current research studies involve (1) developing and testing interventions to prevent and reduce obesity in at-risk communities; and (2) empirically examining the links between patient-centered, culturally sensitive health care and health outcomes among racial/ethnic minorities and the medically underserved. My health self-empowerment theory and Patient-Centered, Culturally Sensitive Health Care Model are widely used. I have more than 116 published refereed articles and one published book, and have received more than $11 million in research grants.

I am proudest of the fact that under my mentorship, 54 doctoral students have received their Ph.D. degrees, and 50 graduate students have received their Master’s degrees. Among my students, more than 40 percent are racial/ethnic minorities.
**Crystal C. Tyson, M.D.**

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*Research Interests*

My research interests include non-pharmacologic strategies involving diet modification and weight management to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease for adults with chronic kidney disease, hypertension, and resistant hypertension, with a focus on minority health. My long-term career goal as a clinical investigator is to reduce racial disparities for patients with chronic kidney disease and hypertension.
Ebele Umeukeje M.D., M.P.H.

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Research Interests
I am passionate about improving health outcomes in vulnerable patients with kidney disease. My research is aimed towards understanding the influence of key novel psychosocial factors on medication adherence in patients with kidney disease and will inform evidence-based, patient-centered innovative approaches to improve medication adherence and health outcomes in this patient population. I also have a special interest in health disparities in this patient population, especially those that are mediated by race.

I have specifically assessed the impact of psychological factors mediated by self-determination theory, such as autonomous motivation and perception of providers’ autonomy support, on phosphate binder medication adherence and serum phosphorus control in dialysis patients and discovered that these factors are strongly linked with phosphate binder medication adherence and that phosphate binder adherence also has a strong association with serum phosphorus control. Furthermore, I have found interesting differences by race, which could be useful targets for future intervention.

Building directly upon these discoveries of potential pathways I have tested the feasibility of motivational interviewing to improve these key psychological factors, medication adherence and bone mineral health in patients with end-stage renal disease through an NIH-funded randomized controlled trial. Through community partnerships, I have also conducted formative research to understand barriers to chronic kidney disease screening in non-whites, especially those who are at risk for chronic kidney disease.
Lisa VanHoose, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research interest focuses on genetic and environmental factors causing lymphatic dysfunction that contributes to cardiovascular and lymphatic vascular diseases. I am particularly interested in structural and molecular changes in the cardiac lymphatic system related to diabetes. We have discovered interesting, novel findings regarding PROX-1, a lymphangiogenic transcription factor, under the backdrop of diabetes in Zucker diabetic fatty rats. I am preparing a grant application to continue exploring changes in lymphangiogenesis in another animal model of type 2 diabetes. I am currently investigating obesity-related secondary lymphedema in humans, and 100 percent of the subjects have a co-morbidity of type 2 diabetes. I have requested internal funds to evaluate gene expression in these subjects compared to age-matched healthy controls.

Roberto Vargas, M.D., M.P.H.

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Research Interests
My research interests include the design and testing of interventions to improve quality of care and to reduce health disparities. This includes efforts to reduce disparities in cancer outcomes, improve detection and treatment of kidney disease, and improve management of chronic disease. In addition to conducting policy analyses and health services research, I am also engaged in community-partnered research projects to reduce disparities in cancer care and to address negative social determinants of health.
Janelle D. Vaughns, M.D.
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Research Interests
I am interested in health disparities within the obese pediatric and adolescent surgical community. Specifically, as a pediatric anesthesiologist, I am studying the role of pharmacogenetics in fatty liver through Pk/Pd modeling. I want to explore the possible genetic variations in the cytochrome P450 systems and anesthetic drug metabolism within ethnic populations diagnosed with nonalcoholic steatohepatitis. Currently, I am funded through the Pediatric Trials Network/Duke University to undertake pharmacokinetic studies to support the relabeling of intravenous midazolam for use in obese children.
Francisco Villarreal, M.D., Ph.D.

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Research Interests
Diabetes mellitus is the fastest-growing pathology in the United States. In the last 2 years, 3 million more Americans have been diagnosed with the disease. Under the umbrella of an NIH-sponsored program project (National Center on Minority Health and Health Disparities-sponsored EXPORT grant, Dr. Sandra Daley, PI), we have undertaken a research effort jointly with Dr. Wolfgang Dillmann, Chief of Endocrinology at the University of California, San Diego, to examine the in vivo and in vitro effects that diabetes has on cardiac diastolic function. Efforts focus on alterations that arise in both cardiac myocytes and fibroblasts. Animal models of type 2 diabetes are used, including transgenic animal models. Our laboratory also has undertaken a project related to the characterization of the cardioprotective actions of cocoa flavanols on animal models of ischemia reperfusion injury, currently sponsored by a National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health R21. Cocoa flavanols are known to have beneficial effects in humans within a large dose range and with no toxic effects. Our intention is to demonstrate that the cocoa flavanol epicatechin can exert cardioprotective actions. For this purpose, we are currently pursuing studies in vitro and in vivo. Our expectation is to take our concept to initial clinical trials within a short time frame.

Phyllis Wallace, Dr.P.H.

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Research Interests
My research interests include health disparities, cancer control and prevention, minority health, adolescent health, gender minority health, behavioral interventions, medical home, qualitative research, and mixed methods design. I also examine the benefits of fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity as predictors and promoters of health and well-being.
Cynthia Warrick, Ph.D., R.Ph.

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Research Interests
I have 20 years of higher education experience as faculty, researcher, educator, and administrator. A pharmacist by profession and native of San Antonio, Texas, I received a Bachelor of Science degree in Pharmacy from Howard University; a Master of Science degree in Public Policy from the Georgia Institute of Technology; and my Ph.D. in Environmental Science and Public Policy from George Mason University. My research interests are in cancer screening and dialysis disparities in low-income and minority communities and the recruitment, development, and training of underrepresented research investigators. Currently, I am a Senior Fellow, Research and Evaluation at the Thurgood Marshall College Fund. I have recently founded the Society for Diversity in the Biomedical Sciences (www.biomeddiversity.org) to facilitate education, research, training, and professional development for students, graduates, faculty, and professionals.
Fern Jureidini Webb, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
My research agenda focuses on health intervention models, using community-based asset models to improve health behaviors and decrease health disparities among African Americans. My research interests include (1) implementing evidenced-based health programs in community settings to improve health outcomes and decrease health disparities among African Americans; and (2) developing a community-based participatory research agenda, where I collaborate with community organizations and community members to develop, implement, and evaluate programs designed specifically to meet the unique needs of African Americans living with chronic diseases. For example, I served as the Principal Investigator on the Winning Over Weight Wellness program (WOW Wellness) in 2010 designed to assist African American women and their families in incorporating simple behavioral changes into their everyday lives in efforts to decrease weight. In addition, my research now focuses on community-engaged research; I received an NIH diversity supplement to work with Dr. Linda Cottler’s NIH National Institute on Drug Abuse (R01) grant, “Transformative Approach to Reduce Research Disparities Toward Drug Users” (2012–2014). Through this opportunity, I am learning how to conduct community-engaged research as am exploring the willingness of community members in northeast and central Florida to engage in research studies to improve chronic diseases and health outcomes.
Richard O. White III, M.D., M.Sc.

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Research Interests
I was trained as an Internist and Pediatrician at Vanderbilt University and completed my Master’s in Clinical Investigation at Meharry Medical College in 2010. My research focuses on the impact of health literacy and health communication on diabetes and obesity prevention/management for Latino and African American adults and children. I am currently involved in several community-engaged efforts to understand better the nature of the patient-provider interaction on diabetes care and the facilitators and barriers to healthy lifestyle among adults and youth in northeast Florida. I am beginning my fourth year of a K23 Career Development Award through the NIDDK and hope to move toward research independence with a career that focuses on the development, cultural tailoring, and implementation of family-based interventions to improve health outcome for minority patients and address disparities of care.

Dione Williams, M.D.

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Research Interests
I am interested in biomedical informatics and the electronic health record. My research mentor is Dr. Shyam Visweswaran, and I am currently working on my thesis, “Features of Successful Medicare Attestation of Ambulatory Physicians.”
Lovoria B. Williams, Ph.D., APRN-BC

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Research Interests
My research focus is health disparities. My interests are behavioral interventions developed through community-based participatory research interventions, obesity, physical activity, cardiovascular disease, and the development of sustainable translational interventions. Additional interests include stroke prevention and diabetes biomarkers predicting incident diabetes.
Greta Berry Winbush, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
Behavioral health, health care services, and health care policy research on African Americans have been the focus of my research for the past 25 years. Personal care experiences through multiple health care systems fueled a strong commitment to eliminating health disparities among vulnerable and underserved African Americans through research, teaching, and community service. My current research program is the Health Empowerment Technology (HET) Project. The HET Project is a translational science research program purposed to eliminate health disparities among African Americans and other minority groups through the merger of evidence-based health disparity research and culturally centered health empowerment technology. Using Web-based health empowerment technology, attention is given to reducing disparities in health literacy, health communication, and health outcomes among disparate groups. Another intent is to increase their inclusion in virtual health communities. Recent study populations consist of African American elderly and their doctors and African American women with disabilities.

The research on African American elderly is part of a Minority Eldercare Disparity Initiative at the University’s Stokes Center on Aging. This initiative targeting minority elders, especially African Americans, in the areas of health and health service disparities represents an interdisciplinary effort at Central State University that includes gerontology academic programming, minority aging and health services research, and health outreach.
**Jackson T. Wright, Jr., M.D., Ph.D., FACP**

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**Research Interests**
I am Professor of Medicine and Program Director of the William T. Dahms, M.D., Clinical Research Unit at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) and a member of the Executive Committee of CWRU’s Clinical and Translational Science Award program. I am also Director of the Clinical Hypertension Program at University Hospitals Case Medical Center. My research experience includes having had a major or leadership role in nearly all of the major cardiovascular and renal clinical outcome trials conducted in black populations over the past two decades. I am currently co-Principal Investigator (PI) of one of seven clinical networks in the NIDDK-sponsored Chronic Renal Insufficiency Cohort Study (40 percent black) and PI of one of the five clinical center networks in the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute–sponsored Systolic Blood Pressure Intervention Trial (SPRINT).

**Regina Sims Wright, Ph.D.**

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**Research Interests**
My research examines sources of variability in neurocognitive functioning in older adults. I have focused primarily on older African Americans, with an emphasis on the role of cardiovascular risk factors—such as hypertension, impaired glucose tolerance, elevated lipids, and obesity—on such neurocognitive abilities as working memory, perceptual speed, verbal memory, visuospatial ability, executive function, and inductive reasoning. My interest in African American neurocognitive functioning developed from a variety of research experiences focused largely on issues surrounding racial/ethnic disparities in health.
Bessie A. Young, M.D., M.P.H., FACP, FASN

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Research Interests
Chronic kidney disease (CKD) is widely prevalent and disproportionately affects minorities. Health disparities contribute to differences in CKD and end-stage renal disease (ESRD) outcomes. The overarching goal of my research program is to evaluate disparities in CKD/ESRD and to develop interventions aimed at decreasing kidney disease-associated health issues. My research program currently focuses on the development of a CKD working group for the National Institutes of Health (NIH)-funded Jackson Heart Study of 5,300 African Americans from Jackson, Mississippi. In addition, I have a project that is evaluating community, researcher, and clinician attitudes toward Apolipoprotein L1 genetic polymorphism testing. My prior research projects included the NIH-funded Increasing Kidney Disease Awareness Network Transplant project, which involves the development and testing of new educational materials for patients with late-stage CKD. Clinically, within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), we have developed a kidney disease telemedicine intervention programs that focuses on increasing specialty-primary care interaction using the Extension for Community Health Outcomes (VA-ECHO) model to improve rural access to nephrology care. Finally, we are collaborating with the Caribbean Health and Education Foundation to develop a CKD registry to monitor the prevalence and incidence of CKD in Eastern Caribbean states. Currently, my research program receives NIH and VA funding, which supports several co-investigators and graduate students.
Anna Zamora-Kapoor, Ph.D.

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Research Interests
I am an Assistant Research Professor at Washington State University, committed to studying populations that are poor, discriminated against, and exhibit compromised health. I have expertise in the social determinants of health and health disparities, and a special interest in identifying the most important strategies to prevent obesity, type 2 diabetes, and hypertension in American Indian and Alaska Native populations.
Network of Minority Health Research Investigators

14th Annual Workshop

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

National Institutes of Health

DoubleTree Bethesda Hotel

Bethesda, MD

April 20–22, 2016

Final Summary Report
INTRODUCTIONS

Winnie Martinez, Program Officer, NIDDK, NIH
Heather Tarleton, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Loyola Marymount University

Ms. Winnie Martinez welcomed the participants to the meeting and thanked the members of the Planning and Oversight Committees for their efforts in organizing the meeting.

Dr. Heather Tarleton extended her welcome to the participants. She recognized the NMRI Annual Meeting as her favorite meeting of the year because of its personal appeal and the excellent opportunities it affords for networking and collaborating. In particular, she welcomed new NMRI members and those participants who were attending their first national NMRI meeting, encouraging them to participate actively.

The NMRI was established in 2003 by the Office of Minority Health Research Coordination (OMHRC) at the NIDDK. The NMRI’s members are researchers and technical personnel interested in minority health research, including individuals from traditionally underserved communities. The fourfold mission of the NMRI is to (1) encourage minority health investigators to be researchers in fields of interest to the NIDDK; (2) promote two-way communication between members of the NMRI and the NIDDK; (3) gather recommendations and strategies to enhance opportunities for and support of groups underrepresented in biomedical research; and (4) advance scientific knowledge and contribute to the reduction and eventual elimination of racial and ethnic health disparities. Dr. Tarleton emphasized to new members the sincere interest that the NIDDK has in receiving their feedback.

The NMRI provides an opportunity to volunteer to be a mentor younger students and researchers. Dr. Tarleton thanked all of the current mentoring volunteers. She provided examples of how interactions with NMRI members had inspired two of her students to pursue graduate careers in research.

Dr. Tarleton acknowledged NIDDK director Dr. Griffin P. Rodgers, OMHRC director Dr. Lawrence Agodoa, and NMRI coordinator Ms. Martinez. In addition, she thanked members of the NMRI Oversight Committee for their guidance and acknowledged the financial support of professional societies and cosponsors that made the previous night’s reception possible and supported many of the NMRI’s travel awards. She congratulated NMRI members Drs. Evan Dale Abel and Glenn Chertow on their induction into the National Academy of Medicine, formerly known
as the Institute of Medicine. She suggested dedicating the meeting to the memory of
Dr. Marion Sewer, who had been a member of the NMRI and an advocate and educator dedicat-
ed to helping her colleagues and fostering the professional development of her students.

Dr. Tarleton presented the goals for the meeting, the first of which was to network and collabor-
ate. She noted that the schedule for the meeting included multiple opportunities to connect
with current collaborators and for new investigators to meet with members. She expressed the
hope that participants would use the meeting to make tangible progress on their research. She
urged participants to find or become a mentor. Benefits of being mentored include receiving ad-
vice on the grant writing process and identifying funding opportunities to pursue. Dr. Tarleton
concluded by inviting all of the meeting participants to introduce themselves to the group.

WELCOMING REMARKS

Embracing the Extraordinary Value of a Diverse Community
Gregory Germino, M.D., Deputy Director, NIDDK, NIH

Dr. Gregory Germino welcomed the meeting participants on behalf of Dr. Rodgers and the
NIDDK. He noted that the NMRI is an important part of the NIDDK and that its future is im-
portant to science. He stated that the research mission of the NIDDK, one of the NIH’s
27 Institutes and Centers (ICs), is to support and conduct research on common, costly and con-
sequential diseases, including diabetes and other endocrine and metabolic diseases; liver and
other digestive diseases; nutritional disorders; obesity; and kidney, urologic, and hematologic
diseases. Dr. Germino discussed the NIDDK’s fiscal year (FY) 2015 budget of $1.7 billion, with
an additional $150 million special appropriation for type 1 diabetes research that also includes
funds to other Institutes, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. He noted
that the majority of the budget, 64 percent, funded research project grants and only 4 percent
was spent on administration.

Dr. Germino stated that the NIDDK aligns its budget with its core principles, which are to
(1) maintain a vigorous investigator-initiated research portfolio, (2) support pivotal clinical
studies and trials, (3) preserve a stable pool of talented new investigators, (4) foster exceptional
research training and mentoring opportunities, and (5) ensure knowledge dissemination about
clinically significant research. Dr. Germino emphasized the importance of ensuring that the
NIDDK maintains the most qualified pool of researchers possible.

Dr. Germino commented on the research problems facing the NIDDK: The diseases studied
are chronic, there are complex interactions among conditions, the diseases often are difficult to
model in animals, and the risks for patients and tolls on investigators often are both high. He
remarked that many diseases that fall within the NIDDK’s primary mission disproportionately
affect African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanic Americans, Pacific Islanders, and Asian
Americans, which is why the NIDDK sets aside a significant portion of resources to help recruit
a diverse workforce of excellent researchers. Dr. Germino described some of the available re-
sources: the Short-Term Research Experience for Underrepresented Persons (STEP-UP) pro-
gram provides research and training opportunities for students, encouraging them to become
excited about learning and research; R03 and National Research Service Award (NRSA) F31
grants are available for scientists of underrepresented backgrounds; R21 awards and the NRSA
T32 Diversity Supplement Award help promote diversity in health-related research; and travel
awards are available to help researchers attend meetings.

Dr. Germino noted that the NMRI provides an important opportunity for new, emerging,
mid-career, and senior investigators to establish relationships. He emphasized that joining a net-
work builds a community and can help spread the group’s message. Not only are members able
to gain more knowledge on their chosen topic—to become “in the know”—but new career investigators can become “known” by connecting to senior experts who can help them build their career. Dr. Germino also mentioned the NIH’s National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN) as a productive resource for investigators to build connections.

Dr. Germino illustrated the progression of the NIH’s and NIDDK’s budgets over the last two fiscal years. In FY 2016, the NIDDK’s budget was $1.97 billion, an increase of 3.6 percent from the $1.90 billion budget of FY 2015. However, the NIH’s total budget increased 6.6 percent in that time. Dr. Germino described some areas of targeted budget increases that contributed to the difference, such as research on precision medicine and antimicrobial resistance, the Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies® (BRAIN) Initiative, and studies of Alzheimer’s disease. He noted that the NIDDK participated in some aspects of the Alzheimer’s studies because of its connection with diabetes, but most of the budget was directly appropriated to the National Institute on Aging.

Dr. Germino described the NIDDK’s grant funding policy for FY 2016. R01 awards have a payline at the 13th percentile in general; R01 applications requesting more than $500,000 have a more stringent 8th percentile payline, and applications from early stage investigators (ESIs) receive a more generous 18th percentile payline. Dr. Germino noted the policy of fully funding Type 5S noncompeting renewals and giving a nominal payline (15th percentile) to the first competitive renewal applications for R01 awards for researchers who were ESIs when they competed for the initial NIDDK Type 1 R01 award.

Dr. Germino then explained that the NIH budget requested for FY 2017 would fund the NIDDK at $1.97 billion, the same amount as FY 2016. He described the targeted initiatives that would receive significant amounts under this budget, including the National Cancer Moonshot, the Precision Medicine Initiative Cohort, and the BRAIN initiative. He noted that almost all ICs would otherwise be flat-funded. Dr. Germino explained that although Congressional appropriators seem supportive of an NIH increase, it is difficult to predict how the process will end, so the NIDDK is planning a conservative budget in the event that they are flat-funded.

Dr. Germino then demonstrated the use of the NIDDK’s website, which was redesigned with investigators in mind. He emphasized the importance of researchers’ keeping themselves informed and commented that his team has worked hard to ensure that the website is understandable, intuitive, and easy to use; the NIDDK intends to be as transparent as possible in its funding practices. He pointed out that the website lists current funding opportunities and allows users to filter the opportunities according to their career stage. Annual reports are available that feature the newest science, patient stories, and general updates on nonscience activities at the NIDDK, including funding trends.

The NIH Common Fund is another resource that offers many sources for research opportunities and a range of research foci that could be of interest to NIDDK investigators. Dr. Germino noted several new initiatives, including the $240 million Stimulating Peripheral Activity to Relieve Conditions (SPARC) project, the Human Microbiome project, and the Metabolomics project. He encouraged researchers to investigate these opportunities.

Dr. Germino then emphasized the importance of mentors, who play a critical role in the success of young investigators. Mentors can serve as advisors and advocates, as well as help researchers make connections and build bridges. He emphasized the NIDDK’s pride in the NMRI, explaining that it sets a paradigm for developing an effective research community. Dr. Germino thanked the participants for their commitment to the program and encouraged new members to stay with the group, recruit colleagues, and continue working within the network long enough to become mentors for the generation that follows them.
Discussion

A meeting participant suggested that the NIDDK could improve its support and promotion of the NMRI. She explained that she had received an NIDDK minority supplement award, which helped mentors take a chance on her and move her into the area of research in which she is now building her career, and she thanked Dr. Germino for the opportunity. However, during her time as a minority award recipient, she was not informed about the existence of the NMRI; she could have benefited greatly from the community had she become involved earlier. She suggested that the NIDDK encourage minority award applicants or recipients to create a profile to help share information about opportunities. Dr. Germino agreed that the NIDDK could improve in this area but added that working within a government organization involves many rules that restrict the ability to do direct outreach about many of the available initiatives. Researchers often must opt in rather than being recruited because privacy concerns make it difficult to promote available programs. Dr. Tarleton added that encouraging participants to update their profiles and spread the word about the NMRI would be emphasized again later in the conference.

An audience member asked Dr. Germino to elaborate on the complexities of funding projects through multiple ICs, such as Alzheimer’s and diabetes research, and to explain which ICs take responsibility for a project that crosses institutional boundaries. Dr. Germino replied that the direct appropriation funding structure of the NIH is both an advantage and a problem. The funds are appropriated with a specific mission, which allows the ICs to focus on the project, and the use of the funds is clearly designated. This becomes a challenge, however, for projects that cross institutional boundaries, and creating robust funding strategies can become complicated. He noted that the NIDDK works with its partners to provide funding for needed research areas and attempts to do direct outreach. Many funding announcements are shared, allowing several ICs to pool their money to fund a particular project; these grants are assigned a primary and secondary funder, meaning that the secondary IC can pick up a grant should the primary IC choose not to fund it. Dr. Germino agreed that such complexities can make it difficult to fund important research.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Teams: Leveraging the Power of Collaboration to Advance Your Science
Lewis Roberts, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Medicine, Mayo Clinic

Dr. Lewis Roberts presented on the power of collaboration, noting that team dynamics are more of an art than a science. He shared a few key quotes illustrating that collaboration allows individuals and organizations to go further and achieve more. Teams are stronger than individuals working alone, and continuing collaboration promotes success. Dr. Roberts shared his top 10 “don’ts” list, with correlates, to foster successful coordination:

1. Don't isolate yourself. (Correlate: Everyone needs mentors.)
2. Don't be afraid to share. (Correlate: Don't think of yourself only; you will get back more than you give.)
3. Don't think of your tribe only. (Correlate: Identity has dark and bright sides.)
4. Don't slack off. (Correlate: Commit to the team and continue to work; this is the source of inspiration.)
5. Don't overdo work. (Correlate: This is the counterpoint to “Don't slack off”; one key is control.)
6. Don't be timid. (Correlate: Pick a significant problem in the world that needs to be addressed.)
7. Don't try to do it all by yourself. (Correlate: Harness the wisdom of diverse teams.)
8. Don’t take all the credit to yourself. (Correlate: Pay attention to the author list.)
9. Don’t believe everything people tell you. (Correlate: Be critical.)
10. Don’t give up simply because people don’t believe you. (Correlate: Believe in yourself; keep pressing on.)

Dr. Roberts shared anecdotes from his life that taught him resilience and the importance of education. He said he is lucky that his mother, a public health nurse, encouraged him to learn vicariously by taking note of the lessons learned by others who had made mistakes. He also learned that family is important and that taking individual responsibility is essential to demonstrating good character and leadership. Dr. Roberts was encouraged to pursue medical research while at the University of Ghana Medical School and was particularly influenced by a young man with liver cancer. When he began his studies at a U.S. graduate school, his research advisor warned him that all of the easy experiments had been performed already; Dr. Roberts embraced the challenge. When he was transitioning to his clinical training, he was advised to apply to all of the institutions he dreamed of attending and to not count himself out over fears of not qualifying. Heeding this advice, Dr. Roberts applied to the Mayo Clinic for his residency and was accepted. He learned the importance of taking risks and pressing forward, even when things did not go well or might be discouraging.

Dr. Roberts stressed the importance of mentors, embracing new ideas, and pushing boundaries. At every level, the team works together, and this work provides inspiration to the team members. Finally, Dr. Roberts noted the global disparities in wealth and health, using a chart to highlight the fact that, in general, the health of a society and its wealth are positively correlated. He also noted that countries with similar per-capita incomes can have substantially different health profiles (e.g., Nigeria and Vietnam). It is possible to transform health without a good deal of wealth (“You can be healthy without being wealthy.”) This is the key issue for the NMRI group: What can those present at this meeting collaborate on that will be transformative in the world of health?

**BIOSTATISTICS: ALL ABOUT THE BASICS**

*Fern Webb, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, University of Florida*

Dr. Fern Webb hosted an interactive presentation on the guidelines for designing a statistical study and choosing the correct analysis. Throughout the session, she collected quiz answers through her website (www.fernjwebb.participoll.com) and used the answers to inform her discussion. She invited the audience to ask questions throughout, commenting that there are no wrong questions and that often more is learned from being wrong than from being right.

Dr. Webb described epidemiology as the science of public health and offered two formal definitions: (1) a branch of medical sciences involving the analysis of the incidence, distribution, and control of disease and/or health in a population; and (2) the study of the distribution and determinants of disease frequency and health in the population. The underlying assumption of both definitions is that disease or health distributions are not random events and do not happen in a vacuum.

Dr. Webb outlined the typical epidemiologic research cycle, noting that the cycle is not guaranteed to happen exactly in the sequence presented. The question to be studied is identified, and the literature is researched; the study protocol—including variables, study population, and research design—is planned; the study is conducted; the findings are disseminated to key stakeholders and the scientific community; and the results are reviewed to determine the next steps for further study.
The study should begin by determining the exposures and outcomes of interest. Dr. Webb informed attendees that one variable can have multiple names. For example, exposure, treatment, independent variable, antecedent, and predictor are all synonyms. Outcome, condition, dependent variable, consequent and criterion also have the same meaning. She likened the use of these synonyms to the availability of multiple routes to the same destination. Dr. Webb then outlined the four types of data: nominal data, which consist of categories without inherent ranking or order, such as ethnicity or blood type; ordinal data, which consist of ordered categories at undefined intervals, such as pain scales or Likert scales; interval data, which have a defined order and comparable intervals but no true zero, such as temperature; and ratio or continuous data, which have a defined order and interval but begin or end at zero, such as age or blood pressure. Dr. Webb led the audience in a series of quizzes to review these data types.

Dr. Webb shifted the focus to the creation of an analysis plan and introduced two kinds of measures. Measures of frequency are used in descriptive analysis to describe information (measured by variables) or characteristics of people or animals participating in the study. Basic measures of frequency include counts (e.g., \( n \)), proportions (e.g., \( a/[a+b] \)), rates (e.g., \( a/[a+b] \) over a period of time), and ratios (e.g., \( a/b \), with the numerator and denominator being mutually exclusive). Measures of association are used in statistical and inferential analysis to describe how information (usually measured by variables) is associated or related—in other words, what the study results mean in the real world. An association can be understood as the extent to which variables occur together (nondirectional) or as the statistical dependence between two variables. Dr. Webb commented that measures of association are used to try to determine causality between variables, but sometimes this is not possible.

Dr. Webb explained the \( 2 \times 2 \) table, a hallmark of epidemiology in which the independent variable or exposure is aligned along the vertical axis, and the dependent variable or outcome is placed along the horizontal axis. She noted that this table is used for measures of frequency, measures of association, measures of screening, and hypothesis testing. She emphasized that the appropriate statistic must be chosen to measure each type of association, and the choice is determined by the type and number of independent and dependent variables—each type of measure maps onto a particular study design. She referred the audience to a handout illustrating the appropriate statistics for various combinations of variable numbers and types, and the audience practiced choosing statistics for example studies. Statistics to measure the association of variables include Chi-square tests of independence, analysis of variance, multiple regression, and logistic regression.

Dr. Webb introduced a discussion of inferential analysis, asking how data from a study reflect truth in a population. She noted that the statistical methods to evaluate the role of chance are the same in every study. Testing an alternative hypothesis against a null hypothesis—the theory that there is no association between variables—will return a \( 2 \times 2 \) table charting whether the hypotheses are true or false in reality, and this can help determine whether the results are correct or what kind of error (type I or type II) is shown. In the estimation of confidence intervals, a value of 1.0 indicates no association between variables and fails to reject the null hypothesis. A statistically significant confidence interval, which does not include 1.0, will reject the null hypothesis. The \( p \)-value and confidence interval always must be consistent with each other. The group practiced applying these guidelines to sample data.

An attendee asked what to do when a study does not have enough data to find statistical significance. Dr. Webb responded that this should be explained when describing the limitations of the study and advised suggesting further studies be conducted. She reminded the audience that this would be a type II error.
Dr. Webb emphasized three important points for the study of biostatistics. First, researchers should choose a measure of association based on the data and variable type for both independent and dependent variables. Second, there is no need to guess or memorize the appropriate statistics for each type—researchers can use the handout provided. Third, researchers should consult with a biostatistician in the study planning phase before finalizing the study design and beginning data collection.

SESSION I: ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

Participants attended one of six round table discussions focused on various career-oriented topics. Meeting participants attended the session of their choice.

Table 1: Health Disparities Research and Community-based Participatory Research
*Myra Kleinpeter, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Tulane University School of Medicine*

Table 2: Charting Your Course for Success (Postdoctoral Scholars/Junior Faculty)
*Bessie Young, M.D., Professor, University of Washington*
*Lewis Roberts, M.D., Ph.D., Professor of Medicine, Mayo Clinic*

Table 3: Beyond NIH Funding Sources
*Heather Tarleton, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Loyola Marymount University*
*Jose Romero, Ph.D., Associate Physiologist, Brigham and Women’s Hospital/Harvard Medical School*

Table 4: R01/R21/R03/R15 (R Mechanisms)
*Carlos Isales, M.D., Professor, Augusta University*
*Ann Jerkins, Ph.D., Scientific Review Officer, NIDDK, NIH*

Table 5: K Awards
*Bridgett Rahim-Williams, Ph.D., Professor and Associate Dean, Bethune-Cookman University*
*Robert Wellner, Ph.D., Scientific Review Officer, NIDDK, NIH*
*James Hyde, Ph.D., Program Director, NIDDK, NIH*

Table 6: Research Supplements to Promote Diversity
*Robert Rivers, Ph.D., Program Officer, NIDDK, NIH*

SESSION II: ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

Participants attended one of three round table discussions. Two sessions covered different types of NIH awards—R01 Basic/Clinical and K01 Basic/Clinical—and during these sessions, session leaders were given sample grant applications to review and critique. A third session reviewed R03 grants and focused on grant writing basics. Types of grants and the grant process were discussed.

Mock Study Section 1: R01 Basic/Clinical
*Carlos Isales, M.D., Professor, Augusta University*
*Ann Jerkins, Ph.D., Scientific Review Officer, NIDDK, NIH*

Mock Study Section 2: K01 Basic/Clinical
*Bridgett Rahim-Williams, Ph.D., Professor and Associate Dean, Bethune-Cookman University*
*Robert Wellner, Ph.D., Scientific Review Officer, NIDDK, NIH*
Grant Writing Basics and Pilot Studies: Preparation for an R03
Mark Lawson, Ph.D., Professor, University of California, San Diego
Patricia Heyn, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Colorado, Anschutz Medical Campus

PARALLEL SESSIONS

Two parallel sessions provided the opportunity for participants to engage in career development activities. The sessions were intended to allow informal, interactive discussions among participants. Meeting participants attended the session of their choice.

Specific Aim Review with Senior Member

Participants who signed up for an appointment with a senior NMRI member had the opportunity to discuss the specific aims of their upcoming grant proposal. During the session, senior members reviewed the participant's specific aims, provided feedback, and advised on areas for improvement.

Opportunities for Collaboration

Participants who chose to attend this structured networking session had the opportunity to connect with fellow researchers on shared research interests, ongoing projects, data analysis needs, and any other research concerns.

MARCO CABRERA POSTER AND NETWORKING SESSION

All meeting participants were invited to view the posters submitted to the NMRI 14th Annual Workshop and to converse with their presenters. Judges observed the posters and discussed the described research with their presenters. Winners were chosen for each of three categories—Basic Science, Translational Science, and Clinical Science—and awards were presented to the winning recipients in the final session of the workshop. (See “Poster Session Awards.”)

DINNER SPEAKER

My Scientific Journey: A Marriage of Epidemiology, Molecular Endocrinology, and Diabetes
Sherita Hill Golden, M.D., M.H.S., Hugh P. McCormick Family Professor of Endocrinology and Metabolism, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

Dr. Sherita Hill Golden shared with the meeting participants her journey through science, which began with the foresight and bravery of her grandmother, who was an inspiration to her and her family. Dr. Golden was in the fourth grade when her teacher first recognized that she should be tested for the talented and gifted program. In fifth grade, Dr. Golden fell in love with science and the function of the human body. As a result, she eventually attended a science and technology magnet school, and her parents supported and encouraged her scientific curiosity. After receiving her Bachelor’s degree in Biology from the University of Maryland, College Park, she chose to pursue a medical degree from the University of Virginia School of Medicine. Eventually, she chose internal medicine as her specialty.

Ultimately, Dr. Golden decided to focus specifically on clinical research in diabetes, an exponentially growing public health epidemic that disproportionately affects minority and underserved populations, particularly the African American and Latino populations. Her decision was partially influenced by the September 1993 publication of the Diabetes Control and Complications Trial, which revolutionized the care and treatment of diabetes. Her initial research focused...
on endocrine risk factors for insulin resistance and type 2 diabetes, as she attempted to determine the upstream factors that lead to obesity and insulin resistance, as well as how stress affects the neuroendocrine response. She hypothesized that depression affects hormonal factors, which in turn increase diabetes risk. Depression and chronic stress cause hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis hyperactivity and activation of the sympathetic nervous system (i.e., “fight or flight” response) at a low level chronically, causing an increase in cortisol, catecholamines, and inflammatory markers. All of these biomarkers are associated with insulin resistance.

The Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA), funded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, is a multicenter, longitudinal cohort study of the occurrence and correlates of subclinical cardiovascular disease (CVD) and the factors influencing its progression. The study found a 42 percent higher risk of developing diabetes in those subjects exhibiting depression at baseline. Adjusting for lifestyle factors reduced this risk somewhat but not entirely explain the association, indicating a missing link. To find this missing link, neuroendocrine hormones were assessed while considering the following questions: Are neuroendocrine hormones related to metabolic outcomes? If so, how can they be assessed in population-based studies? Creation of a transgenic mouse model showed that overexpression of 11-beta hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase, the enzyme that generates active cortisol (corticosterone) from inactive cortisone and 11-dehydrocorticosterone, results in insulin resistance.

The next step was to determine how to assess subclinical hypercortisolism and ascertain whether the condition is associated with diabetes, independent of depression. As a result, the MESA Stress Ancillary Studies were funded, and diurnal salivary cortisol was assessed in a subset of participants. Results indicated that subjects with diabetes had lower cortisol awakening responses (CARs) and a slower early cortisol decline than those without diabetes. This blunted profile is seen commonly with depression and obesity as well. Women with diabetes had a higher total area under the curve (AUC) than women without diabetes, driven primarily by a higher late decline AUC; this association was not observed in men. A 6-year follow-up longitudinal study found a lack of significant association between diabetes status and change in CAR, possibly a result of the lack of data on glycemic control and diabetes complications.

Another study examined the association of diurnal cortisol curve features with hyperglycemia. The study found that in individuals with diabetes, cortisol curve parameters suggestive of higher HPA axis activity and dysfunction were associated with higher glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c). Current research is determining whether HPA axis dysfunction leads to hyperglycemia in diabetes, whether hyperglycemia leads to HPA axis dysfunction, or whether the association between the HPA axis and hyperglycemia is bidirectional. Future studies are planned to follow up on this observation.

Dr. Golden highlighted the International Conference on Diabetes and Depression, held in October 2012, which inspired her to consider the whole spectrum of this issue—from molecules to patient care. She also is passionate about translating population science and epidemiology to the health care setting. The Johns Hopkins Hospital Inpatient Glucose Management Program, which she directs, has two key components: clinical consultation and health care delivery (systems intervention). The program implemented a series of evidence-based interventions, which has resulted in a 19 percent reduction in hypoglycemia frequency throughout the hospital over 3 years. Other hospitals are adopting the program's model. Dr. Golden stressed that clinical work can be turned into a form of scholarship; important clinical activities should be published so that others can learn from them and emulate successful programs.

Dr. Golden stated that she shared her personal experiences and highlights from her academic career path to emphasize the need to diversify support with “hard” money and to pursue opportunities that one enjoys. This realization allowed her to pursue her current leadership position as Executive Vice-Chair of the Department of Medicine, which was not something that she
had previously envisioned for herself but does align with all of her passions. Finally, Dr. Golden shared what she considers the guiding principles of an outstanding clinician and scientist: service (community and mentorship), scholarship, family, friends, health, integrity, and balance.

Friday, April 22, 2016

MENTOR/MENTEE SESSION

Junior investigators who had signed up for this session had the opportunity to meet with one of several senior NMRI investigators who offered to serve as mentors. During the session, each mentor hosted a roundtable discussion with his or her mentees, answering questions and providing advice.

ROLE OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Society of Nephrology (ASN)

Raymond Harris, M.D., President, ASN

Dr. Raymond Harris thanked the organizers for the pleasure and honor of speaking, expressing his admiration for the NMRI and its mission. He described the increasing incidence of end-stage renal disease (ESRD) in the last 30 years and emphasized the disproportionate burden on minorities, especially African Americans. Dr. Harris pointed out that individual health is only partly determined by biology and behavior; public policy, social factors, and health services also affect it, and the ASN can help shape these factors with the support of its large global membership.

Dr. Harris explained that kidney disease clinical trials lag behind many other areas and commented on a number of initiatives the ASN supports, such as the ASN Foundation for Kidney Research, the Kidney Health Initiative, and its successful partnership with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The ASN recognizes its need for greater inclusion and the importance of recruiting and supporting young investigators from minority backgrounds, particularly in light of the disproportionate effects of kidney disease on minority populations. The first ASN diversity summit was held in the summer of 2013, and the ASN diversity work group began at the end of 2013; in its first 15 months, the group created a new vision statement, increased collection of member demographics, and began several award and representation initiatives. Dr. Harris described the most recent accomplishments of the work group, including recognizing Gentzon Hall, M.D., Ph.D., from Duke University, with the ASN-Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program Award. The diversity work group also organized the first Diversity and Inclusion Lunch at Kidney Week 2015, which attracted more than 50 attendees and served as a platform to solicit input and feedback to identify existing gaps in current efforts. The second Diversity and Inclusion Lunch is planned for the ASN's 2016 meeting in Chicago with an anticipated 75 participants, and Dr. Harris encouraged NMRI members to attend. The work group also hosted a reception at the Student National Medical Association Annual Meeting, during which students listened to a presentation on careers in nephrology; at the reception, 10 to 15 students registered for student memberships to the ASN. Dr. Harris also mentioned the ASN’s lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) inclusion initiatives, including sending a representative to the LGBT Health Workforce Conference to evaluate it for potential ASN involvement. He noted that the ASN funded 20 participants to attend the 2016 NMRI Annual Workshop.

Dr. Harris described other diversity and inclusion efforts at the ASN, including the Michelle P. Winn Endowed Lectureship in Glomerular Diseases and Genetics, an effort to increase the diversity of Kidney Week Speakers, and an increase in travel support and grant funding recipients. The next steps for the ASN include refining the existing mentorship curriculum to help
train both mentors and mentees and tracking and reporting the demographics of ASN panels and members, using statistics to gauge the success of diversity and inclusion efforts across all areas of the ASN. He noted that the ASN is in the process of reconfiguring its committee structure to more accurately reflect current concerns and demographics, and it plans to establish a permanent Diversity and Inclusion Committee that will include some members of the original work group and some new members. Dr. Harris encouraged interested attendees to apply to the open call for committee membership.

Dr. Harris described some of the ASN programs that support early career professionals, such as career development grants, Amos awards, and the William and Sandra Bennett Clinical Scholars Program, which supports aspiring nephrology educators. The ASN also supports students and trainees with research fellowship programs, an international scholars program for trainees from Central and South America, and a summer program to facilitate early exposure to kidney research for medical students and graduate students. Dr. Harris emphasized that the ASN is committed to supporting career development and promoting academicians, physicians, and nephrologists at all levels. He stressed the importance of mentoring and sponsorship and noted that the ASN is developing tools to improve these, such as a “How to Mentor” package to ensure the best results for all parties. He also outlined the ASN’s five-point guidance for diversity and inclusion values: inclusiveness, mentorship, health equity, patient advocacy, and engagement.

Discussion

Dr. Mariya Sweetwyne explained that as a trainee member of the ASN, she has received some announcements about upcoming diversity initiatives but has not heard about the progress these initiatives have made. She asked how this information is being distributed to the group and broadly to the ASN membership, which would include trainee mentors who need to be kept informed. Dr. Harris acknowledged that the ASN could improve in this important aspect of the initiative and said that the diversity work group plans to address this. He stressed the importance of figuring out how to craft the message to reach potential participants, as well as the membership as a whole, because the membership may not be aware these initiatives exist. Dr. Jonathan Himmelfarb, one of the chairs of the ASN diversity work group, added that they have started online communities to increase involvement; any member can facilitate a discussion, and although beta testing still is ongoing, 20 percent of the existing posts have related to diversity, which is promising for increasing the discussion when the online communities become fully accessible.

A meeting participant asked how the effort to increase diversity complements the efforts to increase awareness of the field of nephrology. Dr. Harris replied that he perceives the efforts as congruent; when young researchers are made aware of the possibilities early in their career, the number of people, including minorities, entering the field of nephrology increases. He emphasized that the field is important and exciting and that it contains many opportunities.

An experienced attendee complimented the ASN on taking these bold steps toward increasing diversity, noting that many researchers of his generation have been waiting a long time for such efforts. Dr. Harris agreed that these initiatives bode well for the future of the ASN.

A participant thanked the ASN for sponsoring a large group of attendees. Dr. Harris noted that the ASN plans to continue its sponsorship for the 2017 NMRI Annual Workshop.
Mr. Steven Echard conveyed apologies for Dr. Charles Howell, chief of internal medicine at Howard University and chair of the AASLD’s Diversity Task Force, who had planned to deliver the presentation but was unable to attend. He described the AASLD’s Strategic Plan and its mission to advance and disseminate the science and practice of hepatology and to promote liver health and quality patient care. He noted that the AASLD is well known for hosting the Liver Meeting, which had more than 10,000 attendees in 2015, half of whom were from international locations. Mr. Echard emphasized that the AASLD offers many other professional opportunities and meetings year round. This year, Hepatitis B is one of the AASLD’s foci; the AASLD plans to focus on disparities research soon, which Dr. Howell strongly promotes.

Mr. Echard described the LiverLearning® tool, available on the AASLD website, which captures all sessions at their conferences. The website has 3 years of content, presentations, and slides available for members to view and use. One of the AASLD’s most popular productions is the journal Hepatology, which is highly competitive and has an impact factor of more than 11. Mr. Echard explained that the competition to publish in Hepatology might be prohibitive for early career researchers, so he offered several other options for publishing through the AASLD. The journal Liver Transplantation, despite its name, focuses on many aspects of clinical research, and the journal Clinical Liver Disease highlights primary care applications. Multimedia productions, such as expert podcasts, also are available. The AASLD is planning to create an open-access journal with the tentative title Hepatology Communications, which will be available later this year.

Mr. Echard also noted that the AASLD is well known for publishing clinical practice guidelines and updates for treatments in the hepatology field. Most guidelines use the Grading of Recommendation Assessment, Development and Evaluation (GRADE) approach, with systematic evidence reviews. AASLD has begun using the GRADE approach and published its first GRADE guidelines on hepatitis B virus in January; AASLD now is developing hepatocellular carcinoma guidelines for publication in early 2017. AASLD also has developed a hepatitis C virus guidance that provides up-to-date recommendations to health care practitioners on the optimal screening, management, and treatment for adults with hepatitis C virus infection in the United States, considering the best available evidence. The guidance is updated regularly as new data, information, and tools and treatments become available, and it is updated within a few days for every new therapy released. A dedicated website hosts the guidance (www.hcvguidelines.org). Mr. Echard explained that all of the AASLD guidelines are designed for use by both specialists and primary care providers (PCPs). He also described the AASLD’s global outreach initiatives, including partnerships with international organizations, sponsorship of international conferences, and funding for international travel awards.

As one of the smaller gastrointestinal societies, the AASLD’s biggest strength is its membership of more than 5,000 hepatologists, surgeons, scientists, trainees, and other health care professionals. The AASLD supports a membership category called AASLD Fellows, comprising individuals with longer than 10 years of membership who have participated significantly in Society events; the Fellows make a commitment to serve as mentors to members earlier in their careers. The AASLD also has more than 600 trainee members, a category to which members can belong for 3 to 4 years after their training.

Mr. Echard explained that the AASLD Diversity Task Force is being reorganized as the Diversity Committee to increase the AASLD’s support for both diversity and inclusion. This is the Association’s second year sponsoring attendees to the NMRI, and it looks forward to increasing sponsorship for attendees interested in hepatology. Mr. Echard described the increased efforts to focus on gender equality, noting that although its membership is only about 33 percent female,
AASLD has been able to maintain up to 40 percent of its leadership positions for women. He highlighted that both the immediate past President and the President-elect are women.

Mr. Echard highlighted a number of special interest groups that offer opportunities for interested researchers; any member can join any group. The Innovation Fund is being created to allow the special interest groups to develop and fund larger projects. He also described the opportunities available through the AASLD’s committees, which recently were reorganized and expanded to focus on current initiatives.

Mr. Echard explained that the AASLD offers a mentor program that matches AASLD Fellows with trainees and members who are within 2 years of having finished their training. The mentorship program allows trainees and mentors to discuss research, career development, work/life balance, clinical practice, and more. Mr. Echard also described the Emerging Liver Scholars Program, which offers grants for trainees and early-career gastroenterologists to be paired with a mentor who will attend the Liver Meeting with them and guide them; since 2013, this program has supported more than 100 Scholars.

Mr. Echard discussed the recent creation of the AASLD Foundation, which gathers funds specifically for research, rather than the Liver Meeting or other well-known nonclinical initiatives. The mission of the Foundation is to support liver research and educate PCPs about liver disease and its treatment. It funds liver research, supports advanced hepatology training, and creates broader education platforms for non-hepatologists. The Foundation also plans to develop programs to enhance public awareness and patient education. The AASLD Foundation offers Research and Career Development Awards in several categories: multiyear, single-year, and abstract awards. The Foundation plans to double the amount of funding available over the next 5 years, from $2.5 million to $5 million. The AASLD also plans to increase its commitment to sponsoring attendees to the NMRI Annual Workshop. Mr. Echard emphasized that the scientists who have been funded by the AASLD in the past have demonstrated success; half of all recipients reported receiving NIH funding during or after their award, and most have remained in hepatology. He invited attendees to apply for the Research and Career Development Awards before the December 1, 2016, deadline and noted that information is available on the AASLD website.

**Discussion**

An attendee thanked Mr. Echard for the AASLD's anticipated increase in funding for NMRI attendees and asked if there is a fee for trainee membership. Mr. Echard responded that the trainee membership fee is $125, which is a significantly reduced cost, and that residents and medical students can join without a fee. He added that trainees also can register to attend the Liver Meeting at a reduced cost of $100.

A nephrologist representing the ASN noted that the ASN also had difficulty capturing demographic information on ethnicity. She recommended that the AASLD’s regular membership renewal process include an opt-out question about ethnicity, which would highlight the information without requiring an answer. She noted that this increased their response rate by about 200 percent.

**American Diabetes Association (ADA)**

*Allison McElvaine, Ph.D., Director, Research Communications, ADA*

Dr. Allison McElvaine noted that kidney and liver research is important to helping people with diabetes and thanked the previous speakers. She described the growing health crisis of diabetes. Over the past 5 years, the rate of diabetes has increased from one in 13 Americans to one in 11, and the economic burden has increased from $174 billion per year to $245 billion per year. At
this rate, by 2050 diabetes will affect one in three Americans, or more than 100 million people, and at a catastrophic cost. Minorities are disproportionately affected by diabetes, obesity, and their complications; it is predicted that by 2050, half of Americans in high-risk minority populations will have diabetes.

Maintaining a normal range of blood glucose levels is difficult but vital for good health. People with diabetes struggle with this constant, complicated, and expensive process. The ADA’s vision is for a life free of diabetes and its burdens; its mission is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes.

The ADA supports four primary paths for research: professional initiatives, such as conferences and journals; medical initiatives, such as increasing the standard of care; community initiatives like health education programs; and advocacy to help support research. The ADA began funding research in 1952 and in 2015 made $31 million available for research. Its Core Research Program funds investigator-initiated projects, as well as development and training. A new initiative called Pathway to Stop Diabetes® is a competitive fund for which candidates must be nominated by their institutions. The ADA also offers a Targeted Research Program, which issues periodic proposal solicitations regarding specific research needs. Dr. McElvaine explained the portions of research funding supporting studies of type 1, type 2, and gestational diabetes, as well as prediabetes.

Dr. McElvaine noted that the ADA provides opportunities across career stages, such as the minority undergraduate research fellowship and grant opportunities in basic science, clinical research, and translational research. She explained the Pathway to Stop Diabetes® program further. The program differs from other programs in that it invests in people, rather than in specific projects. Its long-term structure provides protected time and autonomy for researchers to focus on and explore ideas, following where the science leads them. Only one nominee per institution is allowed, leading to rigorous institutional competition, but the nominee can be awarded up to $1.625 million. There have been three annual cycles to date, with more than 100 applications per year, and 17 awardees have been selected in total. Dr. McElvaine noted that the call for nominations is now open, and she encouraged attendees to ensure that their institutions nominate someone.

The ADA recently conducted a retrospective analysis of its core research program to measure successes against the program’s objectives. Awardees have been successful in diabetes research careers; 99 percent have remained in diabetes research in the 5 years following the award. Dr. McElvaine reiterated that the Pathway Call for Nominations is currently open with a July 1 application deadline and noted that the Core Research Program has a standing annual grant cycle with applications due April 15 each year. The Targeted Research Program does not currently have any open calls, but interested researchers should check the website for opportunities. She described other ways to become involved in the ADA, including through publications, presentations, involvement with field offices, and participation in local events. Dr. McElvaine closed by inviting listeners to attend the upcoming Scientific Sessions meeting in New Orleans, June 10–14.

Discussion

A meeting participant asked whether the ADA provides grant mechanisms for medical students. Dr. McElvaine replied that the ADA offers undergraduate internships and postdoctoral opportunities, but currently no grants exist for medical students. The participant noted that endocrinology is a potential path into diabetes research.

An audience member asked whether the ADA supports initiatives focusing on dentists, explaining that many dentists help diagnose diabetes. Dr. McElvaine responded that the ADA does
not have any specific initiatives for dentists, but certain research areas within their current programs could be explored. She noted that two-thirds of people with diabetes are unaware that they are affected, so it is important to find any potential paths for increasing awareness of biological links and improving health care delivery.

A participant explained that she trained as a Ph.D., rather than as a clinician, but her research focuses on clinical outcomes, health systems, and health service delivery. She asked whether the ADA is seeing a shift toward funding research in those areas, and Dr. McElvaine confirmed that the ADA is funding this kind of research.

BUSINESS MEETING AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Oversight Committee Report
Luis Cubano, Ph.D., Professor, Universidad Central Del Caribe

Dr. Luis Cubano reported on the recent activities of the Oversight Committee. He began by acknowledging the support that the NMRI has received for regional meetings and annual workshops from professional societies and thanking the standing and ad hoc members of the Oversight Committee. The NMRI is composed of more than 500 members and was established in 2003. The NMRI seeks to increase the size of the network; accordingly, Dr. Cubano asked the members to contact their colleagues who might benefit from the NMRI by obtaining mentorship and support. The NMRI is a comprehensive and collaborative organization that encompasses all of the areas of research supported by the NIDDK.

Dr. Cubano reminded the members to update the information in their profiles. Based on the completed profiles, meeting attendees include 54 members with doctorate degrees, 31 medical doctors, three members with dual M.D.-Ph.D. degrees, five postdoctoral scholars, 22 assistant professors, six associate professors, and 10 full professors. Some of the 96 participants have not yet completed their profiles.

The NMRI has surveyed its membership to determine how the network had contributed to the members’ professional lives and what it can do to help members in the future. The NMRI contributes to members’ earning potential by providing leadership opportunities, including volunteer opportunities to organize regional meetings and annual workshops; networking opportunities, including letters of reference; and opportunities for seminar presentation recruitment.

The NMRI’s Mentorship Program helps identify mentors for members who need them and creates a framework to help the mentee meet his or her goals. NMRI members can assist in this program by providing biosketches, signing up at registration, attending a mentor-mentee session, and providing information for inclusion in the NMRI directory. The NMRI mentorship agreement form can be used to help establish the relationship between a mentor and mentee, provide a timeline for contacting the mentor, select educational objectives, and provide feedback from the mentee and from the mentor. Participation in the NMRI Mentorship Program is a strong motivation for attending the annual workshop. For 70 percent of members surveyed, the mentorship program was the second reason cited for attending the annual workshop. Fifteen percent listed mentorship advice as a specific benefit for the tenure process. Dr. Cubano encouraged members to participate in the Mentorship Program and provide feedback on it to the Oversight Committee.

The NMRI is responsive to members’ needs. Dr. Cubano noted that collaboration tables were provided at this year’s workshop in response to members’ survey responses from last year. Based on members’ suggestions, abstracts now will be published in the NMRI directory and newsletter. Filling out this year’s evaluation form will continue to provide the Oversight and Planning Committees with ideas for improving the meetings and the network.
The NMRI’s next annual workshop is scheduled for April 26–28, 2017. Travel awards will be available to attend the meeting for those who meet membership eligibility. Filling out online profiles (https://forms.niddk.nih.gov/nmri), including society information, will enable awards to be assigned to eligible members. Dr. Cubano advocated for members to submit abstracts, volunteer to be a mentor, and invite colleagues to NMRI 2017. Dr. Cubano acknowledged Dr. Myra Kleinpeter, chair of the South Regional Planning Committee. A regional meeting in the Midwest has been proposed for 2017, but volunteers are needed to organize it. Dr. Cubano asked members to sign up for the NMRI’s various committees. He explained that the Oversight Committee facilitates the development of mentoring relationships, the identification of new members, and the recruitment of professional organizations to support the network; the Planning Committee organizes the annual workshop; and the Regional Planning Committee plans the regional meeting.

Local NMRI chapters have been formed in Puerto Rico and Colorado. Dr. Cubano advocated for volunteers to organize other local NMRI chapters to continue at a local level the collaborations formed at the annual workshop. The process established for organizing chapters has been kept informal to minimize the burden on organizers. Forming a chapter involves identifying officers (president, vice-president, and secretary), establishing goals that are aligned with the national organization, developing a mission statement, and organizing activities. The application form contains recommendations for activities.

**Planning Committee Report**  
*Heather Tarleton, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Loyola Marymount University*

Dr. Tarleton acknowledged her fellow members of the Planning Committee and Dr. Lincoln Edwards, who will lead the Planning Committee in 2017. Priorities this year included providing opportunities for networking and collaboration; helping members develop transferrable skills; and empowering participants to make tangible progress in their research design, implementation, and/or analysis. She commented that the scale of such progress is less important than that it be tangible and help the participant move forward. Dr. Tarleton recognized that the efforts of Ms. Martinez were key in accomplishing these goals. Listening to participant feedback from the 2015 survey also helped the Planning Committee accomplish its goals, and Dr. Tarleton, too, emphasized the importance of participants’ completing evaluation surveys for this meeting so that the 2017 meeting can continue to meet the members’ needs. Dr. Tarleton recognized the 45 new members, many of whom are recipients of K awards, among the workshop’s 100 attendees. The participants joined together to thank the senior members for their dedication toward mentorship, as well as their contributions to abstract and specific aims review.

Feedback on this meeting’s venue will be important in deciding next year’s location. In addition, completing the NMRI profile will help identify members who are eligible for awards and fellowships. In the coming year, the Planning Committee looks forward to hearing about the publications and grants that resulted from NMRI collaborations. The Planning Committee also seeks to maintain the network’s external funding and identify new cosponsors (professional societies, academic institutions, nonprofits, small grants). Next year’s goals also include strengthening and expanding the mentorship network. Dr. Tarleton concluded by asking participants to consider joining the Planning or Oversight Committees and reminding them to fill out the meeting evaluation.

**Discussion**

A participant raised the issue of continuing engagement with other NMRI members throughout the year. She suggested something similar to a Facebook group for women of color in academia,
of which she is a member. The group has provided a safe space to share challenges, solicit support, and receive feedback in near-real time. Social media might provide a strategic way for NMRI members to remain actively connected, and the NMRI website might provide a trusted platform for social media engagement. LinkedIn was suggested as an alternative to Facebook. An NMRI listserv might be useful for providing information about such topics as employment or fellowship opportunities. The point was made that not all members participate in social media. A repository of curriculae vitae was suggested as an alternative. Joining a local chapter or participating in regional meetings also are ways to stay engaged. It was suggested that participants use the meeting evaluation to make other suggestions for maintaining connections.

Dr. Lawson commented that perhaps NMRI members are not as active in helping each other with proposals as they could be. He proposed that the NMRI facilitate matching members who would like help with writing proposals with those who might be willing to act as readers. Ms. Martinez noted that members can refer to the resource tab on the NMRI website, where they can look for potential mentors throughout the year. Dr. Webb recommended using the phrase “volunteer to review” because some members might not feel qualified to characterize themselves as “mentors,” but might still be willing to help as readers.

A participant recommended forming listserv subgroups by topic so that members could send notes or questions to only the small group of people with a certain shared interest. Ms. Martinez suggested using NMRI member profiles to identify characteristics, such as research areas of interest, which could be used to form such groups. A participant advocated for members’ being given the option to opt into groups of interest to them that might not be captured by the information in their profiles.

An audience member noted that maintaining participation of senior mentors in NMRI workshops as they advance in their careers has been challenging. She proposed holding a session that targets senior mentors (e.g., leadership skills). Dr. Agodoa agreed with the importance of continued participation of senior mentors.

Dr. Agodoa presented plaques to Drs. Tarleton and Cubano in recognition for their service chairing the Planning and Oversight Committees, respectively.

**SCIENTIFIC PRESENTATIONS**

**Primary Care Utilization and Mortality and ESRD Risk among Older Adults with Chronic Kidney Disease**

*Raquel Greer, M.D., Assistant Professor, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine*

Dr. Raquel Greer presented her research on primary care utilization among older adults with chronic kidney disease (CKD), noting that CKD affects more than 26 million U.S. adults and is associated with an increased risk of CVD, hospitalizations, and mortality. More than 600,000 U.S. adults have ESRD, resulting in treatment costs of $30 billion in 2013. African Americans and other minorities are disproportionately affected; for example, African Americans exhibit a fourfold increased incidence of ESRD. PCPs care for the majority of patients with CKD, which provides opportunities for these providers to identify and manage their patients’ CKD risks, engage patients in risk factor modification, and provide preventative care. The effect of primary care utilization on clinical outcomes among patients with CKD is unknown.

The objective of Dr. Greer’s study was to quantify the association between primary care utilization and ESRD incidence or mortality among older adults with CKD. The retrospective cohort
The study used data from a 5 percent random sample of Medicare beneficiary claims linked with data from the U.S. Renal Data System from 2005 to 2010. The study population included nearly 88,000 adults older than 65 years of age diagnosed with CKD as defined by ICD-9-DM diagnosis codes in one inpatient claim or two outpatient claims in 2005 to 2006. Patients with a history of ESRD or who were admitted to hospice or a skilled nursing facility were excluded from the study.

The study’s independent variable was patients’ primary care utilization (defined by at least one visit to the PCP) at baseline. Covariates included patients’ demographics, neighborhood-level sociodemographics, region, clinical characteristics, and utilization measures. The independent variable and covariates were assessed in 2006. The researchers followed the participants over time (2007–2010) to determine whether they developed one of the two main outcomes of interest: ESRD or all-cause mortality. The researchers used standard and cause-specific Cox proportional hazard models for statistical analysis.

The study found that 81 percent of participants had at least one visit with a PCP during the baseline year. The researchers did not find a significant difference in PCP visits by age or gender, but they saw a significant difference by race, with greater PCP utilization observed among whites compared to blacks. The prevalence of diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease was greater among those patients with at least one PCP visit compared to patients who did not utilize primary care. Compared to patients with no primary care visits, patients with at least one visit had a 22 percent lower risk of death and a 19 percent lower risk for ESRD after adjusting for demographic, clinical, neighborhood, and utilization factors.

The researchers performed a variety of sensitivity analyses, which verified their results. Dr. Greer described some of the limitations of the study, which include the use of ICD-9-CM to identify patients with CKD, which may not capture all CKD patients; the lack of clinical information regarding patients’ kidney function, which limits the ability to adjust for disease severity at baseline; and unmeasured confounders.

The researchers concluded that primary care utilization is associated with a lower risk of death and development of ESRD among older adults with CKD. Therefore, primary care appears to play an important role in key clinical outcomes for patients with CKD. As such, efforts to improve the engagement of PCPs in the proactive care of patients with CKD represents an important strategy to improve the health of this high-risk population.

Discussion

Dr. Harris commented on the importance of this study, noting how critical it is to educate PCPs about the importance of being aware of CKD early in disease progression.

A participant asked what might be perceived as barriers to primary care utilization based on the study results. Dr. Greer stated that PCPs must engage patients and proactively follow them, rather than waiting until they visit with a problem. PCPs must ensure that patients comply with their diabetes and hypertension follow-up care. The participant asked for clarification regarding the inclusion criteria of the study. Dr. Greer explained that the researchers examined data from a 2-year period to determine whether patients had been diagnosed with CKD.

An attendee congratulated Dr. Greer on highlighting this topic and looks forward to her becoming an advocate on this issue. Addressing this issue is essential and will have a phenomenal impact on patient outcomes.
Mr. Stanford Mwasongwe described the results of a study on predicting incident CKD among participants in the Jackson Heart Study. Evidence that new markers are needed for predicting CKD include that established CKD risk factors do not fully explain prevalence in the community, the current risk profile does not identify individuals at risk of kidney disease progression efficiently, and the Modification of Diet in Renal Disease (MDRD) study showed that established CKD risk factors explained only 34 percent of the variance of renal disease progression. In particular, because of the paucity of data for African Americans, the prognostic significance of biomarkers in CKD incidence in this population is not well understood and requires further investigation, considering the ethnic differences that exist in levels of adiposity and circulating biomarkers. The hypotheses for the study were that (1) a multimarker panel representing distinct biologic pathways is associated with the development of CKD over time in the African American community, and (2) a full model involving biomarkers has a better predictive value than a reduced model without biomarkers.

The Jackson Heart Study is a population-based longitudinal investigation based in Jackson, Mississippi, of the risk factors for CVD among African Americans. The study began in 2000 and entailed three clinical exams, as well as ongoing surveillance for congestive heart disease, stroke, heart failure, and total mortality. The analysis population comprised 2,460 individuals who did not have CKD at baseline, who do have data on serum creatinine at Exams 1 and 3, and who are not missing data on biomarkers and covariates. Incident CKD was defined as an estimated glomerular filtration rate of less than 60 mL/minute/1.73 m² at Exam 3.

Two models were evaluated: traditional risk factors (Model 1) and traditional risk factors with a multimarker panel of biomarkers (Model 2). Traditional risk factors for CKD include age, sex, and body mass index; lipids; comorbidity (i.e., diabetes); a positive current smoking status; and blood pressure and blood pressure medications. The eight biomarkers included in the multimarker panel and their associated pathways were high sensitive C-reactive protein (inflammation), adiponectin and leptin (adiposity), b type natriuretic peptide (natriuretic), aldosterone and renin (neuro-hormonal), and homocysteine and endothelin (endothelial). In the data analyses, biomarkers were log-transformed and gender-standardized, and correlation among the biomarkers was evaluated by the principal component method. Logistic regression models were fit by a linear combination of the components of Models 1 and 2. The data analytical design was that the predictive value for CKD of Models 1 and 2 were to be compared by the likelihood ratio test, and if the entire biomarker panel was found to be significant, backward selection and Akaike Information Content were to be used to identify the most parsimonious set of biomarkers that was significant. Model predictive accuracy was assessed using the c-statistic, and the integrated discrimination index (IDI) was used to measure the biomarker model improvement in average sensitivity without sacrificing average specificity.

The investigators developed descriptive characteristics of the study population. The mean age was 53, 63 percent of the participants were women, 46.5 percent were taking blood pressure medication, and 16 percent had diabetes. The entire biomarker panel was found to be significant (p = 0.0009), and of the eight biomarkers, C reactive protein and adiponectin were found to be the best predictors of incident CKD (odds ratios of 1.46 and 1.24, respectively). C-reactive protein showed a linear, positive relationship with incident CKD. Adiponectin had a positive linear relationship with incident CKD at lower values of the biomarker that plateaued at higher levels. The relative IDI of Model 2 to Model 1 showed a small increase in predictive utility for incident CKD of 6.4 percent with the multimarker biomarker panel.
In summary, biomarker data showed that adiposity and inflammation were two important pathways in predicting incident CKD in the study cohort, but the increment in predictive utility of the multimarker panel was modest and might not be of clinical significance. Limitations of the study were that it was located in a single geographic location and might not apply to other populations, serum creatinine levels were available at only two time points 10 years apart, and the availability of biomarkers was limited.

Discussion

A participant asked about potential genetic modifiers of risk for CKD in African Americans, such as APOL1. A protective effect has been found for obesity in the association between APOL1 and CKD progression, implying a possible role for inflammation in CKD progression. Mr. Mwasongwe responded that genetic correlations with CKD risk had been explored.

A suggestion was made that fibroblast growth factor 23 might play a role in CKD progression, but Mr. Mwasongwe replied that the investigators had not explored this possibility in their study.

Phytochemical Profile and in Vivo Effects of Plant Extracts Used as Diabetes Adjuvants in Puerto Rico
Michelle Martínez-Montemayor, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Universidad Central del Caribe

Dr. Michelle Martínez-Montemayor described a bioscreening and validation study of antidiabetic herbal remedies used in Puerto Rico. The investigation combined the approaches of ethnopharmacology—which is the study of ethnic groups and their use of drugs, particularly plants as a main delivery of pharmaceuticals—and pharmacognosy, which is the study of drugs from natural origins, to determine the efficacy of the herbal remedies. The study was part of TRAMIL (www.tramil.net), a program that develops methods to validate the use of traditional medicine and is investigating more than 300 plants used to treat different ailments in Caribbean nations. Of the 11 municipalities in southeastern Puerto Rico in the TRAMIL Ethnopharmacological Survey, most (6) rely on medical consultation to treat their condition, but five use other alternatives as the first treatment: two use herbal remedies, and three use self-medication. Twelve of the 228 remedies surveyed were for diabetes, which within the United States occurs at the highest rate in Puerto Rico and is the third leading cause of death in the commonwealth. The most frequently used medical plants used as alternative or complementary treatments for diabetes in southeastern Puerto Rico are Tapeinochilos ananassae, Costus speciosus, and Syzygium jambos. T. ananassae and Costus spp., which has been widely studied for its antidiabetic effects, look alike and are commonly known as insulina, and S. jambos is a fruit tree known as pomarrosa del río.

Diabetes is a disease with a very complicated etiology. The effects of antidiabetic plant extracts on the physiopathology of diabetes—including protein glycation, sorbitol accumulation, and reactive oxygen species accumulation—are being studied in in vitro assays. Qualitative and quantitative characterization of methanolic and aqueous plant extracts revealed the presence of flavonoids, alkaloids, phenolic compounds, saponins, sterols, and tannins. T. ananassae had the highest concentrations of flavonoids and tannins, S. jambos showed the highest phenolic compounds, and C. speciosus had greater amounts of alkaloids. In vivo studies were performed using an animal model of type 2 diabetes, the C57BLKS/J (db/db) mouse, which is genetically obese as a result of the knockout of the leptin receptor via the db mutation and rapidly develops hyperglycemia and insulin resistance. The efficacy of the herbal remedies was tested via glucose and insulin tolerance tests after treatment with decoctions of plant leaves administered daily via oral gavage for 1, 5, and 10 weeks. The treatments had no significant effects on water
or feed intake or weight gains. The mice showed better glucose modulation when the plant extracts were administered in complement with an insulin injection, with blood glucose reaching nondetectable levels at 90 minutes after insulin injection for mice treated with *S. jambos* and *T. ananassae* for 10 weeks at levels similar to those consumed by people (2.2 mg/kg body weight).

These results are the first to show the qualitative and quantitative chemical profile of three plants commonly used by the Puerto Rican population to lower blood glucose levels. Phenolic compounds, found at highest concentrations in *S. jambos*, are powerful antioxidants. Flavonoids, which act as insulin secretagogues, and tannins, which may regulate carbohydrate metabolism, were found at higher concentrations in *T. ananassae*. *S. jambos* showed the best *in vivo* efficacy in lowering blood glucose levels, and the plant extracts used with insulin modulated glucose better than controls in animal models.

**Discussion**

A participant asked about plans for investigating insulin resistance in patients using the teas. Dr. Martínez-Montemayor responded that although this would be worthwhile to study, her team currently is focusing on mechanistic studies.

A suggestion was made that using a 154-pound body weight might overestimate the dose that patients are receiving, but Dr. Martínez-Montemayor responded that 154 pounds is the standard weight used in the literature.

When asked about consumption of the antidiabetic plants in other regions, Dr. Martínez-Montemayor confirmed that they are used in other islands in the Caribbean region as well.

A participant questioned why diabetes rates are so high if the teas really are protective. Dr. Martínez-Montemayor responded that only a small population uses the teas. This population does not have resources to use other medicines. High diabetes rates also could be caused by genetic factors.

When asked to speculate about the mechanism by which the antidiabetic extracts are working, Dr. Martínez-Montemayor answered that this question still is being explored.

Dr. Martínez-Montemayor was asked whether she collaborates with local healers who use these plants. She responded that her work is trying to promote the validation of the use of natural products and overcome the stigma that the natural compounds are not sufficiently potent. The plants contain a combination of compounds and may be effective cures within their cultural context.

**POSTER SESSION AWARDS**

The workshop's three scientific presenters, who were selected from the pool of submitted abstracts, were presented with plaques commemorating their achievement. All of the meeting participants who presented posters at this year’s workshop were thanked for their time and willingness to share their research with the NMRI community. The three winners of the poster session awards were then announced and congratulated. The winners in the categories of Basic, Translational, and Clinical Science were—

**Basic Science Poster Award**

Mariya Sweetwyne, Ph.D., Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Washington

“Preservation of Glomerular Architecture in Aged Mice by Systemic Late-stage Intervention with Mitochondrial Protective Peptide, SS-31”
**Translational Science Poster Award**  
*Essa Mohamed, Doctoral Student, Mayo Clinic*  
“Evaluating Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors about Viral Hepatitis and Hepatocellular Carcinoma among Recent African Immigrants in Minnesota: A Community-Engaged Qualitative Study”

**Clinical Science Poster Award**  
*Ebele Umeukeje, M.D., Professor, Vanderbilt School of Medicine*  
“Perceived Competence Is Related to Phosphorus Control in End-stage Renal Disease”

**NEXT STEPS AND ADJOURNMENT**  
*Heather Tarleton, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Loyola Marymount University*

Dr. Tarleton invited the current and upcoming chairs of the Oversight and Planning Committees to offer closing comments. Dr. Cubano, chair of the 2016 Oversight Committee, thanked the participants for attending and looks forward to seeing everyone next year. Dr. Edwards, chair of the 2017 Planning Committee, thanked the committee chairs and members who have served this year and said he is looking forward to making next year’s meeting a success. Ms. Martinez left the participants with a final request and reminder to update their NMRI profile; she was thanked by all the attendees with a round of applause for all of her hard work coordinating the workshop. Dr. Tarleton concluded by thanking the participants once again and wishing everyone safe travels.