2017
Network of Minority Health Research Investigators Directory

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Network of Minority Health Research Investigators History and Mission

In 1999, 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 Disorders (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—African American, Hispanic American, American Indian, Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islanders—to address that need.

The primary mission of the Network of Minority Health Research Investigators (NMRI, or the Network) 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 NMRI members and the NIDDK. Through the Network, 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. 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., MACP

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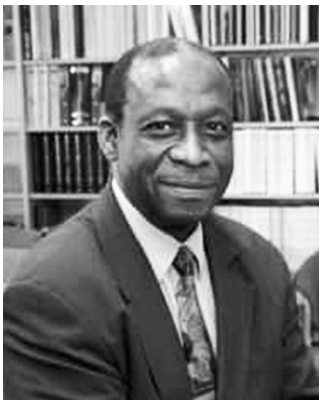
Dr. Griffin P. Rodgers was named Director of the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)—one of the National Institutes of Health (NIH)—on April 1, 2007. He had served as NIDDK's Acting Director since March 2006 and had been the Institute's Deputy Director since January 2001. As the Director of 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 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 an M.B.A., 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-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 and his collaborators recently reported on a modified blood stem-cell transplant regimen that is highly effective in reversing sickle cell disease in adults and is associated with relatively low toxicity. He has been 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 both nationally and internationally. He has been honored with many named lectureships at American medical centers and has published more than 200 original research articles, reviews, and book chapters; has edited four books and monographs; and holds three patents.

Dr. Rodgers is a member of the American Society of Hematology, the American Society of Clinical Investigation, the Association of American Physicians, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the National Academy of Medicine, among others. He served as Governor to the American College of Physicians and as Chair of the Hematology Subspecialty Board and as a member of the American Board of Internal Medicine's Board of Directors.



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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 at NIDDK; and Co-Project Officer of the end-stage renal disease renal database, the United States Renal Data System.

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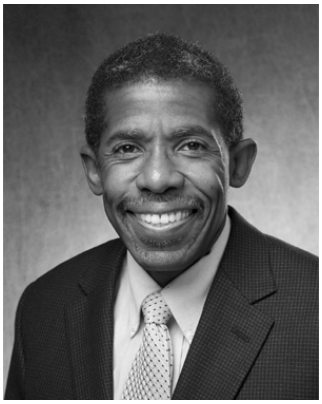
NMRI Attendees



E. Dale Abel, M.D., Ph.D.

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John B. Stokes III Chair in Diabetes Research
Chair and Department Executive Officer, Department of Internal Medicine
Director, Fraternal Order of Eagles Diabetes Research Center
Director, Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism
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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.

Ingrid Richards Adams, Ph.D., R.D., LD, LDE

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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 American, Hispanic, and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander) populations.

Adebowale Adebiyi, Ph.D.

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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.

Oreoluwa Adedoyin, Ph.D.

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Research Interests

My current research is focused on understanding the role of heme oxygenase-1 (HO-1) in modulation of immune responses during development (health) and in response to renal injury due to ferroptotic cell death. HO-1 is a cytoprotective, potent antioxidant enzyme, which is induced as an adaptive and beneficial response to injury. It has been shown to be protective in animal models and several clinically important conditions, such as acute renal failure, transplant rejection, angiogenesis, and atherosclerosis. Ferroptosis is an iron-dependent form of regulated, non-apoptotic cell death that is triggered under conditions of glutathione depletion and/or inactivation of glutathione peroxidase 4 (GPX4). Recent research shows that ferroptosis may mediate cell death and tubular damage in models of acute kidney injury. Even though HO-1 is protective against kidney injury, it is a source of intracellular iron (required for ferroptosis), due to its ability to catabolize the breakdown of toxic heme into iron, biliverdin, and carbon monoxide. Therefore, the goal of my research is to elucidate the role of HO-1 in the regulation of ferroptosis and to understand the mechanisms by which ferroptotic cell death activates the immune system and propagates renal damage.

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Research Interests
My research is clinical-based and is focused on understanding and evaluating outcomes, incidence, prevalence, and mortality brought about due to the opioid epidemic. These aspects are being considered on global, national, and state levels, especially in the state of West Virginia, which is currently the most affected location.

Emilyn Alejandro, Ph.D.

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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.

Larry D. Alexander, Ph.D.

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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.

David B. Allison, Ph.D.

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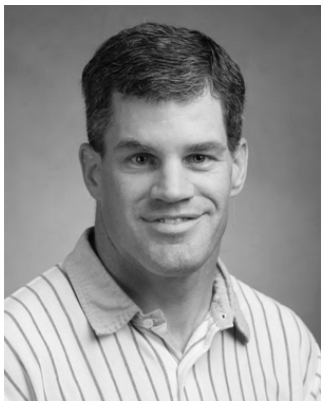
Research Interests

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. The scope of 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.

Maria Rosario (Happy) Araneta, Ph.D.

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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.

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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 Research 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.

Tiffany R. Beckman, M.D., M.P.H.

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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.

Shawn M. Bediako, Ph.D.

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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.

Ruby Benjamin-Garner, Ph.D., M.P.H.

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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.

Rhonda Bentley-Lewis, M.D., M.B.A., M.M.Sc.

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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.

Shirley A. Blanchard, Ph.D.

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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.

Nawal Boukli, Ph.D.

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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.

Susan D. Brown, Ph.D.

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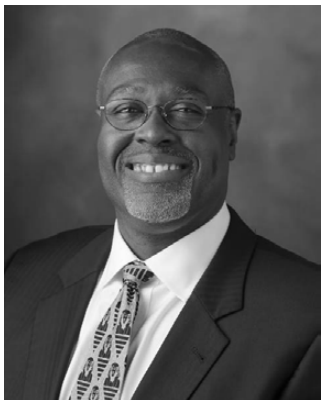
Research Interests

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.



Marino A. Bruce, Ph.D., M.Div., MRSC

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Research Interests

I am a social and behavioral scientist with interests in the integration of the full range of health determinants, specifically for African American males and their risk factors for chronic kidney disease and cardiovascular disease. My current research explores the intersection of race, gender, spirituality, religiosity, and behavior and their implications for social and health outcomes among African American male boys, adolescents, and emerging adults. I serve as a bridge between scientific and faith communities in order to leverage their respective strengths to improve the health of disadvantaged and disenfranchised males, their families, and their communities.

Gregory W. Buck, Ph.D.

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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.

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.

Hector Carbajal, M.D.

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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

I am a board-certified gastroenterologist and clinical hepatologist with extensive training in metabolism. My research focuses on the mechanisms of insulin resistance in alcoholic fatty liver disease (ALD) and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD). We have found a critical role of the major hepatic lipid droplet proteins—Perilipin 2 (PLIN2) and Perilipin 3 (PLIN3)—in development of hepatic steatosis, glucose tolerance, and insulin sensitivity in mouse models of ALD and NAFLD. Reduction of hepatocellular lipid metabolites, such as ceramides and diacylglycerol, correlate with improvements in insulin sensitivity in these models. Current investigations in my laboratory include elucidating the interaction of lipid droplet proteins with lipid metabolites in impairment of insulin signaling using comprehensive *in vivo* metabolic studies, genetic models, and cellular approaches. These studies form the basis for translational studies investigating the prognostic and pathologic role of lipids and lipid-associated proteins in patients with ALD and NAFLD. In addition to my laboratory research, I am a clinical hepatologist who specializes in the care of patients with ALD and NAFLD. I am a member of the American Gastroenterological Association, American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases, European Association for the Study of the Liver, Research Society of Alcoholism, and an editorial board member of *JSM Gastroenterology and Hepatology*.

April P. Carson, Ph.D., M.S.P.H.

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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.

Victor V. Chaban, Ph.D., M.S.C.R.

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Research Interests

I am 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.*

Healani K. Chang, Dr.P.H.

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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.

Blanche M. Chavers, M.D.

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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 study, and the Systolic Pressure Intervention Trial (SPRINT) and SPRINT MIND.

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Research Interests

My research interests include health disparities related to diabetes/diabetes complications among adults, children, and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I am also interested in cancer disparities among breast cancer survivors.

Leonor Corsino, M.D., M.H.S., FACE

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Research Interests

I am an Associate 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 with a special interest in the Hispanic/Latino population. I have approached this interest through a diverse array of research studies, which include (1) community engagement projects; (2) implementation studies; (3) intervention studies; (4) studies increasing our understanding of biological factors, and (5) epidemiologic studies. I also have a strong interest in increasing diversity and work closely with underrepresented minority students.

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

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Associate Vice Chair for Diversity and Inclusion, Department of Medicine
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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 underrepresented 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).

Daisy D. De León, Ph.D.

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Research Interests

My main research interest is studying the role of insulin-like growth factor 2 (IGF-2) in breast cancer and diabetes on health disparities among African American (AA) women. My laboratory has published on IGF-2 actions in the development, progression, and metastasis of breast cancer among AA women. A current emphasis in my laboratory is to determine the mechanisms that link IGF-2, diabetes, and the breast cancer survival disparity observed among AA women. A recently published observation linked IGF-2, diabetes, and breast cancer in a series of studies that integrated *in vivo* cell analyses with breast cancer tissues from AA women. In addition, my laboratory is focusing on the mechanisms of IGF-2 regulation of the mitochondria at the intersection of breast cancer and diabetes. Further, my team is investigating how dietary supplements and anti-inflammatory drugs regulate IGF-2 to prevent cancer. In so doing, my research team integrates the cellular and molecular *in vivo* studies performed in established breast cancer cell lines with animal model studies and tumor tissue analyses to advance the translational significance of the research.

Clarissa Jonas Diamantidis, M.D., M.H.S.

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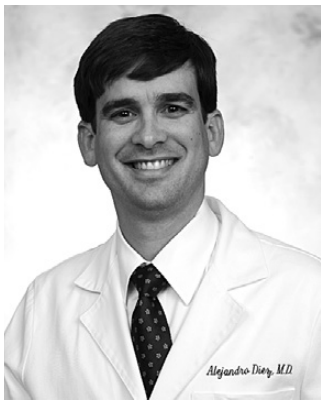
Research Interests

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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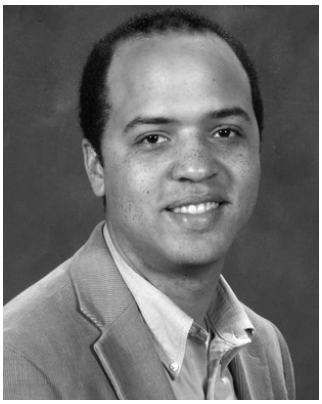
Research Interests

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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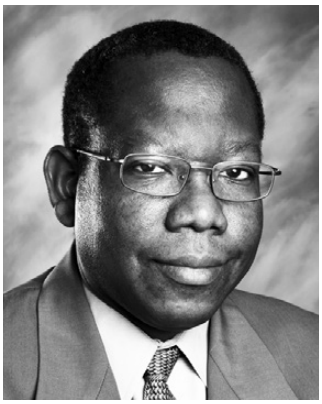
Research Interests

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, et cetera? 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, et cetera? 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.



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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
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 a 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 of the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*.

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Research Interests

I earned a Master of Public Health in Biostatistics from the University of Puerto Rico, and a doctoral degree in Community Health Sciences from the University of Illinois at Chicago 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 Hispanics/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 Hispanics/Latinos to inform the development of multilevel interventions.

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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 IBD, 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 Pennsylvania State University 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.

Marta Amaral Figueroa, Ph.D.

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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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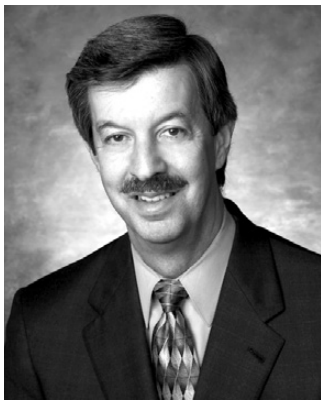
Research Interests

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.

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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.

Trudy Gaillard, Ph.D., R.N., FAHA, CDE

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Research Interests

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 self-management education programs. My studies have focused on differences in metabolic syndrome, insulin resistance, and its correlates in African Americans and white Americans. I am interested in developing culturally specific, community-based diabetes self-management and support programs aimed at prevention and management of prediabetes, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and cognitive impairment.

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.

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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 levels. I also am interested in adolescent health and examining the relationship between educational attainment and health.

Sherita Hill Golden, M.D., M.H.S.

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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.

Gabriel Gonzalez, Ph.D.

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Research Interests

I am a research scientist and Instructor of Medicine in the laboratory of Dr. Natasha Frank at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School. My research is focused in the area of stem cell and cancer biology and regenerative medicine. Mouse models are used to study the role of ATP-binding cassette sub-family B member 5 (ABCB5)-positive cells during organogenesis and how they contribute to eye, gastrointestinal tract, and skin development, as well as cancer initiation. Throughout my research experience, I have been afforded the opportunity to characterize the population of adult stem cells capable of (1) maintaining tissue homeostasis and (2) assisting tissue regeneration. My research interests also are focused on investigating the mechanisms within this model system that when altered could lead to cancer initiation.

Eddie L. Greene, M.D.

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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.

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Research Interests
A primary focus of my research is to integrate measures of the social and built environments into disease models with the goal of effectively addressing the impact of disease risk in ethnic minority and vulnerable populations. My long-term goal is to use these models to develop targeted programs that consider the individual-level risk factors associated with the onset of disease within the context of social and environmental influences.

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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Director, Physician Scientist Training Program
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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."

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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.

Sam Headley, Ph.D., ACSM-RCEP, FACSM

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Research Interests

My research interest is focused on the impact of lifestyle interventions (e.g., diet and exercise training) on cardiovascular disease in patients with chronic kidney disease (CKD). This is of interest to me, an exercise scientist, because most CKD patients are at a greater risk of dying prematurely from cardiovascular disease. Over the years, our research has shown that CKD patients can exercise safely and derive great benefit when they adopt healthy lifestyle habits that assist with their other medically focused treatments.

Patricia C. Heyn, Ph.D., FGSA, FACRM

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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 such disabilities 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.

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Research Interests

I am a nephrologist with a clinical practice focused on chronic kidney disease, dialysis maintenance care, and kidney transplantation. My clinical research interests have been two-pronged. My epidemiology and/or health care delivery science investigations have examined (1) biomarkers of premature death and/or progressive kidney failure in transplant and community hypertensive subjects and (2) factors associated with kidney function recovery, hospitalizations, and premature death in incident dialysis patients. Supported by an NIDDK Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award (K23), my translational investigations also examine mesenchymal stromal/stem cell function and senescence in individuals with diabetic kidney disease. These investigations will help assess the feasibility of a regenerative medicine approach to delaying the progression of diabetic kidney disease.

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.

Mandy J. Hill, Dr.P.H., M.P.H.

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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

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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.

Sula Hood, Ph.D., M.P.H.

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Research Interests

My research agenda has a strong emphasis on addressing chronic disease health disparities in ethnic minorities and disadvantaged populations, and focuses on the development of community-based interventions to increase social support, peer support, and health communication. In so doing, these interventions will serve as critical strategies for promoting chronic disease prevention and coping and self-management practices. Disease topics of primary interest include diabetes, cancer, and lupus. In collaboration with African American families, I have been successful in incorporating health-promoting activities at black family reunions. Also, my current line of research is focused on identifying patterns of communication about health in African American families, and developing culturally sensitive strategies to (1) promote awareness of the importance of family health history sharing among African Americans and (2) increase family health history sharing and collection in African American families. My research utilizes the mixed-methods approach and incorporates both qualitative and quantitative methodology, including social network analyses.

Marja M. Hurley, M.D.

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Research Interests

My research is focused on the role of fibroblast growth factor-2 (FGF2) in bone, which led to seminal observations on the importance of FGF2 in maintaining bone mass. My laboratory was the first to demonstrate that FGF2 expression in bone cells is increased by parathyroid hormone, the only U.S. Food and Drug Administration–approved anabolic agent for the treatment of osteoporosis in the United States. Recently, my team demonstrated a novel role for the nuclear isoforms of FGF2 in phosphate homeostasis and was awarded a grant from the NIDDK to study the potential role of these isoforms in the human disorder X-linked hypophosphatemic rickets.

Tod Ibrahim

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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 The 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 multiscale 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 re-generation and how this is impacted by the aging process. Our focus is translational for clinical applications for stem cell use.

Chandra L. Jackson, Ph.D., M.S.

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Research Interests

My research focuses on investigating how the attributes of neighborhood, housing, and work conditions affect sleep health (i.e., insufficient sleep duration and inadequate sleep quality) and cardiometabolic dysfunction (e.g., obesity, type 2 diabetes or cardiovascular disease) in under-resourced populations. In addition to identifying the biological mechanisms by which factors in the physical, chemical, and social environments affect health and contribute to health inequities, I am interested in the translation of epidemiologic findings into novel environmental interventions, policies, and practices that address structural, macro-level, and individual-level barriers to achieving and maintaining optimal health.

Cynthia Ann Jackson, Ph.D., M.S.

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Research Interests

My area of research interest is renal physiology, focusing on understanding how the heterogeneous segments of the kidney regulate various parameters involved in water and electrolyte balances. My research projects have included identifying urinary protein markers associated with various pathophysiological diseases, specifically sodium-induced hypertension. My second and most recent project involved investigating signal transduction pathways and biomarkers involved in cell proliferation of renal carcinoma.

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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.

Danese Joiner, Ph.D.

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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.

Stacey 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 completed an NIH K23 Career Development Award.

Holly J. Jones, Ph.D., R.N., CFNP

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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.

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Research Interests

I am a behavioral nurse scientist interested in eliminating the health disparities affecting African American women with hypertension. My program of research is focused on uncovering the mechanisms—biological, psychological, social, and physical—of self-management interventions. Neuroimaging techniques (e.g., functional magnetic resonance imaging) are being used to explore the neuroprocesses associated with self-management behaviors, such as diet, exercise, and medication uptake. I also examine how health information behavior (seeking, sharing, and use) can be enhanced to support blood pressure self-management. My current studies are focused on designing and pilot-testing interventions to improve blood pressure self-management among African American women.

Letitia Jones, Ph.D.

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Research Interests

Despite the virus' 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 lead to induction of key antibodies.

Patricia D. Jones, M.D., M.S.C.R.

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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.

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Research Interests

My laboratory is interested in deciphering the cause of genitourinary birth defects with emphasis on the importance of mitochondrial function in the development of the genitourinary tract. Additionally, I am interested in delineating the genetic defects related to male infertility. Undescended testis is the most common birth defect, affecting 6 percent of males born, and is one of the most common causes of testicular cancer. Using state-of-the-art genetics, I discovered in these patients' genetic defects several transcription factors, including E2F1, ALX4 and OTX1, and that these transcription factors influence several signaling pathways, in particular the WNT signaling pathway. In addition, efforts are focused on understanding the mechanisms of nuclear mitochondrial genes and pathways involved in such diverse processes as the cell cycle, apoptosis, sexual development, and cell-cell interactions working together in a vast network to promote proper formation and function of the gonads and the lower urinary tract. Notably, human and mouse genetics have become the centerpiece of translational research in which the application of genetic knowledge to benefit human health has never looked more promising.

Joshua J. Joseph, M.D.

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Research Interests

My research is focused on understanding risk factors in the development of obesity and type 2 diabetes in diverse populations. My group examines classical risk factors for diabetes and obesity, including physical activity, dietary intake, smoking, cholesterol, blood pressure, and adiposity and potential racial/ethnic differences. We also examine the role of novel risk factors, including adrenal hormones and the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis—specifically aldosterone and cortisol—in the development of diabetes and obesity using data from longitudinal observational cohorts, including the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA), Jackson Heart Study, Coronary Artery Risk Development in Young Adults Study (CARDIA) and REasons for Geographic and Racial Differences in Stroke (REGARDS). The hypotheses generated using epidemiological approaches is used to design and execute detailed metabolic clinical studies to uncover explanatory mechanisms as potential targets for prevention of diabetes and obesity.

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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.

Myra A. Kleinpeter, M.D., M.P.H.

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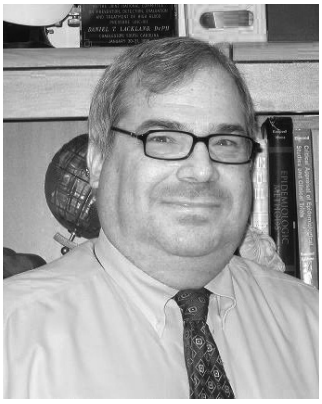
Research Interests

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.



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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's *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 the 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*.

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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.

Maudry-Beverley Lashley, Ph.D.

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Research Interests

I am a clinical/developmental tenured Associate Professor. My research and scholarship interests are concentrated in the areas of evidence-based practice with a focus on black women and gender issues, alcohol, depression and other psychiatric illnesses, domestic violence, health disparities, and community participatory research. My current research is focusing on cardiovascular illnesses.

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.

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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.

Shirleatha T. Lee, Ph.D., R.N., CNE

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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.

Zeenat A. 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 and a few hundred more that result in other immunological problems.

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Research Interests

My primary research focuses on socio-environmental and bio-behavioral factors in development and implementation of community-based interventions for cardiometabolic risk reduction with underserved communities. My research interest includes multiple risk reduction, as well as community-engaged intervention development and implementation. My research combines advocacy and science to inform best practices for building, enhancing, and sustaining partnerships with communities; contributing expertise in the intersection of community and health systems with underserved populations. My commitment to multiple risk reduction stems from my long-term commitment to health equity and health disparities research.

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Research Interests

My long-term research interests are biochemical and molecular mechanisms of xenobiotic-induced hepatotoxicity and defining compensatory responses to liver injury that enhance tissue resistance to toxicant re-exposure. My laboratory also studies the role of ABC transporters in the development of resistance to the action of hepatotoxic chemicals. My group has a longstanding interest in investigating the biochemical and genetic determinants of the mode of action of chemicals (natural and synthetic) with hepatoprotective properties. More recently, my group has been employing transcriptomic and system biological approaches to identify novel genetic determinants of susceptibility to drug-induced hepatotoxicity.

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 regard 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.

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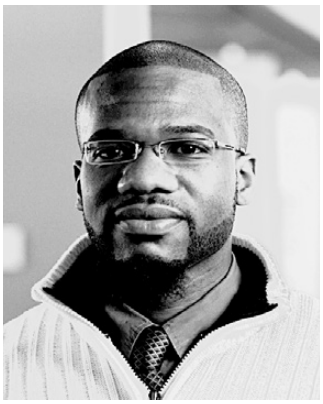
Research Interests

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.

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

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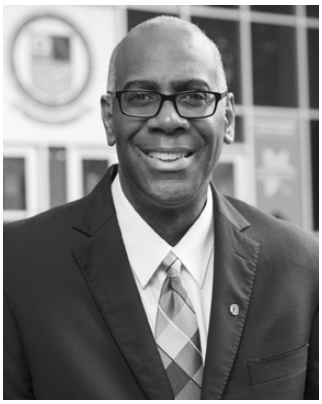
Research Interests

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.



Leon McDougle, M.D., M.P.H.

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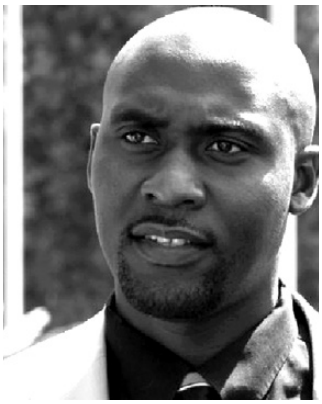
Research Interests

My career has been focused on eliminating health disparities and increasing the diversity of the biomedical and behavioral science workforce. I have enjoyed serving as a mentor, cultural competence expert, attending physician, and advisor for undergraduate students, residents, fellows, graduate and postdoctoral students, and faculty. I have had the good fortune to serve a wide range of learners, including a psychology postdoctoral fellow, dietetics graduate student, and Albert Schweitzer fellow. I was recruited to The Ohio State University to establish the Urban Family Medicine Residency program, serving as its founding program director until 2006. I currently serve as a Co-Principal Investigator for a National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities R01-funded research initiative led by Dr. Joseph Kitzmiller to determine the influence of CYP3A4*22 on simvastatin pharmacokinetics in African Americans that may help decrease health care outcome disparities. In addition, I serve as a Co-Investigator for the National Institute of General Medical Sciences-funded DISCOVERY Postbaccalaureate Research Education Program (PREP), which aims to increase diversity of Ph.D. and M.D./Ph.D. biomedical scientists.



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Research Interests

My research interests are (1) investigating the mechanism of action of imidazoline compounds in sensitizing cancer cells to anticancer agents; and (2) investigating the mechanism of action of imidazoline compounds in the treatment of insulin resistance, hypertension, and metabolic syndrome X.

Ketrell L. McWhorter, Ph.D., M.B.A.

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Research Interests

My research interests are in using a life-course perspective to investigate racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic disparities in perinatal and early childhood outcomes (e.g., birth weight, infant mortality, preterm birth, and childhood obesity) by integrating social and lifestyle (e.g., sleep) factors with biological mechanisms. I also seek to integrate upstream factors of the physical and social environment into studies exploring biological mechanisms to more comprehensively investigate the biological underpinnings of disparities in later-life cardiometabolic health. This approach will help to identify modifiable factors in under-resourced populations to address disparities and promote optimum health. My most recent project involved examining the association between traumatic childhood experiences with sleep characteristics in adulthood.

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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.

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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.

Evangeline Motley, Ph.D.

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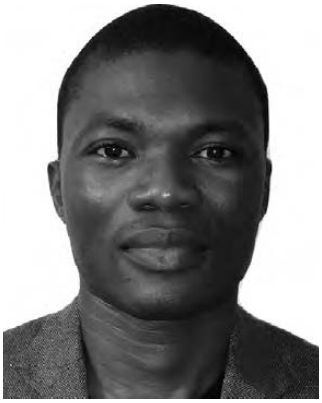
Research Interests

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.

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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.

Kwame Osei, M.D., FACE, FACP

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Research Interests

My research interests include type 2 diabetes mellitus, obesity metabolism, and race/ethnicity.

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Research Interests

The overall focus of research in my laboratory is to elucidate G protein signaling mechanisms that are critical to normal function and pathobiology of the circulatory system, including the heart, vasculature, and kidney. Our work specifically focuses on elucidating the mechanisms by which defects in G protein signaling regulation by regulators of G protein signaling (RGS) proteins are involved in the pathogenesis of cardiovascular and renal disease. We also are interested in understanding the mechanisms of hypertension and renal dysfunction resulting from deficiency in the extracellular matrix protein elastin.

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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.

Teresita Padilla-Benavides, Ph.D.

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Research Interests

My laboratory conducts systematic studies that combine a variety of molecular and cell biology techniques into biological models, including established cell lines and primary cultures. We incorporate diverse biochemistry techniques combined with high-resolution, cutting-edge synchrotron-based X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy. In particular, we study skeletal muscle differentiation as muscle presents an elevated intrinsic need for transition metals like copper (Cu) for proper function. Copper ion (Cu+) is required for mitochondrial energy production as a fundamental component of cytochrome c oxidase, which is elevated during the course of differentiation. We hypothesize that the proper cellular distribution of Cu+ has a leading role in the differentiation of the muscle lineage. We have evidence that supports different cellular roles for Cu in addition to energy production. Moreover, we hypothesize that diverse devastating myopathies are associated with Cu deficiencies at different levels, from mitochondrial Cu-transport and function to general cellular failure in Cu homeostasis and gene regulation. We hope to provide novel molecular mechanisms to improve our understanding of the basis for the muscular phenotypes observed in mitochondrial myopathies, including Menkes and Wilson's disease patients.

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.

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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.

Michelle Penn-Marshall, Ph.D.

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Research Interests

I am an experienced academician with a strong background in teaching, research, and community outreach. Throughout 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.

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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., M.Ed.

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Research Interests

My research focuses on a system-based intervention to address gaps in the management of diabetes and dysglycemia in the hospital setting. This work is inherently translational and employs advanced information technology through electronic health records to promote and test standards of care. Through the use of our validated Diabetes Clinical Decision Support Tool, we will assess the impact of various modalities of decision support in the management, documentation and continuity of care domains of practice, and their associated clinical and economic endpoints related to inpatient diabetes.

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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.

Candice Allister Price, Ph.D.

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Research Interests

As an African American woman, I have witnessed the high prevalence of type 2 diabetes (T2D), cardiovascular disease (CVD) and psychological stress that plays a role in contributing to the metabolic health disparities that plague our communities. As a scientist, my primary goal is to conduct research that aids in the reduction of health disparities in African Americans and other high-risk minority communities. My work includes investigating mechanisms that explain the paradoxical healthy metabolic profile of African American women, a group that suffers the highest risk of CVD mortality. Current studies include cross-sectional studies comparing metabolic outcomes of African American women with Caucasian women, plus the conduct of well-controlled diet intervention studies investigating the mechanisms by which sugar-sweetened beverage consumption increases risk factors associated with cardiovascular disease and T2D in African American women. A secondary component of my research involves understanding the role of psychological stress on metabolic disease development in African American women, and the potential synergistic effects of added sugar consumption on metabolic processes. Outcome metrics include measures of glucose and lipid metabolism, fat distribution, the gut microbiome, post-transcriptional modification of relevant genes, and hypothalamic responses. As a Dean's Scholar in Women's Health under the Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health Scholars Program at UC Davis, my primary research objective is to gain training and research opportunity that will allow me to establish an independent research program investigating obesity and cardiometabolic disease prevention in African American women.

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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 multilevel determinants of disparities in health care quality, shared treatment decision making, and disease self-management for patients with chronic kidney disease, diabetes, and hypertension. I also lead the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Equity's educational and training initiatives for public health and clinical researchers working to advance health equity.

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 co-morbidities. 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.

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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.

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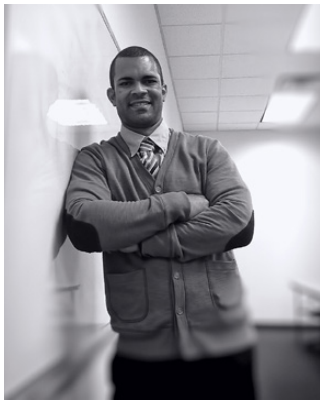
Research Interests

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.



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Research Interests

The primary goal of my research group is to provide further insight into the immuno-physiological health effects that airborne pollutants of different chemical origins induce once they cross the human respiratory barrier in susceptible individuals (e.g., people suffering from chronic respiratory conditions and chronic autoimmunological conditions). We seek to address our scientific questions by integrating human-based immunophysiological approaches, molecular biology, and computational biology to identify gene, protein, and metabolic profiles that increase the immune-toxicological likelihood from air pollution among susceptible individuals, and that may contribute to shift from acute to chronic reprogramming of the immune system pro-inflammatory responses.

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.

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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.

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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.

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Research Interests

My major research interests are threefold. First is the investigation of molecular mechanisms of aldosterone-mediated cardiac and renal injury and dysfunction. Excess aldosterone (ALDO) causes hypertension and cardiac hypertrophy, inflammation, fibrosis, and dysfunction. Primary aldosteronism (PA) is a human pathology characterized by the excess autonomous secretion of ALDO by the adrenal gland and is associated with severe cardio-renal damage. PA is the most common cause of secondary hypertension. Despite the prevalence of PA and its deleterious consequences, the molecular mechanisms that mediate the onset and progression of ALDO-mediated cardiac injury and dysfunction remain poorly understood. We use a variety of experimental models, ranging from cell lines to animal models, and apply a range of molecular, cellular, and physiology techniques to elucidate the genes, pathways, and networks modulated by excess ALDO. We aim to elucidate potential targets that we can manipulate to abolish or mitigate the deleterious cardiac and renal effects of excess ALDO observed in patients with PA. Second is the role and regulation of microRNAs in aldosterone-mediated cardiac and renal injury and dysfunction studies. MicroRNAs (miRNAs) are short endogenous noncoding RNAs that exert their biological effects by downregulating the expression levels of specific genes. Several miRNAs have been implicated in cardiovascular disease. However, the role of miRNAs in ALDO-mediated cardiac and renal injury and dysfunction remains largely unknown. We use animal experimental models of PA to elucidate the miRNAs regulated by excess ALDO in the cardiovascular and renal systems. Furthermore, we manipulate candidate target miRNAs by pharmacological or genetic means to elucidate the role of these particular miRNAs in the onset and progression of cardiac and renal injury triggered by excess ALDO. We aim to identify candidate miRNAs to manipulate them by pharmacological means to abolish or mitigate the deleterious cardiac and renal phenotype observed in patients with PA. Third, we aim to determine the role of miRNAs in acetaminophen (APAP)-induced acute liver failure (ALF). ALF is characterized by severe and sudden loss of hepatocellular function in patients with previously normal liver function, leading, in many cases, to multiorgan system failure and death. In the United States, drug-induced liver injury is the main cause of ALF, and acetaminophen APAP intoxication accounts for about 50 percent of the cases. Current therapies are suboptimal; therefore, alternative or complementary pharmacological interventions and therapies are desperately needed for individuals suffering from APAP-induced ALF. MiRNAs, as a family, have been implicated in liver zonation, but no individual candidates have been identified. Moreover, APAP-induced ALF is a zonal pathological event. We aim to identify miRNAs that temporally disrupt liver zonation and other possible mechanisms that may be manipulated pharmacologically to abolish or mitigate the effects of APAP-induced ALF.

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.

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Research Interests

My primary research interest is the epidemiology of cardiovascular and metabolic complications of patients with chronic kidney disease. I am a Principal Investigator for the NIDDK APOLLO Network and the Kidney Precision Medicine Project. I also am an ancillary study investigator for the Chronic Renal Insufficiency Cohort Study and the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis. I am an investigator in the PERL study, which is a randomized trial of the effects of allopurinol on progression of diabetic nephropathy. I also direct the Latino Kidney Clinic at the Joslin Diabetes Center. I am currently the chair for the Minority Affairs Committee for UNOS. In 2017, I received two NIDDK awards: APOLLO Network U01 and Kidney Precision Medicine Project. Ug3/UH3. I recently collaborated on "Choice of Hemodialysis Access in Older Adults: A Cost-Effectiveness Analysis," published by the *Clinical Journal of the American Society of Nephrology* in June 2017.

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

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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. Last, 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*.

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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.

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Research Interests

As a nurse researcher, I am one of the few Filipina researcher investigators focused on health promotion and obesity-related chronic disease prevention among Asian Americans, particularly Filipinos. My studies center on community-engaged participatory research trials to reduce health disparities and improve health equity. To this end, my research expertise is in implementing culturally adapted weight loss lifestyle interventions using mobile technology to reduce obesity-related cardiovascular, hypertension, and diabetes risks in high-risk, underrepresented minority populations.

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.

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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.

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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. My laboratory is not only the home base for my research program, but also 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 microRNA and gene expression in lung cells in response to oxidative stress triggered by ozone and hyperoxia.

Omar Sims, Ph.D.

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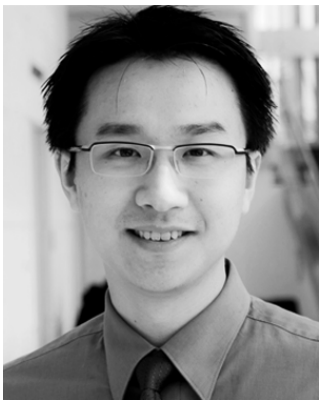
Research Interests

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.



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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, such as Tai Chi, dual task training. I also extend my research to minority populations, such as Latino older adults. My second research area focuses on motor learning in human performance. It includes skill acquisition, medical education, simulation technology, and telemedicine.

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Research Interests

I received my doctorate from the University of Houston in 2016 and am currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention at Arizona State University (ASU). My doctoral work focused on community-based health promotion in underserved populations. My interests in this area led me to seek additional training in understanding the relationship between physical activity, inactivity, and cardiometabolic risk factors in order to inform the development of community-based interventions and strategies that reduce disease and the burden of disparities in minority youth. My current work at ASU is centered on developing family-focused interventions to reduce diabetes risk factors in obese, prediabetic Latino youth.

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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.

Fatima Cody Stanford, M.D., M.P.H., M.P.A., FAAP, FACP, FTOS

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Research Interests

As an obesity medicine physician scientist trained in internal medicine and pediatrics, I have diverse research interests in obesity and health policy. My research has focused on treatment modalities for obesity in the pediatric and adult populations (behavior, pharmacotherapy, and weight loss surgery). I have also evaluated international and domestic policy issues related to effective treatment of obesity. My work has focused on leveraging a multimodal, multisector approach to the treatment of obesity.

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.

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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.

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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 three 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

My research at the University of Washington focuses on the cellular aspects of aging kidneys and chronic kidney diseases. Specifically, I use my training as a cell biologist to study how the epithelial cells of renal glomerular filtration units respond to various injuries. I am most interested in the mechanisms of when and how these responses either balance tissue homeostasis or result in fibrotic disease pathologies. Most recently, my work has contributed to the understanding of how regulation of mitochondrial structure can prevent age-induced glomerulosclerosis. Beyond my work in basic and translational science, I am committed to finding ways to provide research experiences to students who might not otherwise have access to the bench. I spent the first 3 years of my postdoctoral training as a Research and Teaching Fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, where I performed my teacher training primarily in minority-serving institutions. During this time, I created a project designed to engage students enrolled in a traditional classroom setting through the biomedical research experience of hypothesis-driven experimental design and result interpretation. As I continue to develop my research career, I also intend to discover ways to expand on this outreach experience through collaborations with other researchers and educators.

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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.

Last, 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.

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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 on providing used laboratory equipment. In my role in the Professional Science Master's 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.

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Research Interests

Research in my laboratory is focused on three key areas: (1) genetic deconvolution and population structure of sickle cell disease (including functionality of complement regulatory genes in sickle cell pathophysiology); (2) metagenomics and expression profiling of *Leishmania mexicana* persistent parasitemia and chronic disease; and (3) 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.

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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.

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Research Interests

My research interests include nonpharmacologic 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 toward understanding the influence of key novel psychosocial factors on adherence and self-care in patients with kidney disease and will inform evidence-based, patient-centered innovative approaches to improve 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.e., minority groups). I have specifically assessed the impact of psychosocial factors mediated by self-determination theory, such as autonomous motivation and perception of providers' autonomy support, on phosphate binder adherence and serum phosphorus control and discovered that these factors are strongly linked with phosphate binder 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 psychosocial factors, medication adherence, and bone mineral health in patients with end-stage renal disease through an NIH-funded randomized-controlled trial. Most recently, I have expanded my research interests to include an assessment of novel psychosocial factors associated with dialysis treatment adherence through an NIH-funded Building Interdisciplinary Research Careers in Women's Health K12 award. Through community partnerships, I also have conducted formative research to understand barriers to chronic kidney disease screening in nonwhites, especially those who are at risk for CKD.

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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.

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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, Principal Investigator), 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 vitro* and *in vivo* 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.

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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.

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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 evidence-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.

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Research Interests

I was trained as an Internist and Pediatrician at Vanderbilt University and completed my Master's degree 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.

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Research Interests

My research focuses on the role of the fundamental causes of disease and how they contribute to health disparities within the context of gastroenterology, hepatology, and transplant hepatology. My specific areas of focus include contextualizing how socioeconomic and psychosocial factors mediate racial/ethnic disparities regarding outcomes in hepatitis C, colon cancer screening, and access to liver transplantation. I also serve as a primary investigator for multiple clinical trials assessing outcomes for hepatitis C, primary sclerosing cholangitis, and primary biliary cholangitis.

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Research Interests

My research interest focuses on the pathophysiology of kidney disease. I engage an interdisciplinary approach to explore the underlying mechanisms of kidney damage and how those mechanisms contribute to cardiovascular health. My long-term research goal is to develop novel therapeutics to improve the treatment of kidney and cardiovascular disease. Currently, my work is funded by the American Heart Association (National Scientist Development Grant) and an Industry Innovative Grant. I have been recognized as an outstanding early career scientist by the American Physiological Society, where I have been an active member of several committees. In addition, I was a founding member of the Minority Postdoctoral Council at Emory University and am a passionate mentor of undergraduate and graduate student scientists.

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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."

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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.

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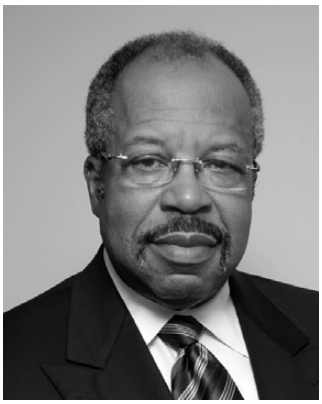
Research Interests

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.



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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).

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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.

Addendum–March 2018

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Research Interests

My research involves the peripheral arterial disease (PAD) of the lower extremities, which is the result of atherosclerotic blockage of blood vessels; its severity varies even among people with similar occlusions, suggesting a possible role for genetics in its severity. Individuals with diabetes are more likely to develop PAD, and when people have PAD and diabetes, the disease is more severe, resulting in higher risk of amputation and death. Studies in our laboratory currently seek to understand how the metabolic environment in diabetes interacts with genetics and contributes to the poor PAD outcomes seen in individuals with diabetes.

Network of Minority Health Research Investigators

15th Annual Workshop

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases

National Institutes of Health

DoubleTree Bethesda Hotel

Bethesda, MD

April 27–28, 2017

Final Summary Report

National Institutes of Health (NIH)
National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)

Network of Minority Health Research Investigators (NMRI)
15th Annual Workshop

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Final Summary Report

Thursday, April 27, 2017

INTRODUCTIONS

Winnie Martinez, Program Officer, NIDDK, NIH
Lincoln Edwards, D.D.S., Ph.D., University President and Professor, Northern Caribbean University

Ms. Winnie Martinez welcomed the participants to the 15th Anniversary Workshop of NMRI and thanked the members of the Planning and Oversight Committees for their continued commitment and time to organize these meetings. She remarked that the Network has grown to 584 members with more than 700 meeting participants over the past 15 years, after having started with 30 members and 50 participants at the inaugural workshop in 2002. To date, the database indicates that 20 percent of NMRI's members are professors or senior investigators, 22 percent are assistant professors, and 1 percent are postdoctoral researchers. Recognizing that the member representation is not being fully captured, Ms. Martinez encouraged members to update their NMRI profiles to maintain a current and accurate status of the Network.

Dr. Lincoln Edwards, chair of the NMRI Planning Committee, joined Ms. Martinez in welcoming participants to the 15th NMRI Anniversary celebration—the growth and achievements of the Network have been exemplary. He expressed appreciation to Ms. Martinez, the senior members, and sponsors, as well as to NMRI's committees for ongoing support of the Network. Dr. Edwards acknowledged and encouraged new members to engage with senior members.

The NMRI was established in 2002 by the Office of Minority Health Research Coordination (OMHRC) at the NIDDK. Dr. Edwards acknowledged the leadership of NMRI: Dr. Griffin P. Rodgers, Director, NIDDK; Dr. Lawrence Agodoa, Director, OMHRC; and Ms. Martinez, Program Director, OMHRC. NMRI's members are researchers and technical personnel interested in minority health research, including individuals from traditionally underserved populations. 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. NMRI's leadership has the following expectations of the Network: consistent reporting of publications, grants, presentations, promotions and tenure; feedback via post-meeting evaluations and surveys; recruitment of one or more members per year to the Network; facilitate establishing NMRI chapters; encourage one or more professional societies to support the Network; and attend annual and regional meetings.

Dr. Edwards congratulated NMRI members Drs. Dale Abel and Glenn Chertow on their induction into the National Academy of Medicine and Dr. Patricia Heyn on being inducted into the American Congress of Rehabilitation Medicine and the Gerontology Society of America. He asked participants to join in a moment of silence in the memory of Dr. Sherilyn Gordon Burroughs, who had been a member of the NMRI and strong supporter and leader of undergraduate medical education. Dr. Edwards invited meeting participants to introduce themselves.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

NIH Addresses the Science of Diversity: Where Are We Now?

Hannah Valantine, M.D., Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity, NIH

Dr. Hannah Valantine lauded the success of the NMRI and provided an update on NIH's approaches to address the science of diversity. These approaches address, in depth, the four cross-cutting diversity challenges: (1) science of diversity; (2) recruitment and retention; (3) sociocultural factors; and (4) sustainability fundamentals and models. She called attention to the 2012 report titled "Race, Ethnicity, and NIH Research Awards," which revealed that African American applicants were 50 percent less likely to receive NIH investigator-initiated research funding than Caucasian applicants. Dr. Francis Collins, Director, NIH, acted promptly to address these findings by establishing a Biomedical Workforce Working Group within the Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD). The Working Group, as charged, developed recommendations for immediate and long-term strategies, which included recruitment of an active biomedical researcher with commitment to diversity and strong credibility in the academic community—this led to the establishment of the NIH Scientific Workforce Diversity (SWD) Office, which is charged to coordinate diversity programs across the NIH.

Dr. Valantine was recruited by Dr. Collins, in 2014, to become NIH's first Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity, as well as Senior Investigator of the Laboratory of Organ Transplant Genomics (LoGT) at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI). Her work focuses on using cell-free DNA as a detection biomarker for heart transplant rejection. Prior to coming to the NIH, Dr. Valantine was Professor of Medicine in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine and Director of Transplantation Research at Stanford University. She reflected on her childhood years growing up in Banjul, Gambia, being educated in London, England, and her first experiences as the only student of color in her class. Overcoming challenges of diversity and inclusion, Dr. Valantine successfully matriculated through college and medical school in the United Kingdom. It was during her medical residency and training in cardiology that she developed a desire to work in the field of transplantation medicine. She then moved to the United States for advanced cardiology training in a postdoctoral position at Stanford University, which led to her becoming Assistant Professor in the Cardiology Division at Stanford and then rising through the academic ranks to full Professor. Recognizing the need to foster collaboration in transplantation research, in June 2015, Dr. Valantine established the Genome Research Alliance for Transplantation (GRAfT), an NHLBI-sponsored consortium of seven thoracic transplant programs. She remarked that more than 30 percent of the active transplant recipients are African Americans, which will allow investigators, for the first time, to identify transplant-related health disparities in this population and gain insight into the observed differences in outcomes between racial groups. In addition, a biorepository has been established to support the GRAfT and is being maintained by the LoGT.

Dr. Valantine explained that diversity matters to the NIH for many reasons, which include ensuring fairness and equality in biomedical research opportunities to leverage the entire U.S. intellectual talent pool and the impact of workforce diversity on health disparities. Furthermore, studies have shown that diversity in teams establishes new perspectives on research and capitalizes on increased opportunities for excellence, creativity, and innovation, and broadens the scope of inquiry,

rendering more solutions to complex problems of health and disease. To emphasize its stance on why diversity matters, the NIH has incorporated into its fiscal year (FY) 2016–2020 NIH-Wide Strategic Plan the principle of enhancing stewardship, which includes increasing workforce diversity. For example, capturing the benefits of additional diversity identifications (e.g., thinking style, experiences, and skills) for underrepresented populations for U.S. biomedical, clinical, behavioral and social science research into funding opportunities would be a proxy for cognitive diversity, but the lack of diversity across the biomedical career path from training and early career to tenured faculty remains a challenge. Underrepresented groups (URG), regardless of gender, hold very few tenured faculty positions—this is a pattern the NIH is committed to improving through the mission of the SWD.

Numerous reports demonstrating the science of diversity have concluded that diversity in teams is more likely to give the diverse perspective and approach essential to solving the complex problems of health. For example, Dr. Scott Page, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, summarizes in his book, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies*, where case studies and mathematical modeling demonstrated that better problem solving results from a larger informational or cognitive space. Dr. Samuel Sommers, in the 2006 report titled "On Racial Diversity and Group Decision Making: Identifying Multiple Effects of Racial Composition on Jury Deliberations," showed that a wider range of information exchange in diverse groups resulted in more facts being cited, more discussion and fewer errors in jury deliberations and decision making. To answer the question of whether these examples will address diversity and the quality of science, recent reports from the National Bureau of Economic Research that examined the ethnic identity of authors of more than 2.5 million scientific papers written by U.S.-based authors from 1985 to 2008 revealed that publications written by diverse groups received more citations and are published in journals with higher impact factors. Similar findings were noted in the report titled "Gender-Heterogeneous Working Groups Produce Higher Quality Science." The NIH is planning to issue funding opportunity announcements (FOAs) to evaluate and recapitulate these findings to provide further evidence that diversity in teams increases the output to science.

Regarding recruitment and retention, NIH's Intramural Research Program (IRP) has a range of targeted scientific opportunities to enhance intramural diversity in the biomedical sciences that engage youth beginning in high school and extend onward to postdoctoral studies. Although the NIH has made significant investments in undergraduate- and graduate-level programs to enhance diversity, the SWD identified gaps in the IRP pipeline that could be improved. Dr. Valantine and the SWD developed a recruitment tool to search for candidates at the postdoctoral, assistant professor, associate professor, and full professor levels. Using this tool to search a number of scientific databases, the NIH identified junior and senior career stage candidate pools to expand diversity in the biomedical sciences. To foster outreach and promote knowledge and awareness about scientific career opportunities in the IRP, the NIH and the SWD Office established the NIH Future Research Leaders Conference, which is a trans-NIH effort to engage talented early-stage biomedical and behavioral scientists from diverse backgrounds. Other scientific organizations could emulate this model. In addition, the Diversity Consortium Program (DCP) was established and supports three components: the Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity (BUILD), National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN) for Diverse Biomedical Workforce programs, and the Center for Evaluation and Coordination (CEC). The latter is a highly innovative approach that will utilize multiple methods to evaluate the efficacy of the range of interventions within and across BUILD institutions. The BUILD program is being implemented at 10 academic institutions, and the hypotheses that will be tested include stereotype threat and critical race theory. The NRMN program will conduct guided virtual mentorships and offer grant writing and coaching tools.

Sociocultural factors, such as stereotypes regarding a "typical scientist," have played a significant role in implicit bias. For example, a recent report of two independent studies showed that students were more likely to rate individuals with feminine appearance, mostly women, as early childhood educators and not scientists than they were males, thus implying that males are regarded as having the face of a scientist. This has important implications for the decision-making process in regard to funding and biomedical research positions. Nevertheless, recent reports have shown that with intervention and education on bias, these habits can be broken. The NIH is in the process of testing interventions and educational initiatives to circumvent bias in the IRP, including the Implicit Bias Education and Research program, which is designed to raise awareness of implicit bias and reduce its effect on the candidate search process. The SWD Office has developed implicit-bias education modules and provides scientific evidence of how such bias may affect judgments and decision making in scientific contexts.

A key pathway into sustainability in the biomedical workforce is the NIH independent (i.e., R01) research project grant (RPG). Referring to the 2012 report on racial and ethnic disparities in NIH research awards, Dr. Valantine pointed out the ACD's recommendation to the NIH to carefully evaluate these findings, the causes, and to develop interventional strategies to prompt change. Thus, in a 1-year period, a taskforce composed of several NIH Institute directors evaluated the R01 review process at all stages, from submissions to funding, for awards made in FYs 2011–2015. This analysis showed that the relative gap was slightly lower than that of FYs 2000–2006; however, there was multifactorial disparity at each stage in the review process; African American scientists constituted only 1.5 percent of the RPG applicant pool. In time, the NIH expects that the BUILD and NRMN programs will help to resolve the low applicant pool by using evidence-based approaches for mentored research experiences that will enhance diversity among students and trainees across the biomedical career path. In addition to these longer-term approaches, the NIH has embarked on immediate actions that involve targeted interventions to enhance R01 submission and resubmission rates, as well as mentoring and coaching for grant preparation. Although resubmissions of unfunded grants are 30 to 50 percent more likely to be funded, data show that the resubmission rates for African American scientists were lower than for other groups.

NIH's integrated national strategy for scientific workforce diversity has an overarching goal to eliminate transition barriers and achieve sustainable transformation in scientific workforce diversity. In so doing, this strategy will identify gaps and programs that are needed and leverage existing programs to achieve this goal. The NIH envisions establishing a model program, tentatively called Hubs of Innovation and Research in Scientific Workforce Diversity.

Discussion

A meeting participant asked whether the NIH could address the issue of academic background and the role it has on resubmissions among African American scientists. Applying for smaller grants might provide a scientist the protected time they would need for the larger funding opportunities. Dr. Valantine replied that the NIH has learned from applicant interviews that a lack of protected time weighs heavily on their grant resubmission rates. She called attention to the high-priority and short-term project award, R56, which has protected time built into its framework. Also, academic institutions should consider ways to provide protected time to early career investigators.

When asked about the diversity of the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) Study Section reviewers, Dr. Valantine responded that the CSR Study Section rosters reflected the diversity of that particular scientific discipline at the faculty level. Recognizing the challenges in junior and senior career faculty positions and URG, the NIH has implemented an Early Career Reviewer Program, and

URG comprise 20 percent of that pool. The SWD Office is in the process of evaluating whether bias exists in the peer review process by conducting a study of scoring of redacted applications from all racial and ethnic groups. These results should provide insight into the impact of bias in the peer review process.

Experienced participants explained that the Minority Supplements, which should be advertised as competitive funding mechanisms, allow scientists protected time to collect preliminary data and asked whether this funding mechanism was being broadly utilized among URG. Dr. Valantine commented that Administrative Research Supplements to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research are being used to support African American and Hispanic scientists, although not to the full extent possible. These supplements were not being tracked, and analysis is needed to determine the correlation of R01 awards to the Diversity Supplements. For example, the National Institute of General Medical Sciences and the National Institute on Aging found that retrospectively, these supplements played a significant role in retaining URG in the academic setting; 60 percent of the scientists supported by Diversity Supplements from those Institutes remained in academia. Going forward, the NIH will assign recipients an identification number to track their progress and career paths, instead of collecting those data retrospectively.

Participants encouraged the NIH to consider ways to engage diversity and inclusion officers and other senior members of academic administrations to provide input on biomedical research workforce diversity and to evaluate the evidence that diversity matters. Dr. Valantine acknowledged that institutional change and engaging leaders is the pathway that will have the most impact on improving diversity in the biomedical workforce.

When asked about ways that the NIH will convey the message about workforce diversity issues to Congress, Dr. Valantine replied that biomedical research has always received bipartisan support and that ongoing effective communication with Congress on scientific progress is critical.

IMPACT OF THE NETWORK ON YOUR CAREER

Presentations by Selected Junior and Senior Members

Dr. Edwards invited senior NMRI members, Drs. Carlos Isales, Professor, Augusta University, and Michelle Harris, Associate Professor, University of the District of Columbia, to reflect on the impact that the Network has made on their career decisions. They will be followed by junior member, Dr. Leonor Corsino, Assistant Professor, Duke University Medical Center. Dr. Ketrell McWhorter, Postdoctoral Fellow, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), presented on behalf of Dr. Chandra Jackson, Earl Stadtman Investigator, NIEHS.

Dr. Isales thanked the NIDDK, the Planning Committee, and the NMRI for the opportunity to share his experience as a member of the Network. Dr. Isales explained how his perceptions on mentoring, biomedical research, and the NIH CSR Study Sections changed after engaging with the Network. A mentee (i.e., a postdoctorate, assistant professor, or associate professor) may encounter many types of mentors in the biomedical sciences, including (1) the detached observers who are not aware of or aligned with the mentee's professional challenges; (2) supervisory and strict individuals who are less likely to provide critical recommendations or advice; and (3) the informal casual resolvers who offer limited constructive criticism and guidance. He expressed appreciation to Dr. Agodoa, Ms. Martinez, and the NMRI for holding fast to its mission to encourage minority health investigators to be researchers in fields of interest to the NIDDK—the Network helps to build quality relationships with mentors who are purposely interested in the mentee's career. Dr. Isales next described how the Network helped him face the challenges of balancing the duties of being a new faculty member and setting up a new research program with other academic responsibilities. It is important to know when you have reached your maximum

level of satisfactory performance, to know how to say "No" to new requests from the administration, and to remain confident that you have made the right decision. Before joining the NMRI, Dr. Isales viewed the NIH Study Sections and grant review process as a barrier to his success as a research scientist. After engaging with the Network, he realized that the NIH and its CSR are not adversaries, but are very interested in researchers' being successful in funding their research ideas. In closing, Dr. Isales summarized that the Network has been invaluable to him as a minority health research investigator in assisting with realistic goal setting, providing training, establishing supportive mentorship, and providing networking opportunities. He credits the NMRI as key to his accomplishments of rising through the academic ranks from assistant professor in 2002 to his current position of Professor in the Department of Neuroscience and Regenerative Medicine at Augusta University.

Dr. Harris expressed gratitude and honor to be a member of the NMRI and serve among great scientific scholars and health researchers, such as Dr. Isales, who share their time and efforts unconditionally to support the Network. She reflected on her years as a doctoral student and the role of the Network in providing the necessary resources during her professional journey. Not being an obvious candidate for the NMRI in regard to research funding, Dr. Harris advocated for acceptance on the basis of in-kind support she received from the private sector and the Network credited those awards to her portfolio as external funding. After having received quality mentoring from the Network, Dr. Harris takes pride in serving as a mentor for new members in this, her first year as a senior investigator. She also has supported the NMRI in other capacities, including Oversight Committee member and judge for scientific poster sessions and competitions. Attending this 15th Anniversary meeting has fostered a renewed commitment to the Network.
Dr. Harris integrates research into the courses she teaches—a direct reflection of the impact that the NMRI has made to the training of new scientists. She believes that when you give of your time and energy to serve others, you receive bountiful growth and development for the years to come. Dr. Harris thanked Ms. Martinez and the NMRI for their unending support and encouraged new members to be active participants within the Network.

Dr. Corsino is a 10-year member of the Network and shared how this experience has shaped her career. The NMRI has allowed Dr. Corsino to meet, collaborate, and engage with other minority scientists on a professional and personal level. Words cannot express the heartfelt gratitude she has for the NIDDK, the Network, and its organizers—including Ms. Martinez—for providing an environment that fosters friendships with colleagues who are on similar paths working toward common goals. Dr. Corsino described her path to Assistant Professor, which began as a Fellow in clinical research; constant motivation from the NMRI has been encouraging and inspiring as she strives to reduce health disparities and achieve goals. Rekindled relationships from medical school and quality mentorship have all been possible because of the NMRI.

Dr. Ketrell McWhorter, Postdoctoral Fellow in the Social and Environmental Determinants of Health Equity Group, NIEHS, expressed appreciation to the NMRI on behalf of Dr. Jackson, her mentor, who could not attend today's session of the meeting. Dr. McWhorter remarked that her work with Dr. Jackson on type 2 diabetes and health disparities is a testament to the impact and reach of the Network. She shared some of Dr. Jackson's reflections on the NMRI and the support she has received since joining in 2013, including travel awards to the annual meeting, recognition for scientific achievements, and valuable advice from junior and senior members alike.

WELCOMING REMARKS AND ANNIVERSARY RECOGNITION AWARDS

Griffin P. Rodgers, M.D., M.A.C.P., Director, NIDDK, NIH

Dr. Rodgers welcomed participants to the 15th Anniversary NMRI Workshop and remarked that the Network, as a signature program of the NIDDK, has inspired other NIH Institutes and Centers to establish similar programs. He echoed Dr. Valantine's comments on the power of networking and collaboration, adding that they achieve outstanding results when developed with the appropriate follow-up. Dr. Rodgers remarked that the Network extends beyond the NIH and NIDDK and noted that he has had the pleasure of meeting and working with many of NMRI's members, albeit engaging in committees, professional societies, and associations, including the National Medical Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, and Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science. Having long served as a member of the National Advisory Committee for the Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) program, and understanding this program's role in sustaining the scientific talent pool, Dr. Rodgers sees this as a mechanism for the RWJF and NMRI leaders to connect and expand on networks for minority health researchers and further develop senior investigators and leaders in the biomedical field. From its humble beginnings and first meeting in 2002, the NMRI has evolved into a Network of more than 500 investigators from almost 50 universities and centers. The annual workshop has been expanded to include regional meetings, as well. Despite these accomplishments, representation remains a challenge at many academic institutions—the NIDDK NMRI remains a vital conduit to advocate for minority researchers and meritorious research. At this anniversary workshop, the NIDDK is celebrating 15 years of success and honoring those members whose outstanding participation and commitment have fostered the Network's growth and activities. Dr. Rodgers, accompanied by Ms. Martinez and Dr. Edwards, presented senior NMRI members with medallions in appreciation for their service.

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: Community-Based Participatory Research
Lovoria Williams, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Augusta University
Joyce Balls-Berry, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Mayo Clinic

Participants were provided with introductory knowledge of Community-Engaged and Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR). Topics covered included: principles of community-engaged research; creating, building, and sustaining a CBPR partnership; and Community-Patient Engaged Research (CPER).

Table 2: Behavioral and Social Sciences Research
Nia Mitchell, M.D., Assistant Professor, Duke University School of Medicine
Patricia Heyn, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

Participants discussed approaches and challenges associated with behavioral and social sciences research. Facilitators and participants suggested ideas to overcome these challenges, including ways to generate pilot data and peer-reviewed publications for grant applications with limited resources and infrastructure.

Table 3: Epigenetics Research
Pamela Shiao, Ph.D., Associate Dean, Augusta University

Participants were introduced to epigenetics, genomics, bioinformatics, metabolomics, and proteomics. Topics discussed included these emerging fields, as well as genomic computation and epigenetics analysis tools, and the available funding opportunities and training institutes.

Table 4: NIH Intramural Research
Roland Owens, Ph.D., Assistant Director, Office of Intramural Research, NIH

Participants discussed different research positions, including fellowships and other opportunities that are available within the NIH IRP. They also learned about the places the different positions are advertised, evaluation criteria, and competitive strategies to secure a research position or fellowship.

Table 5: Research Supplements to Support Diversity and the NIH Funding Mechanism
Robert Rivers, Ph.D., Program Director, NIDDK, NIH

This round table provided detailed descriptions of research supplements and tips on submitting an application to obtain a research supplement.

Table 6: Successful Approaches for Grant Funding
Cynthia Warrick, Ph.D., President, Society for Diversity in Biomedical Sciences

This round table discussed strategies for research development and research team participation to achieve success in grant funding.

SESSION II: ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS

Participants attended one of three round table discussions. Two sessions covered mock study sessions for 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 discussed grant sources for non-NIH behavioral and social sciences research.

Mock Study Section 1: R01
Francesco Villarreal, M.D., Ph.D., Professor, University of California, San Diego
Ann Jerkins, Ph.D., Scientific Review Officer, NIDDK, NIH

Mock Study Section 2: K01 Awards
Nia Mitchell, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Duke University School of Medicine
Michele Barnard, Ph.D., Scientific Review Officer, NIDDK, NIH

Non-NIH Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (BSSR) Grant Sources
Patricia Heyn, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

RESEARCH APPLICATIONS IN BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS
Timothy Huerta, Ph.D., Associate Professor, The Ohio State University College of Medicine

Dr. Timothy Huerta began his presentation on research applications in biomedical informatics by concisely defining biomedical informatics as the study of the manner in which biomedical data are used to improve human health. Biomedical informaticists work along the data continuum to extract patterns relevant to health-related issues. He next described the five "Vs" of data that distinguish biomedical informatics from others: velocity, veracity, volume, variety, and value. Integrated technologies that allow individuals to engage in managing their health are an example of the type of challenges that create the need for biomedical informatics. For example, Johns Hopkins University's Corrie Health team, in collaboration with Apple Inc., developed Corrie (cor is Latin for heart), a cardiology CareKit computer application (app) that is connected to the Apple Watch to collect biometrics data in real-time (i.e., veracity). This device has the capacity to transmit data at 1 to 10 times per second (i.e., velocity), which is an overwhelming amount of information or volume. These types of devices and patient portals collect large volumes of health information data, but they may not always be of value to the health care organization.

Dr. Huerta explained that biomedical informatics involves three skills: data mining, domain experience, and statistics, including graph theory and network analysis. The biomedical informaticist frequently relies on clinical domain experts who are experienced with health issues to understand the context and meaning behind the data. Research applications in biomedical informatics cross-cuts these three skills to study biomedical information, particularly those held in computer systems, from the bench to the bedside. The challenges lie in determining ways to build, access, experience, engage, and find patterns in the data, of which there is not one single framework. He described current Ohio State University projects that are research applications of biomedical informatics: (1) a shared decision-making tool that is an extensible platform to offer a single resource for physicians to understand evidence-based assessment of risk while also providing patient-centered materials that support the provision of care; (2) surveillance "hot spotting" of hospital-acquired infections to use electronic medical records to explore real-time results and recognize concerning trends sooner, so that clinicians can implement timely and effective interventions; and (3) a telemetry and alarms project to help clinicians focus on meaningful events, instead of the white noise sometimes caused by alarms. Opportunities for clinicians interested in research involve identifying questions that address gaps in knowledge and working with biomedical informatics experts to resolve them. Funding agencies readily support solving these types of problems to address gaps in health care.

Discussion

When asked about the informatics used in the telemetry and alarms project to control white noise, Dr. Huerta explained that oxygen monitors arriving from a distributor are typically set to alarm at 95 percent, which is not clinically relevant. After determining that lowering this set point did not have an adverse effect on patients, the monitors were reprogrammed to alarm at 80 percent, which decreased the noise by half.

A meeting participant asked how biomedical informatics could be used to resolve technology, availability, and data access issues. Dr. Huerta clarified that the work in progress at The Ohio State University to address technology disparities suggests that the problems are related to awareness, rather than access. Clinicians currently do not have the tools to use the data being created by patients, nor are they aware of the diversity of self-managed health apps available.

In response to a query on the use of discrete data in real-time decision-making platforms to provide recommendations for health care providers, Dr. Huerta explained that approaches like control charts can reveal the trend of occurrences to inform the necessary intervention. Researchers must collaborate to identify the appropriate measurement models aligned with the problems that are being addressed.

A participant questioned the use of data for biomedical informatics and the governing rules per Health Insurance Probability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Institutional Review Board approvals. Dr. Huerta explained that these concerns are addressed by the domain experts—usually a collaborative team of researchers—when patient data are involved. Testing of solutions can be explored using simulated data prior to an implementation, and that process can help to identify issues where HIPAA is relevant. Most research applications in progress at The Ohio State University are developed with the help of simulated models.

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.

Challenges and Opportunities in Endocrinology and Nephrology

Carlos Isales, Ph.D., Professor, Augusta University
Ayotunde Dokun, Ph.D., Associate Professor, The University of Tennessee Health Science Center
Crystal Gadegbeku, M.D., Professor, Temple University School of Medicine

Dr. Isales, who studies the impact of nutrients on stem cells and aging, opened the session by discussing the challenges and opportunities in endocrinology. He noted the increase in patients with endocrine-related illnesses, which is partly due to the high prevalence of type 1 and type 2 diabetes. Patients diagnosed with type 1 diabetes are experiencing complications from obesity, which is not the normal phenotype. To further complicate matters, diabetes research is underfunded when compared to other illnesses. The opportunities for endocrine care and research are significant, but the limited number of models—cell culture or animal—that can recapitulate the endocrine system poses a challenge for investigative research.

Dr. Ayotunde Dokun currently runs an R01-funded translational research laboratory that focuses on understanding the molecular mechanisms of vascular complications and diabetes and remarked that circumventing obesity-related complications in diabetic patients is the overarching challenge in endocrine research. Clinical studies have shown that lifestyle interventions can reduce the progression from a prediabetic to a diabetic condition, but implementation research is needed to broadly implement these interventions into the community setting—the opportunities for minority health researchers should be focused in this area.

Dr. Crystal Gadegbeku has been involved in NIH-funded clinical and translation research and noted that Congressional appropriators and policymakers have shown an increased interest in the rising costs of treating end-stage renal disease. Recent reports revealed that the cost of care for dialysis treatment is more than the total NIH annual budget, yet investments in kidney-related research is less than 1 percent of NIH-funded research. Funding appropriations for kidney-related research are likely to increase and the potential opportunities to conduct novel research will follow suit. Participants were encouraged to investigate the existing funding mechanisms for kidney research, consider developing innovative research proposals, and engage mentors at all career stages.

Charting Your Course for Success
Ricardo Azziz, M.D., Chief Officer, Academic Health and Hospital Affairs, The State University of New York

Dr. Ricardo Azziz discussed charting the course of success and leadership skills for young professionals. He pointed out that per the U.S. Census reports on educational attainment in the United States, 1.5 percent of the 215 million people ages 25 years or older had earned professional degrees and 1.9 percent had earned doctorate degrees, totaling 3.4 percent. Additionally, 0.77 percent and 0.91 percent of African Americans and 0.65 percent and 0.69 percent of Hispanics, had earned a professional or doctorate degree, respectively, compared to 1.7 percent and 2.05 percent of white non-Hispanics. Dr. Azziz remarked that by charting their course for success through hard work, perseverance, and leadership, the participants have beaten the odds. Leadership, as a learned skill, is about facing obstacles and standing tall in the midst of negativity and challenging times. He distinguished the duties of administrators and managers from those of leaders. Leaders, Dr. Azziz emphasized, do the following:

- Provide a vision.
- Lead and manage change.
- Interpret the environment.
- Empower and create teams.
- Engage communities.
- Model good behavior.

Participants were enlightened by Dr. Azziz's personal story of success and his thoughts on how to invest in leadership development, why leadership is a privilege, and how networking and collaboration are key for transformative leadership.

MARCO CABRERA POSTER AND NETWORKING SESSION

All meeting participants were invited to view the posters submitted to the NMRI 15th Annual Workshop and to converse with their presenters. Judges examined the posters and discussed the described research with their presenters. Winners were selected 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.")

NMRI 15TH ANNIVERSARY RECOGNITION

The Network paid tribute to Dr. Marion Sewer, who was an active member of NMRI and was known for her passion for improving diversity in science.

DR. MARION SEWER HONORARY LECTURE OF THE NETWORK OF MINORITY HEALTH RESEARCH INVESTIGATORS

NMRI: Creating Your Future, Being Mentored, and Becoming a Mentor

Eddie Greene, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Mayo Clinic

Dr. Eddie Greene, Associate Professor of Medicine, Department of Medicine, Nephrology, and Hypertension, Medical Director, Office of Diversity in Education, Mayo Clinic at Rochester, presented the inaugural Dr. Marion Sewer Honorary Lecture. He pointed out that two of the founders of the Mayo Clinic, Drs. William and Charles Mayo, believed that the needs of the patient come first; he shares this belief. Dr. Greene reflected on his experiences of being mentored and becoming a mentor, and emphasized several key points in his presentation. First, NMRI participants are the future, and opportunity will knock. He urged the audience to be resilient and to give back when they are at the pinnacle of success. Those who practice servant leadership will be emulated and followed. The destination and journey are equally important, but critical to the journey is recognizing that mentors are essential to guide the initial steps on the path to destination. Engaging with a highly functional team is more satisfying and makes the collaboration more effective.

Dr. Greene, a strong advocate and longtime NMRI supporter, provided supporting arguments for choosing the Network. The NMRI is the progenitor of a collaborative approach to teamwork and team science in the modern world of biomedical research. The opportunity exists to learn about others' research, share ideas, discuss approaches for novel projects, develop hypotheses and experimental designs, and establish new relationships and ongoing collaborations. The NMRI and other strong support groups build diversity and inclusion capacity for biomedical research teams, as well as educational and clinical structures and processes. Research to eliminate the differences in health status of different groups of people, or health disparities, is one opportunity for clinical investigators. For example, health disparities in the incidence and prevalence of end-stage renal disease have been identified and are recorded in the 2014 Annual Data Report from the United States Renal Data System.

Mentors make or can make a difference at many stages in one's career, beginning in elementary and high school, on through junior faculty and beyond. People encounter different types of mentors throughout this journey and career continuum. Dr. Greene reflected on his own journey to becoming a minority physician, biomedical researcher, and clinical investigator, which began in Belzoni, Mississippi. He thanked his first mentors, his parents, who gave him a start on life and sparked his intellectual curiosity. Dr. Greene then acknowledged his other mentors from undergraduate studies, his inaugural NMRI membership, and forward. He emphasized the importance of seeking and selecting the right mentor and discussed the mentee's responsibilities, which include initiating the mentor-mentee relationship. Mentors do matter and do make a difference, and the NMRI fosters good mentoring relationships. Mentoring begins with teamwork, which involves pioneers, guardians, drivers, and integrators—people should choose a role on the team and make a difference. Dr. Green highlighted important collaborations and the impact they have made on his career. Good collaboration networks and team dynamics are effective in building research portfolios.

As clinicians and health researchers, our world and our patients are diverse. Developing a diverse educational, research, and clinical environment throughout the biomedical workforce will increasingly enable this community to attract the best and most talented people as colleagues.

Diversity also is important to help resolve health disparities. Dr. Greene expressed his sincere appreciation to the NIDDK and NMRI for their leadership and strong support of minority researchers and closed by reiterating to participants what he had said at the beginning of his speech: You are the future. Opportunity will knock. The destination and journey are equally important. Be resilient. Give back when you are at the pinnacle of success. Practice servant leadership and you will be emulated and followed.

Friday, April 28, 2017

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 round table discussion with his or her mentees, answering questions and providing advice.

ROLE OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

American Society of Nephrology (ASN)

Deidre Crews, M.D., Incoming Chair, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, ASN

Dr. Deidre Crews provided an update on the ASN's efforts to address diversity and inclusion in the Society, noting that the ASN enterprise includes both the Foundation for Kidney Research and the Kidney Health Institute. The ASN Diversity and Inclusion Work Group was established in December 2013 and after 4 successful years of accomplishments, including establishing the ASN-Harold Amos Medical Faculty Development Program (AMFDP) Award in 2016 and providing travel awards to 55 NMRI workshop participants from 2015 to 2017, it transitioned into the Diversity and Inclusion Committee in January 2017. She acknowledged the committee members, many of whom also are NMRI members. Dr. Crews detailed the committee's priorities, highlighting the update to the eligibility requirements for the ASN-AMFDP award to include Ph.D.-level nurses. In 2014, at the annual Kidney Week meeting, the ASN expanded on its diversity and inclusion efforts by establishing the Michelle P. Winn, M.D. Endowed Lectureship in memory of the Duke University Medical School professor and nephrologist. Dr. Crews conveyed ASN's commitment to career development for kidney professionals and highlighted efforts to support students, trainees, and early career professionals. The ASN values statement on diversity and inclusion embodies inclusiveness, mentorship, health equity, patient advocacy, and engagement. Additional information on grants, funding, and the Diversity and Inclusion Committee can be accessed at the ASN website.

American Society for Bone and Mineral Research (ASBMR)

Nicole Wright, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, The University of Alabama at Birmingham

Dr. Nicole Wright informed participants that ASBMR, with approximately 4,000 members, is home to the world's foremost bone, mineral, and musculoskeletal researchers and clinicians, 46 percent of whom are located outside of the United States, representing 60 countries worldwide. The Society's mission is to promote excellence in bone and mineral research to foster integration of basic and clinical science and facilitate translation of these sciences into clinical practice. In so doing, the ASBMR convenes annual and topical meetings and publishes the *Journal of Bone and Mineral Research* (*JBMR*) and *JBMR Plus*. In addition to specialized lectures and symposia, the annual meetings incorporate activities for minority researchers, which are planned by the ASBMR's Diversity in Bone and Mineral Research Subcommittee. Dr. Wright explained the membership benefits and encouraged the Network's members to explore the many ASBMR opportunities.

American Diabetes Association (ADA)
Allison McElvaine, Ph.D., Director, Research Communications, ADA

Dr. Allison McElvaine explained how the ADA, through its mission to prevent and cure diabetes and improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes, aims to address the prevalence, seriousness, health costs, and disproportionate effects of diabetes on minority populations. The ADA's 2017–2020 Strategic Plan is aligned to accomplish this mission and centers on three pillars: (1) Drive Discovery (through research), (2) Raise Voice (through advocacy), and (3) Support People (through professional and community resources). The ADA has invested more than $770 million in diabetes research and supported 4,600 research projects. In 2016 alone, $34.5 million was made available for research to support 378 projects that funded 351 individual investigators in more than 150 academic institutions and centers across the United States. Advances in biomedical research have resulted in improved treatments, the ADA's *Standards of Medical Care in Diabetes*, and reduced complications from the disease. Research programs include the Core Research Program, Collaborative Targeted Research Program, and Pathway to Stop Diabetes Initiative. Funding opportunities are available at all career stages and include minority undergraduate internships; postdoctoral and minority postdoctoral fellowships; junior faculty development awards; and innovative basic science, clinical, or translational science awards for junior and senior faculty. Detailed research program descriptions and submission deadlines can be accessed at the ADA website. In addition to funding, the ADA provides legal advocacy for persons reporting diabetes-related discrimination, as well as law enforcement training in the appropriate identification of diabetic emergencies. Dr. McElvaine encouraged participants to apply for grants, present and submit research findings at ADA's annual Scientific Sessions, volunteer to serve on committees, or become a diabetes advocate and support the ADA's mission.

Endocrine Society
Rocio Pereira, M.D., Assistant Professor, Joslin Diabetes Center

Dr. Rocio Pereira, former chair of the Endocrine Society's Diversity and Inclusion Committee, discussed the Society's resources for biomedical scientists and its activities related to minority populations. The Endocrine Society has more than 18,000 members who are medical doctors, researchers, scientists, and educators, located in 122 countries, with 40 percent of the membership being outside of the United States. Peer-reviewed publications include *Endocrine Reviews*, *Endocrinology*, and the *Journal of the Endocrine Society*. In 2014, the Endocrine Society held its inaugural Reducing Health Disparities summit and has since incorporated health disparities into many of the Society's activities, including the publication of feature articles. The society convenes an annual meeting, ENDO, and features Endocareers, which provides a mentor exchange program, in-training, and early career resources, as well as board certification training for clinical endocrinologists. The Endocrine Society awards program spans all career levels and includes ENDO travel awards, scientific achievement awards, summer research fellowships, and student and early career awards. In addition, the NIDDK-sponsored Future Leaders Advancing Research in Endocrinology (FLARE) program to support training and endocrine research for URG is one of the Society's diversity initiatives. Workshops, internship paths, mentorship paths, and ENDO travel awards are components of the FLARE program.

Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR)
Liz Fray, Membership Coordinator, CUR

Ms. Liz Fray thanked NMRI organizers for the opportunity to present on CUR, a leading organization for undergraduate research. As a membership-based nonprofit organization with more than 12,000 individual members and approximately 700 academic institutional members, CUR has representation at more than 900 colleges and universities. CUR comprises 13 divisions, including health sciences, and individual members can choose a division of interest. The

organization's mission is to support and promote high-quality undergraduate student-faculty collaborative research and scholarship. Five strategic pillars that are most important to this mission are (1) the integration of undergraduate research into curricula and coursework; (2) assessment of the impact of undergraduate research; (3) diversity and inclusion in undergraduate research; (4) innovation and collaboration in undergraduate research; and (5) internationalization (i.e., expanding the opportunities for research exchange internationally) and undergraduate research. Meetings for students and faculty and such services as nationally recognized awards, a mentor network, and an undergraduate researcher's registry are among the resources that CUR provides. Also, 2- to 3-day meetings, or CUR Institutes, are held on college campuses, during which time small groups meet to discuss an issue related to undergraduate research and faculty development. Institutes on proposal writing and beginning a research program in the natural sciences are planned for 2017. Participants were invited to visit the CUR website for additional details.

BUSINESS MEETING AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Oversight Committee Report

Sylvia Rosas, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Joslin Diabetes Center

Dr. Sylvia Rosas reported on the activities and responsibilities of the NMRI Oversight Committee. The Oversight Committee has a broad mandate that includes facilitating the development of active mentoring relationships between senior and junior members; identifying new members and planning outreach to new organizations; establishing specific groupings of Network members by research/professional interest or geographical location; and coordinating with professional societies that host annual meetings attended by Network members with the potential goal of organizing an informal gathering at one of these meetings. The Oversight Committee is composed of 10 members and two *ad hoc* members who represent the varied constituencies of the NMRI, as well as representatives from the NIH. Dr. Rosas explained that the committee convenes by conference call every 3 months; the fourth meeting coincides with the annual meeting of the Network. She acknowledged the incoming chair, Dr. Rocio Pereira, and current members of the committee. Dr. Rosas discussed future plans and encouraged participants to consider joining. Dr. Pereira expressed appreciation to Dr. Rosas for her service to the committee and invited NMRI members to forward any comments or suggestions to her attention.

Planning Committee Report

Lincoln Edwards, D.D.S., Ph.D., University President and Professor, Northern Caribbean University

Dr. Lincoln Edwards acknowledged the Planning Committee members and their role in planning and organizing the NMRI Annual Workshops. The Planning Committee convenes by conference call once each month to share and discuss ideas and make decisions by consensus and voting; the committee's final meeting coincides with the annual meeting of the Network. The priorities for the 2017 workshop and meeting were to provide opportunities for network and collaboration; honor senior members and those who have made significant contributions to the development of the NMRI; and provide the necessary tools to inspire and empower participants to make tangible progress and achieve goals in their research and careers. The team, with the assistance of Ms. Martinez, worked together to achieve these priorities. Dr. Edwards noted that the NMRI leadership and the Committee listens and values attendees' feedback and emphasized the importance of completing the meeting survey. Twenty-nine new members are in attendance and presented at this 2017 Workshop, partly due to the efforts of the existing members to increase awareness about the Network. He expressed appreciation to senior NMRI members for their dedication and work in mentoring, reviewing abstracts, and providing advice on research proposals' specific aims. The 2018 Annual Workshop is being planned and is scheduled to be held in Bethesda, Maryland; the dates are to be determined. Dr. Jose Romero is the incoming chair of the Planning Committee.

NMRI Chapter Overview
Patricia Heyn, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

Dr. Partricia Heyn provided an update on NMRI Chapter development and described the features of the draft application form, including the eligibility criteria. She pointed out that currently there are no active NMRI chapters and encouraged members of the Network to consider establishing chapters at their respective institutions. NMRI chapters will adopt NMRI's fourfold mission, which Dr. Edwards had stated in his earlier remarks. Individual chapters will provide an opportunity to engage students early in their studies, and Dr. Heyn and others in the Network will assist those who are interested. Ms. Martinez explained that the NMRI is not exclusive to diabetes, digestive disease, or kidney researchers and is open to minority investigators working in other disciplines.

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 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:

Basic Science Poster Award
Oreoluwa Adedoyin, Ph.D., Postdoctoral Fellow, The University of Alabama at Birmingham
"Lack of Heme Oxygenase-1 Increases Susceptibility to Ferroptosis in Proximal Tubule Epithelial Cells"

Translational Science Poster Award
Ketrell McWhorter, Ph.D., Postdoctoral Fellow, NIEHS
"Impact of Excessive Gestational Weight Gain and Prepregnancy BMI on the Prevalence of Large-For-Gestational Age Infants of Women with Type I Insulin-Dependent Diabetes"

Clinical Science Poster Award
Ebele Umeukeje, M.D., Professor, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine
"Increasing Autonomous Motivation for Phosphate Binder Adherence in End-Stage Renal Disease"

LUNCH KEYNOTE

Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) Disparities Research: Opportunities, Process, and Impact
Parag Aggarwal, Ph.D., Senior Program Officer, PCORI

Dr. Parag Aggarwal described PCORI, an independent research institution authorized by Congress in 2010, its research priorities, funding opportunities, and efforts to address disparities research. Governed by a 21-member Board of Governors representing the broader health care community, PCORI funds comparative clinical effectiveness research (CER) that engages patients and other stakeholders throughout the process. At PCORI, CER is patient-centered; seeks answers to real-world questions that matter to patients and other clinical decision makers; compares outcomes that matter to patients; and compares the effectiveness of two or more interventions known to have proven efficacies. PCORI is particularly interested in funding research that focuses on high-priority conditions that affect large numbers of people across a broad range of populations, placing a heavy burden on individuals, families, subpopulations, and society.

Dr. Aggarwal emphasized the importance of having a clear understanding of patient-centeredness (i.e., projects with outcomes that matter to patients) and patient and stakeholder engagement (i.e., patients and other stakeholders as research partners) when developing projects. From PCORI's perspective, there are numerous different stakeholders, and it has developed

several structures to engage stakeholders, including but not limited to Merit Review Panels, Advisory Boards, Pipeline to Proposal Awards, Speakers Bureau, Ambassador Program, Engagement Awards, and various webinars and workshops. A valuable tool and resource for applicants applying for research awards is the engagement rubric, which can be accessed from the PCORI website.

PCORI's five national priorities for research are (1) Assessment of Prevention, Diagnosis, and Treatment Options; (2) Improving Health Care Systems; (3) Communication and Dissemination Research; (4) Addressing Disparities; and (5) Accelerating Patient-Centered Outcomes Research and Methodological Research. Since December 2016, these five programs have been merged into two programs: (1) Health Care Delivery and Disparities Research and (2) Clinical Effectiveness and Decision Science. This merging does not affect the five individual national priority areas or funding categories. To date, PCORI has funded more than 440 projects in 42 states plus the District of Columbia, and also in Canada, Sweden, and Italy, totaling $1.6 billion in investments. Including stakeholder engagement awards and the coordinating center awards, more than 780 projects have been funded. The portfolio of funded projects stratified by health condition shows higher percentages of awards for mental and behavioral health-related projects, along with cancer, cardiovascular disease, and chronic conditions. Although diabetes is not the most studied health condition, PCORI supported 26 diabetes-related projects, totaling $54 million in investments, and the majority of the projects focus on underrepresented populations. Similarly, PCORI has invested $32.7 million to fund 12 kidney disease-related projects; again, these projects largely focused on underrepresented populations. The database of funded projects can be accessed and searched through the PCORI website.

Dr. Aggarwal detailed PCORI's initiatives for the Addressing Disparities National Priority. The mission is to reduce disparities in health and health care outcomes and advance equity in health and health care, with the guiding principle of supporting comparative effectiveness research that will identify the best options for reducing and eliminating disparities. The goals are to identify research questions, fund research, and disseminate promising best practices. PCORI's disparities research portfolio includes 67 funded projects and $187 million in funding. Projects are being conducted in 21 states across the United States, plus the District of Columbia.

Aside from the stakeholder engagement awards, PCORI provides several different funding opportunities, which include the Broad PCORI Funding Announcements (PFAs) that are aligned with the national priority areas, Pragmatic Clinical Studies to Evaluate Patient-Centered Outcomes, and Targeted Funding Announcements, which are designed to address PCORI's highest priority questions. The PFAs support investigator-initiated research, and awards range from $750,000 to $3 million for a funding period of 3 years. Pragmatic Clinical Studies, which address critical evidence gaps in topics of special interest to stakeholders, are 5-year $10 million projects. The PCORI research contracting process establishes a research contract, not a research grant as does the NIH. This mechanism allows PCORI to have more oversight on the project's performance, including evaluations of the completion of milestones and deliverables. Dr. Aggarwal described the application and merit review process, including the merit review criteria and the letter of intent requirements. He encouraged adhering to the PFA and application guidelines, contacting a program officer to answers questions on applying, and submitting early and on time.

Discussion

A participant asked about PCORI's ongoing operations, given the proposed changes to the health care system. Dr. Aggarwal responded that no changes are currently projected and that funded projects will continue to be supported, as well as open funding announcements. Congressional support for biomedical research remains strong, and PCORI's leadership is confident that this support will continue.

When asked about patient participation in the PCORI merit review process and whether other resources could be leveraged to increase the number of patients who provide input, Dr. Aggarwal explained that the review panel comprises a team of 15–25 people, including subject-matter experts, patients, and other stakeholders. Normally, one patient is assigned for each application and commits to investing a considerable amount of time reviewing the application. Although finding patients to participate in the review process is a challenge and any ideas for improvement are welcome, keeping the size of the team to a manageable number helps facilitate the process.

A participant asked about the success rate for applications and the difference between the grant and contract funding mechanisms. Dr. Aggarwal responded that projects that score well could be funded even if the total awards are above the PCORI funding line for that particular cycle. For example, the quality of the research will affect the decision to fund potentially three projects versus funding two. PCORI uses the contract funding mechanism and projects are required to meet and achieve the fixed milestones and deliverables. Granting mechanisms appropriate the funds on preset cycles and performance indicators are evaluated.

When asked about projects that focused on biomedical informatics, Dr. Aggarwal replied that projects making use of patient-reported outcomes data and observational studies have been supported by PCORI.

SCIENTIFIC PRESENTATIONS

An Optimal Modifiable Lifestyle Risk Factor Score Is Associated with Lower Risk of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus in African Americans: The Jackson Heart Study

Joshua J. Joseph, M.D., Assistant Professor, Werner Medical Center, The Ohio State University

Dr. Joshua Joseph presented on an optimal modifiable lifestyle risk factor score associated with lower risk of type 2 diabetes mellitus in African Americans. Reports on the prevalence and incidence trends for adults diagnosed with diabetes in the United States from 1980 to 2012 showed that the incidence rates among African Americans and Hispanics continued to increase while rates have plateaued among non-Hispanic whites. Current interventions, such as the Diabetes Prevention Program, have demonstrated that lifestyle intervention (e.g., weight loss and physical activity) reduce the risk of developing diabetes by 58 percent. An analysis from the Multiethnic Study of Atherosclerosis (MESA)—investigating the relationship between physical activity, sedentary behavior, and incident diabetes in a multiethnic population—revealed that the effect of physical activity and sedentary behavior on incident type 2 diabetes was significant only for non-Hispanic whites but not multiethnic groups, including African Americans. Furthermore, assessments on the levels of ideal cardiovascular health (i.e., never smoked, total cholesterol less than 200 mg/dL, blood pressure less than 120/80 mm Hg, body mass index (BMI) less than 25 kg/m2, physical activity more than or equal to 450 metabolic equivalent of task minutes per week, and a healthy diet score) showed that attainment of a greater number of ideal cardiovascular health factors was associated with a dose-dependent lower risk of incident type 2 diabetes mellitus. In addition, prior studies on modifiable lifestyle risk factors for incident diabetes, including the Cardiovascular Health Study initiated by the NHLBI and the NIH-American Association of Retired Persons Diet and Health Study, showed that higher levels of optimal modifiable lifestyle risk factors for diabetes were associated with significantly lower risk of developing diabetes mellitus. Although the outcomes were promising, these assessments, except for the MESA studies, were conducted in predominately non-Hispanic white cohorts and included the BMI in the combined modifiable risk factor group. Thus, the association of modifiable risk factors are less investigated in African Americans.

The research objective of this current study was to investigate the associations of combined modifiable risk factors (physical activity, television watching, dietary intake, sleep disordered breathing, and smoking) with incident diabetes in African Americans and the effect of baseline adiposity and glycemic status. Dr. Joseph and collaborators aimed to determine whether an optimal modifiable lifestyle risk factor score would be inversely associated with incident diabetes among African Americans. Data on modifiable risk factors were collected at three examination cycles in

a population-based cohort of African Americans in the Jackson Heart Study: (1) 2000–2004 (i.e., baseline); (2) 2005–2008; and (3) 2009–2012. Incident diabetes (fasting glucose ≥ 126 mg/dL, physician diagnosis, use of diabetes drugs, or HbA1c ≥ 6.5%) was assessed over 12 years among adults without prevalent diabetes at baseline. Incidence rate ratios (IRR) were estimated using Poisson regression modeling adjusting for age, sex, education, current occupation status, systolic blood pressure, and body mass index (BMI). Modifiable lifestyle factors were combined in risk score categories of poor (0–3 points), average (4–7 points), or optimal (8–11 points).

Compared to a poor modifiable lifestyle risk score, an average or optimal score was associated with a 21 percent and 31 percent lower risk of diabetes, respectively. BMI and glycemic status at baseline modified the association of lifestyle risk score with diabetes. Among participants with BMI less than 30 kg/m^2, there was a 40 percent and 47 percent significantly lower risk, respectively, compared to a 10 percent and 17 percent non-significantly lower risk among participants with BMI of 30 kg/m^2 or more. For participants with normoglycemia (normal fasting glucose and HbA1c) at baseline, there was a 36 percent and 43 percent lower risk, respectively, compared to a 10 percent and 20 percent non-significant lower risk among participants with prediabetes at baseline.

The study concluded that modifiable lifestyle factors are associated with a lower risk of diabetes among African Americans, with greater effects among those with lower adiposity and normoglycemia. Lifestyle interventions to reduce obesity have focused on individuals with high BMI and/or prediabetes. This study suggests that African Americans at the lower end of the diabetes risk spectrum may derive significant long-term benefit from diabetes prevention strategies focused on the outlined modifiable lifestyle risk factors.

Dr. Joseph acknowledged his study collaborators: Drs. Justin B. Echouffo-Tcheugui, Sameera A. Talegawkar, Valery S. Effoe, Mercedes R. Carnethon, Willa A. Hsueh, and Sherita H. Golden and Ms. Victoria Okhomina. He expressed appreciation to the staff and investigators of the Jackson Heart Study.

Discussion

A participant asked about the association of modifiable risk factors on incident diabetes in the Hispanic population. Dr. Joseph replied that the MESA study showed that attainment of a higher number of modifiable risk factors (e.g., smoking, cholesterol, blood pressure, BMI, physical activity, and healthy diet score) were associated with a lower risk of incident diabetes among Hispanic Americans, but the magnitude of reduction was less for Hispanic Americans than for non-Hispanic whites. This could suggest that early intervention and novel modifiable risk factors are needed.

Recognizing the association of genetic predisposition and risk factors for various diseases, a participant asked about the type of novel modifiable risk factors that would be considered for diabetes mellitus. Dr. Joseph described his work on generational stress and cortisol levels, which has shown an association between cortisol levels and the risk of developing diabetes mellitus. These studies suggest that cortisol could be a novel modifiable risk factor.

Diabetes Educators and In-person Culturally Competent Medical Interpreters Collaborative: A Diabetes Education Group for Hispanic Patients with Limited English Proficiency

Ariana Pichardo-Lowden, M.D., Assistant Professor, Milton S. Hershey Medical Center, Pennsylvania State University

Dr. Ariana Pichardo-Lowden presented on the Diabetes Educators and In-person Culturally Competent Medical Interpreters Collaborative and diabetes education for Hispanic patients with limited proficiency in English. The prevalence of diabetes is increasing in the Hispanic population and those diagnosed with type 2 diabetes show poor adherence to the ADA-recommended guidelines for self-management. Proper diabetic self-management skills and behaviors are

necessary for glycemic control and to avoid complications. Further complicating matters is the barrier to speak and understand English and the fact that members of the Hispanic population are less likely to afford medical insurance coverage. This inadequate access to health care—combined with cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic barriers—contributes to the existing health disparities in the Hispanic population. In addition, diabetes educational programs that are available to patients with limited English proficiency often have limitations. For example, telephone translation services often restrict effective communication in patient-educator interactions, and educators may have a limited understanding of the impact of culture on lifestyle, dietary habits, treatment adherence, disease management, and coping. Studies have shown that bilingual health care providers and trained in-person interpreters positively affect the satisfaction, quality of care, and outcomes of patients with limited English proficiency.

The purposes of this educational program are to develop and implement a learning-centered and culturally competent Spanish diabetes curriculum for Hispanic patients with low English proficiency and to assess its impact on patients' self-management and diabetes control. The course consists of three 1-hour diabetes educational sessions occurring over a 9-month period. Hispanic patients who have limited English proficiency, are newly diagnosed with diabetes, or have glycated hemoglobin (HbA1c) levels of 8 percent are being enrolled for the class. Students will engage in active learning activities related to diabetes self-management, which is focused on the seven goals of American Association of Diabetes Educators (AADE7). The AADE7 address healthy eating, increased activity, glucose monitoring, taking medications, problem solving, reducing risks, and coping. The instructional methods for this program are aligned with the L. Dee Fink Taxonomy of Significant Learning, which includes foundational knowledge, application, integration, human dimension, caring, and learning how to learn. Diabetes educators, the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center's Division of Endocrinology and Family and Community Medicine Program faculty, and the Latino Medical Student Association at the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine are collaborating to design and implement the educational program.

The in-person interpreters are certified and trained on language interpretation and cultural awareness. The evaluation of the quality of instruction will be conducted after each session through debriefings by diabetes interpreters. Program assessments, measures of health-related outcomes, and evaluation of health outcomes are included in the program. Dr. Pichardo-Lowden noted that the program is in the early phases and the curriculum is being implemented. She anticipates that the program will positively impact four important domains: (1) access to diabetes education at the Hershey Medical Center; (2) patients' satisfaction related to diabetes education; (3) improvements in self-management skills or behaviors; and (4) diabetes control among limited English proficiency Hispanic patients.

Discussion

A participant congratulated Dr. Pichardo-Lowden on highlighting this topic and looks forward to the outcomes of the study.

When asked how the cultural competency of the in-person interpreters would be evaluated, Dr. Pichardo-Lowden explained that the interpreters are bilingual and are certified by the Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine's Medical Interpretation course. They also will be trained in cultural competency.

Mitochondrial Protection in Aged Kidneys Reduces Parietal Epithelial Cell Senescence
Mariya Sweetwyne, Ph.D., Acting Instructor, University of Washington

Dr. Mariya Sweetwyne presented her research demonstrating that the mitochondrial protection in aged kidneys reduces parietal epithelial cell senescence. Aging is a significant risk factor for chronic kidney disease (CKD). It is estimated that 25 percent of Americans older than age 65 are diagnosed with CKD.

Aged kidneys, even in healthy adults, exhibit nephron loss and glomerulosclerosis. Kidneys are mitochondrial rich, and mitochondrial dysfunction has been proposed as a mechanism contributing to renal aging. This suggests that the mitochondria may play a role in the underlying changes of the aging glomerulus and the induction of cellular senescence. From prior studies, Dr. Sweetwyne and colleagues could show that the mitochondrial-targeted peptide, SS-31, improved age-induced glomerulosclerosis. Also, parietal epithelial cell (PEC) activation was reduced, and podocyte and endothelial cell integrity were improved. This current study will investigate the mechanism associated with these changes.

The objective was to assess the signs of oxidative stress and cellular senescence in aged SS-31 treated PECs. Results showed that Nox4, a reactive oxygen species-generating enzyme, was reduced in SS-31 treated PECs, and SS-31 treatment significantly reduced the presence of SA-β-gal, a senescence marker, in all renal compartments. The expression of p16 also was reduced in PECs of SS-31 treated animals, but p21 expression increased. Further examination of glomeruli in serial sections revealed a differential expression of p16 and p21 in the PEC at the Bowman's capsule, with cells expressing one or the other protein, but not both. In conclusion, mitochondrial protection is evident in aged kidneys, and senescence is regulated through a p16/p21 interaction, which is specific to the PEC.

Discussion

A participant suggested that this experimental design would be one way to investigate natural products that have shown protective effects on the aging kidney. Dr. Sweetwyne agreed that, in general this design would be a good model, but suggested careful attention when using many of the more robust CKD models.

NEXT STEPS AND ADJOURNMENT

Lincoln Edwards, D.D.S., Ph.D., University President and Professor, Northern Caribbean University

Dr. Edwards thanked participants for attending this 15th Anniversary NMRI workshop and meeting. He expressed appreciation to CUR for sponsoring the 2017 NMRI Network Reception and the professional societies—ASN, ASBMR, ADA, and the Endocrine Society—for sponsoring travel awards to the NMRI 15th Annual Workshop.

Ms. Martinez thanked everyone for attending and noted that the NMRI West Regional meeting is being planned.