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FOCUS on Research

The Kidney Health Research Collaborative

What is the Kidney Health Research Collaborative (KHRC)?

The KHRC is an innovation hub based at the SFVAHCS and UCSF whose mission is to improve kidney health worldwide. The KHRC's team of researchers believe that a multidisciplinary, collaborative research program can foster innovation to improve the lives of those affected by kidney disease, and they are committed to making kidney disease preventable and reversible.

What are the goals of the KHRC?

Their ambitious goals are matched by their energy and passion. They are working to build the leading clinical research center dedicated to accelerating scientific discovery to prevent and treat kidney disease. A key component of this is providing world-class mentorship and training for the next generation of kidney scientists. They emphasize the rapid dissemination and implementation of novel methods that will decrease the burden of kidney disease.

How does their collaborative model work?

KHRC co-founders Dr. Michael Shlipak, and Dr. Carmen A. Peralta believe that "innovation is a social process." They describe the collaborative model as "Team Science" where resources can be shared to improve efficiency and scale. The multidisciplinary team of core investigators, fellows, residents, students, and a statistical and operations core work closely with leading investigators in basic science, laboratory and chemical sciences, genetics, nephrology, vascular physiology, epidemiology, biostatistics, implementation sciences and population health.



The Kidney Health Research Collaborative Team

In other research settings, principal investigators' relationships with young investigators tend to be fairly restrictive and at times siloed. The KHRC provides a more flexible model in which members of the team interact throughout the research process with a common goal and mission. Each trainee draws upon the knowledge, skills, and resources of all of the investigators.

Their training philosophy is integral to how the collaborative works. It is founded on a commitment to support passionate young investigators and to embed mentorship and talent development in all steps of the discovery process. This model maximizes creative potential and provides trainees with the supportive environment required to be productive and contributing members of the research team.

The collaborative is also a laboratory for ideas and has the feel of a startup. Open exchange is essential to their scientific process, which is evident in how they discuss their work as well as their office lay out and environment.

"Ideas have to ping pong," stressed Dr. Michael Shlipak. This is a unique model in academic research, and they are clearly proud of what they have created.

What are their proudest accomplishments?

In less than ten years, the collaborative training model has produced four academic faculty members, six NIH Training K Awards, eight NIH R-level funded investigations, three major foundation awards (two American Heart Association and one Robert Wood Johnson), and the team has published over 500 papers. They expanded the scope of trainees beyond fellows and residents to medical students and have fostered new collaborations at the SFVAHCS, San Francisco General Hospital, and UCSF. They are extremely proud of their two new faculty recruits to SFVAHCS—Michelle Estrella, MD, MHS from Johns Hopkins and Vasantha Jotwani, MD from UCSF.

Earlier this year, they were invited to present at the VA's Center for Innovation "Kidney Innovation Summit." The summit brought together over 150 experts to explore new approaches to prevent and treat kidney disease and transform the future of

kidney care. Dr. Peralta briefed the gathering on using VA electronic health records to implement Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) screening. Dr. Shlipak presented a vision for the use of novel urine proteins to identify kidney injury before kidney disease is established.

Researchers at the KHRC conducted the pioneering research that found CKD causes cardiovascular disease and reduced survival; in fact, cardiovascular disease is the major complication of CKD. The KHRC leads the field in using novel markers of kidney health in blood and urine to detect disease at earlier stages. Their work highlights the large burden of CKD in vulnerable populations such as race/ethnic minorities, HIV-infected persons, and elders. KHRC investigators are applying these discoveries in the clinic to detect kidney damage early, when it may still be reversible, which may revolutionize approaches to medication safety.

>> TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE PLEASE VISIT:
www.ncire.org/dna/khrc.html

Q and A: An Interview with Carl Grunfeld, MD, PhD



Carl Grunfeld, MD, PhD
Associate Chief of Staff for
Research and Development, SFVAHCS
Staff Physician, Chief of Metabolism
and Endocrine Sections, SFVAHCS
Professor of Medicine, UCSF

Q: What are the most exciting aspects of your current position?

A: Getting to know our great research community. Facilitating collaborations. The ability to help them do their important work.

Q: How do you view/value the role of NCIRE in supporting the research community and advancing Veterans Health Research?

A: NCIRE is nimble.

Q: How do you define success and how do you measure up to your own definition?

A: Success is coming up with a novel idea and seeing it to fruition. The idea can be a research hypothesis that gets proven and published. Or it can be a program to help other researchers. I never feel I've met my definition because I always have new ideas, so I am looking forward and not at past successes.

Q: What do you wish other people knew about the research done here?

A: The depth and the breadth is amazing. Most people see only a part—like the blind man and the elephant story. Furthermore, people who are not in a specific field cannot see the significance of some of the work. I am working with leadership to send out bulletins on significant papers as they are published.

Q: What is your personal philosophy on what should be done to get more students involved and excited about research?

A: I talk about how exciting it is to do research when I am around students of all ages. It is particularly important to bring it up with our current medical students and residents. They have less exposure to subspecialists and even generalists who do research. We have seen a turnaround in this area, with several somewhat recent students and residents becoming funded faculty. Need to do more of showing what we do.

Q: How did you first get involved in research?

A: I was in the first year of the first ever program for high school students at a medical school, the former Hahnemann (now Drexel). I thought it was just about medicine, but it involved significant research exposure. I got fascinated with thinking about how does the body work, how does the body get ill and how can we treat illness based on what we know. When I learned about the molecular basis of cellular function, I was hooked.

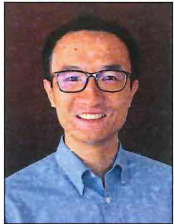
>> TO READ THE FULL ARTICLE PLEASE VISIT: www.ncire.org/dna/Q_A.html

Information Technology

Meet Our Team!

“We recognize that the use of technology is a critical part of research. Our team strives to respond promptly to support our community so that they can achieve their goals and objectives for supporting Veterans health research.”

– Keith Chan, Director, Information Technology



Keith Chan
Director, Information Technology x2-3143
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Supervises the operation of the NCIRE IT support team and provides server and application support to the NCIRE Administrative Office.



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Hubert Ngo
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Provides technical support for hardware, software, peripherals and networking issues. Assists with IT work order management, and handles requests for attaining quotes and configuring new computers.

Contracts and Grants

Welcomes Two New Employees



Ingrid Davila
Ingrid joined NCIRE in July as a Contracts and Grants Specialist. She was born in Guatemala, Central America and raised in San Francisco, and is the mother of an 18 year son. Ingrid has been working in the administrative field since she was 16 years old. She worked at the San Mateo County Event Center for approximately 11 years and advanced from Administrative Assistant to Fair and Event Coordinator, then to Accounts Payable. Prior to this role she was at Mission Bay working as an Administrative Analyst providing pre- and post- administrative support to VA/UCSF PIs. Some of her hobbies include outdoor activities, cooking and listening to music



Pureshka Maharaj Panicker
Pureshka joined NCIRE in September as a Senior Grants Specialist for the Contracts and Grants Department. Prior to coming to NCIRE, Pureshka has focused her career on working for other leading research organizations in the Bay Area, including Stanford University, UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital, El Camino Hospital and The J. David Gladstone Institutes. With her experience she brings her NIH knowledge as well as her ability to monitor and perform variance analysis on complex budgets.

Pureshka holds a Bachelor’s Degree in Integrative Biology from UC Berkeley (GO BEARS!) and an MBA from Howard University. With her extensive knowledge of science and finance she hopes to bridge the gap between Principal Investigators and their ability to grow their portfolio here at NCIRE.

New Awards

Institute for Translational Neuroscience

Josh D. Woolley, MD, PhD

Global Alzheimer's Platform Trial-Ready Cohort for Preclinical/Prodromal Alzheimer's Disease

Michael Weiner, MD

The biological effects of MST PTSD - funded by JM pledge

Sabra S. Inslicht, PhD

Prebiotic Intervention to Improve Calcium Absorption After Gastric Bypass Surgery

Anne L. Schafer, MD

ITN: N-acetylcysteine Treatment of Alcohol Use Disorder in Veterans with TBI

Steven L. Batki, MD

Using Multimodal Imaging to Examine the Neural Mechanisms of an Integrative Exercise Program for Individuals with Dementia

Linda Chao, PhD

Discussions of Prognosis and Stopping Cancer Screening in Older Adults

Alexander K. Smith, MD, MPH, MS

Efficient statistical methods or assessing dementia risk in Parkinson's disease

Duygu Tosun-Turgut, PhD

Understanding HIV latency reversal and clearance of infected cells in vivo

Steven A. Yukl, MD

Implementation of a Pragmatic Trial of Whole Health Team vs. Primary Care Group Education to Promote Non-Pharmacological Strategies to Improve Pain, Functioning, and Quality of Life in Veterans

Karen Seal, MD, MPH

Message from the Executive Director

Colleagues,

Last month, I attended a meeting of the National Association of Veterans Research and Education Foundations (NAVREF), and I was reminded of the important role that the Non-Profit Corporations (NPC) play in improving the lives of Veterans across the U.S. I heard a constant theme: the value of collaborations among researchers, educators, Veterans and more.

Here at home, I see those kinds of collaborations, and others that are just as crucial. They are the partnerships among support staff - our fabulous IT people, for example, and many more -- and the scientists who produce the pioneering work that make NCIRE the largest non-profit research institute devoted to Veterans health.

NAVREF recently announced a goal to double participation in VA/NPC clinical trials. Already, our researchers strive

constantly to include more Veterans in studies that could lead to innovative treatments. If we can do our part in meeting that goal, it will be due to the partnerships and teamwork that form NCIRE's backbone. I look forward to continuing to work with you as we meet all our important challenges ahead.



Rebecca Rosales, MBA, CRA
Executive Director

About NCIRE

NCIRE - The Veterans Health Research Institute has one mission and one goal: Advancing Veterans Health. We sustain a scientific community of clinicians and researchers and support over 200 researchers who have joint faculty appointments at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) and the San Francisco VA Health Care System (SFVAHCS) and are working to foster innovation through leadership in the field of Veterans health research. Our broad portfolio of projects receives generous support from the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Defense, and individual donors, making us the largest nonprofit research institute devoted to Veterans health in the US. NCIRE is a 501(c)3 nonprofit. (Tax ID #94-3084159). Visit NCIRE at www.ncire.org



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