



MCCTR News

Mississippi Center for Clinical and Translational Research

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Joey Granger, PhD

A Message from the Director

Best wishes for the new year! In this--our first--newsletter, we report on several of MCCTR's recent accomplishments as well as those of our faculty and trainees.

The Pilot Projects Program just completed its seventh Call for Proposals. We received thirteen letters of intent, with full proposals due on January 30. (The next round is scheduled for June.)

We welcomed eight new members to our Internal Advisory Board last month: Mohamed Elasri, PhD, Director of USM's

Center for Molecular and Cellular Biosciences; Tammy Fordham-Bell, Health Educator and a member of the Community Advisory Board; Ervin Fox, MD, UMMC; Claudia Lucchinetti, MD, Mayo Clinic; Gailen Marshall, MD, PhD, UMMC; Leandro Mena, MD, MPH, Director of UMMC's Department of Population Health Sciences; Tom Mosley, PhD, Director of UMMC's MIND Center; and Mario Sims, PhD, Chief Science Officer for the Jackson Heart Study.

We hope you enjoy this newsletter. We expect to publish it on a bi-monthly basis.

~Joey Granger, PhD, Director

Inside this issue:

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- **Several COVID clinical trials in progress at UMMC**
- **Some recent accomplishments by MCCTR investigators**
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MCCTR Provides Infrastructure for COVID-19 Study

MCCTR is housing one of 11 "CEAL" grants issued by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. CEAL is an acronym for Community Engagement Alliance Against COVID-19 Disparities.

The objectives are to (1) conduct urgent community-engaged research and outreach focused on COVID-19 awareness and education to address the widespread misinformation about COVID-19 and promote an evidence-based response to the disease, and (2) promote and facilitate inclusion of diverse racial and ethnic populations in clinical trials, reflective of the populations disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Caroline Compretta, PhD, a co-leader of MCCTR's Community Engaged Research Core,

and Michael Hall, MD, MS, MCCTR's Director of Clinical and Population Studies, serve as two of the study's three principal investigators. Victor Sutton, PhD, Director of the Mississippi State Department of Health's Office of Preventive Health and Health Equity, serves as the third principal investigator.

Joey Granger, PhD, serves as the CEAL Study's Director of Research Resources.

Several MCCTR faculty are participating as co-investigators for CEAL study initiatives. Susan Mayfield-Johnson, PhD, a member of MCCTR's Investigator Development Program, and Wendy White, PhD, a co-leader of the Community Engaged Research Core, are both directing distinct CEAL initiatives.



Caroline Compretta, PhD



Michael Hall, MD, MS



Victor Sutton, PhD

MCCTR Participates in National COVID Cohort Collaborative

Under the leadership of William Hillegass, MD, PhD, and in collaboration with UMMC's Center for Informatics and Analytics, MCCTR received a grant to support collaborative participation with seven other CTRs in the National COVID Cohort Collaborative (N3C). The N3C Registry contains data on more than 2.6 million tested and 370,000 COVID-19 positive individuals, extracted from the electronic health records of 73 healthcare institutions.

Funded by NIH's National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), N3C is the premier platform for observational COVID electronic health record-based research.

According to Hillegass, "The assembled Data Enclave will be broadly available to investigators, both locally and throughout the nation. MCCTR's BERD Core will facilitate access and analysis of data for all MCCTR partner investigators."

Several options exist for investigators wanting to pursue research that utilizes the N3C, including investigator-initiated project and participation in either a CTR Consortium project or an N3C working group.

Beyond COVID, NCAT views N3C as establishing the paradigm and infrastructure for the future of collaborative, efficient, and well-powered national electronic health record registries and research. The platform will include extensive use of machine learning. Further, N3C is developing and testing the concept of synthetic datasets. If successful, the synthetic data methods will provide a new state-of-the-art approach to efficiently perform electronic health record-based research while alleviating many privacy and data security concerns.

Interested MCCTR investigators are encouraged to contact Hillegass at whillegass@umc.edu or Sheeba Ogirala at sogirala@umc.edu.



William Hillegass, MD, PhD Sheeba Ogirala, MS, MBA Alexandra Castillo, MPH

UMMC Hosting Several COVID-19 Clinical Trials

UMMC has a robust clinical research effort focused on evaluating multiple treatments for patients with COVID-19.

"To date," said Gailen Marshall, MD, PhD, Medical Director of UMMC's Clinical Research and Trials Unit and a member of the MCCTR Internal Advisory Committee, "We are engaged in 23 distinct clinical trials that have enrolled 712 patients as of December 20."

These trials include several treatments directed against the virus itself and other treatments aimed at the inflammation, sometimes called a cytokine storm, often responsible for serious illness and sometimes death.

UMMC is also involved in developing vaccines to prevent infection. The studies involve research participants throughout Mississippi, with a special emphasis on the state's diverse population.

These clinical trials have a variety of sponsors, including pharmaceutical companies, philanthropic organizations, and the Federal government. Said Marshall, "Our team is committed to doing all we can to help in bringing this devastating pandemic to an end for the benefit of all our state citizens."



Gailen Marshall, MD, PhD



Vishnu Garla, MD was recently appointed as Associate Medical Director of UMMC's Clinical Research and Trials Unit, and is currently Principal Investigator for an industry-sponsored clinical trial, "DARE-19," evaluating the role of Dapagliflozin in the treatment of COVID-19.

Susan Mayfield-Johnson, PhD was honored with the University of Southern Mississippi College of Nursing and Health Professions' 2020 Distinguished Mentor Award, and was named 2020 Educator of the Year with the Mississippi Institute of Higher Learning Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion Award.

Pradeep Alur, MD received a grant from the Pediatric Discovery Council for the clinical study, "Glucose Homeostasis in Cholestatic Preterm Infants of Full Enteral Nutrition." Dr. Alur will also chair a session at the next meeting of the Pediatric Academic Societies, "Individualized Neonatal Care: Sex-Specific Approach Matters!"

Crystal Lim, PhD serves as a co-investigator on the Mississippi Pediatric Clinical Trials Network 2. She also co-chaired a virtual symposium in November of the Association of Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies Annual Convention, "ABCT Internship Training Site Overview."

Upcoming Funding Opportunities

Number: PAR-20-310

Title: Health Services Research on Minority Health and Health Disparities (R01 - Clinical Trial Optional)

Purpose: To encourage innovative health services research that can directly and demonstrably contribute to the improvement of minority health and/or the reduction of health disparities at the health care system-level as well as within clinical settings.

Deadlines: March 17, 2021; November 17, 2021

More Information: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-20-310.html>

Number: [Notice of Intent] NOT-HL-20-820

Title: Early Intervention to Promote Cardiovascular Health of Mothers and Children (ENRICH) Multisite (UG3/UH3) with Coordinating Center (U24)

Purpose: To enable potential applicants sufficient time to develop competitive applications that propose to test the effectiveness of an implementation-ready intervention designed to determine if a cardiovascular health (CVH) promotion module delivered within the context of a home visiting program can enhance maternal and early childhood CVH and address CVH disparities in mothers and children (0-5 years). The study population includes those who are of low socioeconomic status, or live in low resource or underserved rural or urban communities, or in diverse geographic regions of the U.S. with a high burden of cardiovascular disease risk factors. An FOA for clinical trials (UG3/UH3) will run in parallel with a companion FOA for an ENRICH Research Coordinating Center (U24).

Deadline: June 22, 2021 (anticipated)

More Information: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-HL-20-820.html>

Reminder:

Proposals for Pilot Projects Program are due on January 30;
concomitant applications due to IRB by February 5.

MCCTR-affiliated Publications, October 1 - November 30, 2020

- Collins SP, Liu D, Jenkins CA, Storrow AB, Levy PD, Pang PS, Chang AM, Char D, Diercks DJ, Fermann GJ, Han JH, Hiestand B, Hogan C, Kampe CJ, Khan Y, Lee S, Lindenfeld J, Martindale J, McNaughton CD, Miller KF, Miller-Reilly C, Moser K, Peacock WF, Robichaux C, Rothman R, Schrock J, Self WH, Singer AJ, Sterling SA, Ward MJ, Walsh C, Butler J. Effect of a Self-care Intervention on 90-Day Outcomes in Patients With Acute Heart Failure Discharged From the Emergency Department: A Randomized Clinical Trial. *JAMA Cardiol.* 2020 Nov 18:e205763. doi: 10.1001/jamacardio.2020.5763. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 33206126; PMCID: PMC7675219.
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