



UNC CFAR NEWSLETTER

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH AT ITS FINEST

Director's Corner



CFARs are active on many levels. One of the things CFARs do is form Inter-CFAR Working Groups (WGs). Much like the Scientific Working Groups within each CFAR, these more national groups get together to share data and ideas, and to develop collaborations between institutions. Both the Scientific Working Groups and the Inter-CFAR Working Groups need strong leadership, an important topic, and a critical mass of interested people. Also, these groups usually are able to maintain a critical mass for a period of time but once they achieve their goals they move on to other things. For this reason it is helpful to start new working groups to try to catch that

moment (or year) where a group of interested people can get together and synergize.

We have had several of our CFAR members play active roles in Inter-CFAR Working Groups. However, we have never tried to launch a new Inter-CFAR Working Group from the UNC CFAR. That is now changing. While we are here at the launch, we hope this new Inter-CFAR Working Group will develop its own identity, with our CFAR playing an administrative support role as the WG members engage each other across CFARs.

Starting later this year there will be a new Inter-CFAR Transgender Health Working Group. The group will have a leadership team initially consisting of our own Dr. Tonia Poteat, Drs. Andrea Wirtz and Will Beckham at the Johns Hopkins CFAR, and Dr. Laramie Smith at the San Diego CFAR. Some of you may know about Dr. Wirtz's work establishing a large cohort of trans people across the country, a really remarkable accomplishment in outreach. This is an exciting leadership team of young investigators who will be making important contributions for a long time doing work with underserved populations and asking questions that have waited too long to be addressed.

An important part of this effort will come from leadership within the trans community. Many of you will remember Marissa Miller from the Community Symposium when we hosted the National CFAR Meeting in Chapel Hill in November 2019. Marissa continues to interact with us and is a collaborator with Tonia in her research. I am personally grateful for the interest Marissa has shown in our CFAR and the work we do (and could do).

A final part of this effort will be to develop and distribute a health and research newsletter to the trans community. How can we bring the results of research relevant to transgender people to them, and how can we engage them to participate in new research questions? We will be exploring these questions with hopefully new and innovative approaches to outreach. I am grateful to Dr. Myron Cohen and the HPTN which is providing initial funding for the development and distribution of this newsletter.

Let's all wish the new Inter-CFAR Transgender Health Working Group success, and if you have an interest in joining let us know. Finally, let's also thank Tonia, Andrea, Will, and Laramie for their leadership roles in this effort. Stay tuned.

Ronald Swanstrom,
UNC CFAR Co-Director

2

Emerging CFAR Scientific Interest Group on HIV Research and Faith



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CFAR Office of Community Engagement

A part of our mission through the Office of Community Engagement is to enhance the impact of the CFAR and its research to a wider audience of stakeholders and making HIV/AIDS research sustainable and accessible by maintaining authentic, trusting, and reciprocal relationships with populations that collaborate in research. With that being said, we are exploring the development of a new CFAR Scientific Interest Group which would build scholarly partnerships between faith leaders in North Carolina and the UNC Center for AIDS Research. This could be a great start towards bridging the gap between those affected by the stigma associated with HIV and faith communities. This research partnership would include discussions on how faith leaders and faith communities can be more welcoming to LGBTQ+ communities and persons living with HIV as well as understanding values of faith leaders and communities and how they might be involved in research, dissemination, and implementation. While faith is a topic that is rarely mentioned in the biomedical research literature and there may be hesitancy to discuss religion or spirituality, it can be a crucial factor in community engagement and research participation.

New studies from The UNC Global HIV Prevention and Clinical Trials Unit

Becky Straub
*UNC HIV Prevention and Treatment
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The UNC Global HIV Prevention and Clinical Trials Unit is opening several new HIV long-acting treatment, PrEP, Cure and co-morbidity studies. We are excited to announce that we have a new research site conveniently located off I-40 in Chapel Hill with free parking. Research participants are provided with transportation assistance and compensation for their time. Below are some highlighted studies and our research team can be reached [via our website](#) and at 984-215-2700.

Long-Acting HIV Treatment Highlight!

GS-US-526-5816: This study combines an investigational capsid inhibitor in combination with two broadly neutralizing antibodies for twice a year dosing. Participants will be seen monthly for viral load testing and receive the investigational products about every 6 months.

Study name: A Phase 1b Randomized, Blinded, Proof-of-Concept Study to Evaluate the Safety of Broadly Neutralizing Antibodies (bNABs) GS-5423 and GS-2872 in Combination with Capsid Inhibitor Lenacapavir (GS-6207) in Virologically Suppressed Adults with HIV-1 Infection

Long-Acting HIV PrEP Highlights!

MK8591-022 & MK8591-024: These sister PrEP studies are for participants who are assigned at birth female and male respectively who may be at risk for HIV acquisition. They'll compare once a month oral dosing of investigational Islatravir vs. Truvada for women and Truvada or Descovy for men. Participants are seen monthly and receive HIV counseling, testing, STI testing, condoms, lube, and a brief physical exam at every visit.

Study names:

MK8591-022 Evaluation of the efficacy and safety of oral Islatravir as a pre-exposure prophylaxis in cisgender women at high risk for HIV-1 Infection

MK8591-024 Evaluate the Efficacy and Safety of Oral Islatravir Once-Monthly as pre-exposure prophylaxis in cisgender men and transgender women who have sex with men and are at high risk for HIV-1

HIV Cure Highlight!

A5386: This trial will evaluate a combination strategy to induce control of HIV infection in the absence of ART. The team hypothesizes that this will occur through reversal of HIV latency by N-803, targeting and clearance of cells expressing HIV-1 by binding of bNAbs, enhancement of ADCC by N-803, and expansion of resulting anti-HIV immune responses (i.e., “vaccinal effect”) by N-803. This combination strategy may induce post-treatment control as a result of both a reduction of the HIV-1 reservoir and enhanced anti-HIV immunity.

Study name: A Phase I Clinical Trial of the Safety, Tolerability, and Efficacy of IL-15 Superagonist (N-803) With and Without Combination Broadly Neutralizing Antibodies to Induce HIV-1 Control During Analytic Treatment Interruption

HIV Co-Morbidities Highlight!

A5355: Cytomegalovirus (CMV) is a common co-infection with people living with HIV (LWH). CMV can increase inflammation and immune activation which may increase the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease and diabetes. Inflammation may also contribute to maintaining the latent reservoir even after years of ART treatment. This study will randomize 2 out of 3 people to receive an anti-CMV vaccine and 1 out of 3 people will receive a placebo vaccine.

Study name:

Phase II, Double-Blind, Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Trial to Evaluate the Safety and Immunogenicity of a Modified Vaccinia Ankara (MVA)-based anti-Cytomegalovirus (CMV)

Vaccine (Triplex®), in Adults with Both Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)-1 and CMV Who Are on Potent Combination ART with Conserved Immune Function

We look forward to hearing from community members and providers. Please feel free to reach out to our staff if you would like more information about HIV research opportunities at UNC.

Sincerely,

Becky Straub

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Upcoming Events:

July 16, 4pm ET: Positive Women’s Network (PWN) virtual beach BBQ birthday bash ([Register here](#))

August 29: National Faith HIV/AIDS Awareness Day #NFHAAD

September 18: National HIV/AIDS and Aging Awareness Day #HIVandAging

September 27: National Gay Men’s HIV/AIDS Awareness Day #NGMHAAD



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