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In Translation, v.1:no.1 (2010:Summer)

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IN TRANSLATION

Momentum is Strong



Thanks for taking time to learn about some of impressive accomplishments achieved recently by the Connecticut Institute for Clinical and Translational Science (CICATS.) With so much momentum, it's hard to believe it's been less than one year since

CICATS held its formal launch last fall! True to its mission and goals, CICATS is making great strides to educate and nurture new scientists and increase the number of clinical and translational research projects in the greater Hartford area.

This is clearly illustrated through the development of the Master of Science Degree in Clinical and Translational Research, which was designed specifically for healthcare professionals who want to expand their research careers; the awarding of CICATS' first two K12 Awards for Mentored Research to the support the promising work of Drs. Martin and Andemariam; and the development of the Participants Clinical Interactions Resources which will support researchers throughout the Health Center, the University and all the partner institutions.

We look forward to sharing more news in the months ahead. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to learn more by visiting cicats.uconn.edu.

Sincerely,

Cato T. Laurencin, M.D., Ph.D.

Vice President for Health Affairs

Dean, UConn School of Medicine

CICATS K12 Awards for Mentored Research

Susan Reisine, Ph.D., Core Director, Research Education, Training and Career Development

The K12 program was initiated with University funds in the summer of 2009 through CICATS. The purpose of the program is to support the career development of investigators who have made a commitment to focus their research endeavors on clinical and translational research. It will help to develop the infrastructure necessary to implement the Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) K12 program if we are successful in our next NIH application. At the same time, it will develop a pipeline of qualified candidates for future awards through the CTSA.

After soliciting letters of intent at the Farmington and Storrs campuses, we received 20 inquiries, 14 letters of intent and selected eight candidates to submit a full application. Four complete applications were received on January 1, 2010. Two applicants, Drs. Katie Martin and Biree Andemariam received awards.

Dr. Martin is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Allied Health Sciences and the Center for Public Health and Health Policy at UConn-Storrs. Dr. Martin received her PhD in Nutrition Science and Policy from Tufts University and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in Nutritional Sciences at the University of Connecticut, Storrs with Dr. Ann Fer-

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Master of Science in Clinical and Translational Research

**Anne Kenny, M.D. Associate Program Director,
General Clinical Research Center (GCRC)**

The University of Connecticut (Farmington and Storrs campuses) has recently developed a Masters Degree Program in Clinical and Translational Research. The motivation for developing a curriculum was the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) move to discontinue General Clinical Research Centers (GCRC), T32 and K12 programs and merge these funding mechanisms for career development and infrastructure to Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA). These awards will add up to \$4 million/year to current GCRC and training grant funding. To be eligible to apply for a CTSA, institutions must have a graduate degree program in Clinical and Translational Research in place.

The Masters Program in Clinical and Translational Research is designed to prepare health care professionals with the academic and research skills needed to be competitive as independent researchers. The program focuses on the preparation of individuals with established, terminal degrees in a health related field (MD, PhD, PharmD, DDS or DMD) to conduct independent research in translation of information from the basic sciences to the clinic and to the community.

The Masters Program will be led by a team of investigators/educators – Anne Kenny, MD; Howard Tennen, PhD; TV Rajan, MD, PhD; and David Pendys, PhD; working closely with an expanded advisory council including Stephen Walsh, ScD; Marie Smith, PharmD; Henry Kranzler, MD; and Lawrence Raisz, MD. Fifty-four faculty from UCHC, UConn–Storrs, CCMC and Hartford Hospital have agreed to teach and/or mentor prospective students.

The curriculum consists of 24 credits, anchored by required core courses in Clinical and Translational Research (9 credits). In addition, each student is required to complete a 3-credit "translational research" course and a 3-credit elective course from a list of approved courses to complete the plan of study for Clinical and Translational Research. Students will also be required to complete 9 credits in research to provide them with competency in the implementation of research methods, including hypothesis formulation, research design, quantitative and qualitative methods, data acquisition and analysis and computer application. After completion of the course work, students sit for a general examination consisting of a written paper and a grant proposal.

Those interested in the Master Program in Clinical and Translational research should send an email to Dr. Anne Kenny (kenny@uchc.edu) or Ms. Lisa Godin (godin@nso.uchc.edu).

The curriculum will be expanded in the upcoming year, due to successfully receiving an NCRR Curriculum Development Award. The award will allow the program to develop and expand the curriculum in translational methods. Drs. Richard Fortinsky and Betty Eipper have agreed to spearhead the two developing courses. Dr. Fortinsky will work with regional investigators to develop a course entitled "Health Outcome Methods for the Clinical Investigator". Similarly, Dr. Eipper will team with colleagues to develop a course entitled "Basic Science Methods for the Clinical Investigator".



ris. Her research expertise is in food security, food assistance programs, obesity and social capital among low-income populations. For the past two years Dr. Martin has partnered with the Hartford Food System to evaluate their Healthy Food Retailer Initiative among small markets in Hartford. That project was supported with a grant from the Donaghue Medical Research Foundation. For her K12 project, she will evaluate an intervention called Freshplace, which is based on Social Cognitive Theory with motivational interviewing to develop food security and self-sufficiency among Hartford residents. Her mentors are Drs. Judith Fifield and Victor Hesselbrock.

Dr. Andemariam is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Farmington. She is a hematologist-oncologist with Lea's Foundation for Hematologic Disorders, part of the Carole and Ray Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center. Dr. Andemariam received her MD with research honors from Tufts University and is a Master of Science candidate in Clinical Investigation at Weill Cornell Medical College. Her research interests include new advances in care for patients with sickle cell disease and she currently receives research support from Lea's Foundation for Leukemia Research. For this project, she will focus on the pathogenesis of severe asthma in transgenic sickle cell mice and later, in humans with sickle cell disease. Her mentors are Drs. Roger Thrall and Pramod Srivastava.

The Connecticut Institute for Clinical and Translational Science (CICATS) is a partnership between UConn, area hospitals, and community-based organizations to transform the way biomedical science is conceived, conducted and disseminated in Connecticut. The Institute transcends the traditional boundaries of individual organizations and organizes the University and its partners into a single functioning research consortium. Learn more at <http://www.cicats.uconn.edu>.

Overview of Participant & Clinical Interactions Resources

Cheryl Oncken, M.D., Associate Professor of Medicine and Program Director, GCRC

PCIR (Participant Clinical Interactions Resources): Under CICATS, the General Clinical Research Center (GCRC) will be incorporated into the PCIR. The major goal of the PCIR Core is a greater integration of clinical and translational research between the two UConn campuses and the partnering institutions. The crucial role the GCRC has played to date in the growth and development of clinical research at UCHC and its collaborating institutions underscores the need for a jointly focused effort to establish a central research home and to provide a structure for organized regional clinical research. The proposed PCIR will support and accelerate clinical and translational research by coordinating and developing necessary infrastructures that enhance clinical and translational research. The PCIR is designed to respond to the needs of regional clinical and translational science investigators and to facilitate the development of new and novel technologies.

The PCIR builds upon the successful model of the GCRC, as well as other successful clinical research entities at UCHC and partnering regional hospitals. The PCIR Core will provide the infrastructure necessary to continue and expand the conduct of cutting-edge clinical, T1 and T2 research within CICATS. Importantly this model has been extended to include important facilities/technologies (i.e., functional MRI and overnight stay unit at Hartford Hospital) and research personnel available at affiliated institutions. The PCIR holds promise to transform clinical and translation research in the greater Hartford region. **The PCIR aims to** 1) To provide regional clinical

and translational researchers with a range of participant and clinical interaction resources that support clinical (behavioral, medical, and dental), T1 and T2 research at the UConn Farmington and Storrs campuses, Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Hartford Hospital, and other regional hospitals, and in community-based, regional, national and international settings; 2) To ensure that studies utilizing these resources meet the highest scientific and ethical standards and that all known patient safety issues are appropriately addressed. 3) To reduce barriers to the conduct of clinical research by providing recruitment assistance and by reducing the regulatory burden on investigators. 4) To assist in the recruitment, training, and mentoring of a new generation of multi-disciplinary clinical and translational investigators with special attention to the needs of new investigators and to emerging areas of clinical research; 5) To develop a fair and cost-effective system to distribute available clinical and translational research resources, to prioritize

research studies when necessary, and to manage and track resource utilization and study progress. We envision that the PCIR will be composed of several core facilities of the current GCRC and clinical research facilities at partnering institutions that will be made available to CICATS investigators. Victor Hesselbrock, PhD, head of the Clinical Research Core, will be the initial scientific chairman of the PCIR Scientific Advisory Committee. Dr. Cheryl Oncken, GCRC program director, will be the director of the PCIR. Dr. Anne Kenny, GCRC associate program director, will transition to the role of PCIR associate program director for mentoring and training. The PCIR executive committee will be composed of area program directors of regional clinical and translational research centers and Core leaders of PCIR services. In future newsletters, we will further detail the services provided, how to apply for resources, and how the PCIR will interface with other CICATS cores to make a more streamlined system for investigators.



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