Hello Summer!
Dear Colleagues,

Hello Summertime, my favorite season! Welcome to Volume 15 of the Fimbria where we celebrate our graduating residents and fellows and welcome our new trainees. Each issue introduces one of our research labs and clinical innovations. This edition focuses on the lab of stellar scientist Priyadarshini (Priya) Pantham, PhD, a faculty member in the division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine. We also feature two programs in our Clinical Innovation series. The first is our Cardio-Obstetrics Program, led by Drs. Maryam Tarsa in MFM and Laith Alshawabkeh from Cardiology. The second is our Centering Pregnancy Program, a midwife-run group prenatal program meeting the needs of our expectant patients. Our Culture and Justice Quorum has embraced ACOG’s IX CLEAR Initiative for our department culture of anti-racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Visit our website for more information on our divisions, clinical programs, leading edge research, and academic affairs. Please enjoy this issue, and email us with any feedback to Fimbria@ucsd.edu.

Thank you!

Cynthia Gyamfi-Bannerman, MD, MS | Samuel SC Yen Endowed Chair
Department Chair, Obstetrics, Gynecology, & Reproductive Sciences and Professor, Maternal-Fetal Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Grant</th>
<th>Award Date</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanjay Agarwal, MD</td>
<td>SOBI</td>
<td>Pilot study of the IL-1 antagonist Anakinra for the treatment of endometriosis related symptoms.</td>
<td>1/1/2023-12/31/2023</td>
<td>$47,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah Averbach, MD, MAS</td>
<td>NIH/NIHCD</td>
<td>Increasing access to postpartum contraception by linking family planning and infant vaccination services</td>
<td>5/15/2023-4/30/2026</td>
<td>$400,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindsey Burnett, MD, PhD</td>
<td>UCSD Center for Perinatal Discovery</td>
<td>Grant Pathway to Independence “Examining the Role of Bmal1, A Novel Maternal Factor in Preimplantation Development”</td>
<td>7/1/2023-6/30/2024</td>
<td>$10k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jessica Cassin, PhD</td>
<td>NIH</td>
<td>Towards a trophectoderm stem-cell model representing human blastocysts of the highest implantation potential</td>
<td>8/1/2023-7/31/2025</td>
<td>$295k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheila Mody, MD, MPH</td>
<td>Cystic Fibrosis Foundation</td>
<td>Envision CF III: Emerging Leaders in CF Endocrinology</td>
<td>4/1/2023-3/31/2026</td>
<td>$61,525/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Schlaepfer, PhD</td>
<td>V Foundation for Cancer Research</td>
<td>“Overcoming Immune Resistance in Ovarian Cancer”</td>
<td>6/2023-6/2027</td>
<td>$800k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Irene Su, MD, MSCE</td>
<td>Academic Senate</td>
<td>The 4th Trimester Project: SHARE (Strengthening Health Access, Resources, and Excellence Initiative) Grant</td>
<td>6/2023-5/31/2024</td>
<td>$14,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael McHale, MD</td>
<td>Curebound</td>
<td>Curbound Cure Prize: screening for ovarian cancer with advanced diffusion MRI in patients at high risk for ovarian cancer</td>
<td>6/2023-6/2026</td>
<td>$1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audra Meadows, MD, MPH</td>
<td>Conrad Prebys Foundation</td>
<td>OB Refugee Program: SHARE Grant to clinics to serve communities with low socio-economic status</td>
<td>6/2023-6/2025</td>
<td>$100k/year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Kauffman, PhD</td>
<td>NICHD</td>
<td>The circadian time of food intake and its effect on reproductive health.</td>
<td>5/2023-3/2028</td>
<td>$3,145,789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audra Meadows, MD, MPH</td>
<td>Conrad Prebys Foundation</td>
<td>NIH R01 Grant Score of 2% (2nd Percentile) “Androgen effects on the reproductive neuroendocrine axis.” This R01 Project will delineate the specific mechanisms by which androgens impact hormone secretion in females and transgender men.</td>
<td>11/2023-10/2028</td>
<td>$3,836,667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recent Publications of Outstanding Work by Department of OBGYN & RS Members

**Erin E McCoy, Ronit Katz, Diana K N Louden, Emiko Oshima, Amy Murtha, Cynthia Gyamfi-Bannerman, Nanette Santoro, Elizabeth A Howell, Lisa Halvorson, Susan D Reed, Barbara A Goff**

Scholarly activity following NIH Women’s Reproductive Health Research K12 training - A cohort study  | American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology  • JULY 2023


Nicole H Goldhaber, Robin L Schaefer, Roman Martinez, Andrew Graham, Elizabeth Malachowski, Lisa P Rhodes, Ruth S Waterman, Kristin L Mekeel, Brian J Clay, Michael McHale - JULY 2023


Charlotte Pickett, Warren G Foster, Sanjay Agarwal - JULY 2023

Elke Hunsche, Martha Gauthier, Brooke Witherspoon, Viacheslav Rakov, Sanjay K Agarwal - JULY 2023

Dana Canfield, Lauryn Gabby, Elmira Vaziri Fard, Cynthia Gyamfi-Bannerman - JULY 2023

Daphne Yvette LaCourriere, Lisa Kane Low, Sara Putnam, Jean F Wyman, Diane K Newman, Shayna Cunningham, Leslie Rickey, Amanda Berry, Sheila Gahagan, Camille P Vaughan, Oluwateniola Brown, Sonya S Brady - JULY 2023

Claudia Contadini, Alessandra Ferri, Claudia Cirotti, Dwayne Stupack, Daniela Barilá - JULY 2023

Paul C Nathan, H Irene Su - JULY 2023

Karen K Mestan, Sandra L Leibel, Eniko Sajti, Betty Pham, Samantha Hietalati, Louise Laurent, Mana Paras, Karen K Mestan, Sandra L Leibel, Eniko Sajti, Betty Pham, Samantha Hietalati, Louise Laurent, Mana Paras - JULY 2023

**Cynthia Gyamfi-Bannerman, Nanette Santoro, Elizabeth A Howell, Lisa Halvorson, Susan D Reed, Barbara A Goff**

Research K12 training - A cohort study | American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology • JULY 2023

Scholarly activity following NIH Women’s Reproductive Health Research K12 training - A cohort study | American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology • JULY 2023


Nicole H Goldhaber, Robin L Schaefer, Roman Martinez, Andrew Graham, Elizabeth Malachowski, Lisa P Rhodes, Ruth S Waterman, Kristin L Mekeel, Brian J Clay, Michael McHale - JULY 2023


Charlotte Pickett, Warren G Foster, Sanjay Agarwal - JULY 2023

Elke Hunsche, Martha Gauthier, Brooke Witherspoon, Viacheslav Rakov, Sanjay K Agarwal - JULY 2023

Dana Canfield, Lauryn Gabby, Elmira Vaziri Fard, Cynthia Gyamfi-Bannerman - JULY 2023

Daphne Yvette LaCourriere, Lisa Kane Low, Sara Putnam, Jean F Wyman, Diane K Newman, Shayna Cunningham, Leslie Rickey, Amanda Berry, Sheila Gahagan, Camille P Vaughan, Oluwateniola Brown, Sonya S Brady - JULY 2023

Claudia Contadini, Alessandra Ferri, Claudia Cirotti, Dwayne Stupack, Daniela Barilá - JULY 2023

Paul C Nathan, H Irene Su - JULY 2023

Karen K Mestan, Sandra L Leibel, Eniko Sajti, Betty Pham, Samantha Hietalati, Louise Laurent, Mana Paras, Karen K Mestan, Sandra L Leibel, Eniko Sajti, Betty Pham, Samantha Hietalati, Louise Laurent, Mana Paras - JULY 2023
Recent Publications of Outstanding Work by Department of OBGYN & RS Members


**Validation of bladder health scales and function indices for women’s research** | AJOG • MAY 2023


**Preconception and Perinatal Hospitalizations as Indicators of Risk for Severe Maternal Morbidity in Primiparas** | AJOG MFM • MAY 2023

Selina Sandoval, Grace Chen, Sally Rafie, Borsika Rabin, Sheila Mody, Sarah Averbach

**A qualitative analysis of pharmacists’ attitudes towards provision of medication abortion** | BMC Health Services Research • MAY 2023

Anvita Dixit, Nicole E Johns, Mohan Ghule, Madhusudana Battala, Shahina Begum, Niranjan Saggurti, Jay Silverman, Elizabeth Reed, Susan M Kiene, Tarik Benmarhnia, Sarah Averbach, Anita Raj

**Association of traditional marital practices with contraceptive decision-making, couple communication, and method use among couples in rural Maharashtra, India** | Culture, Health & Sexuality • APRIL 2023

Debra L Richardson, Ramez N Eskander, David M O’Malley

**Advances in Ovarian Cancer Care and Unmet Treatment Needs for Patients With Platinum Resistance: A Narrative Review** | JAMA • APRIL 2023


**Tranexamic Acid to Prevent Obstetrical Hemorrhage after Cesarean Delivery** | NEJM • APRIL 2023

Breana L Hill, Ryon P Graf, Kunal Shah, Natalie Danziger, Douglas I Lin, Julia Quintanilha, Gerald Li, James Haberberger, Jeffrey S Ross, Alessandro D Santin, Brian Slomovitz, Julia A Elvin, Ramez N Eskander

**Mismatch repair deficiency, next-generation sequencing-based microsatellite instability, and tumor mutational burden as predictive biomarkers for immune checkpoint inhibitor effectiveness in frontline treatment of advanced stage endometrial cancer** | International Journal of Gynecologic Cancer • APRIL 2023

Emily S Lukacz, Chloe Falke, Julia Geynisman-Tan, Jean F Wyman, Elizabeth R Mueller, Alayne D Markland, Leslie Rickey, Jerry L Lowder, Kyle Rudser, Lisa Kane Low, Diane K Newman; Prevention of Lower Urinary Tract Symptoms (PLUS) Research Consortium

**Healthy bladder storage and emptying functions in community-dwelling women measured by a 2-day bladder health diary** | Neuurology & Urodynamics • APRIL 2023


**Association between unplanned pregnancies and maternal exacerbations in cystic fibrosis** | Journal of Cystic Fibrosis • APRIL 2023

NEWSBYTES

Recent News Featuring Department of OBGYN & RS Members
Priyadarshini (Priya) Pantham, PhD of UC San Diego Pantham Lab

I was born in Chennai (Madras), India, and migrated to New Zealand as a teenager with my family. My Master’s and PhD supervisor, Professor Larry Chamley, was my primary inspiration to pursue placental research. After completing my Doctoral degree at the University of Auckland, I migrated to the U.S. to undertake postdoctoral fellowships in placental biology at the Univ. of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio, TX, the Univ. of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus in Denver, CO, and the Univ. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in Campaign, IL prior to moving to UC San Diego. My singular driving force to conduct research has always been a deep passion for understanding and improving health in pregnancy, with the goal of building a world where each pregnant individual and their baby receives healthcare and support tailored to their unique needs.

I joined Professor Louise Laurent’s lab in the Division of Maternal-Fetal Medicine as an Assistant Project Scientist with an NIH K99/R00 Pathway to Independence grant in August 2019. I transitioned to an Assistant Professor role in October 2021.

Pantham Lab Research and Discovery

Research in my lab focuses on the role of the human placenta, particularly placental extracellular vesicles, (EVs) as carriers of molecular cargo that may play a role in health and disease. My K99/R00 research project involves using next generation sequencing to identify RNA biomarkers of preeclampsia, a placental disorder, in maternal urine. While in Professor Laurent’s lab, I optimized methods to conduct automated and miniaturized transcriptomic profiling of maternal urine in pregnancy, which to our knowledge has been conducted for the first time. I am currently utilizing these methods in my own lab to profile >500 maternal urine samples from normal and preeclamptic pregnancies collected over several years which form part of the UCSD Perinatal Biorepository.

Role of placental extracellular vesicles (EVs) in obstetric disorders such as preeclampsia

3D Kidney-on-a-chip model

In vitro and ex vivo mouse model

Next generation sequencing to identify biomarkers and molecular targets of interest

Functional and mechanistic studies

Pantham Lab Research at UC San Diego
Our lab is also interested in investigating the effect of placental EVs trafficked to maternal organs, particularly the kidney in preeclampsia, which is often characterized by proteinuria and glomerular endotheliosis in addition to maternal hypertension. To this end, we are in the process of establishing the use of a novel validated 3D kidney-on-a-chip model (Emulate, Inc.) to test the functional effects of placental EVs on renal cell types in the kidney in preeclampsia compared to normal pregnancy. We have also conducted a pilot study comparing maternal urine and serum from normal, preeclamptic, and HELLP (hemolysis, elevated liver enzymes, and low platelets) pregnancies and identified microRNAs (miRNAs) of interest that may originate from the placenta and play a role in renal dysfunction seen in preeclampsia, which we will investigate in mechanistic studies using our kidney-on-a-chip model as well as a mouse model in tandem.
Research Goals

Our overall goal is to identify novel molecular pathways which could be targeted by therapeutics to prevent the acute and chronic manifestations of PE. To this end, we were awarded the Preeclampsia Foundation Canada Vision Grant 2021 and the Center for Perinatal Discovery Pilot Grant 2022. I was most recently invited to present at the Mother Infant Research Institute Seminar Series at the Tufts Medical Center in Boston, MA in Nov 2022. Our work will also be presented as posters and an invited talk at a workshop “Beyond 2D - novel culture approaches to improve the way we study the placenta” at the International Federation of Placenta Associations (IFPA) meeting in Rotorua, New Zealand, in Sep 2023.

In addition to our ongoing funded research, during the COVID-19 pandemic, we worked in collaboration with Assistant Professor Marni Jacobs on a project comparing the humoral immune response to SARS-CoV-2 infection and vaccination in pregnant versus nonpregnant women, and we found that pregnant women appeared to mount a non-differential humoral immune response to SARS-CoV-2 compared to non-pregnant women. Our work was published in the AJOG Global Reports.

Mentoring Philosophy

My research has thrived since moving to UC San Diego thanks to my amazing mentor, Professor Laurent, and the opportunities she has provided me along the way. I am also grateful to Professor Mana Parast (Department of Pathology), who was a Co-mentor on my K99 grant. Having two exemplary mentors has illustrated one key mentoring philosophy: Pay it forward. Thanks to their support, I am now able to provide mentorship myself to undergraduate and Master’s students at UC San Diego. I am particularly focused on promoting diversity in academia. I am passionate about mentoring women in the field of reproductive research, and also act as a mentor in the Biology Undergraduate and Master’s Mentorship Program (BUMMP) which focuses on increasing recruitment and retention of underrepresented minorities in academia. One of my undergraduate students, Albert Nguyen, was awarded a BUMMP apprenticeship as well as a Summer URS Eureka! Research Scholarship for Biological Science majors to conduct research in my lab in 2022.

Research Philosophy

If the research we are conducting were easy to do, everyone would be doing it, or it would have already been done. We utilize the most novel techniques and models to remain on the cutting edge of research and answer important questions that have yet to be tackled in pregnancy disorders including preeclampsia, preterm birth, anti-phospholipid syndrome, and intrauterine growth restriction.

Future Forecast for Pantham Lab

The lab is in the process of generating preliminary data to apply for R01 & R21 grants. A new Lab Assistant will work closely with Professor Laurent’s lab on workflows to sequence extracellular small and long RNA. We are setting up pilot projects to establish collaborations with OBGYN & RS Assistant Professors Kathleen Fisch and Lindsey Burnett.

Unlocking Pregnancy Disorders with Scientific Solutions

The placenta remains an incompletely understood and understudied organ. We now know that appropriate placentation is essential for a healthy pregnancy, and the concept of placental function playing a role in defining fetal health as well as later in life, or the “Developmental Origins of Health and Disease” is well established. As part of the UC San Diego Center for Perinatal Discovery, co-directed by Professors Laurent, Parast, and Mestan, the Pantham lab is striving to raise awareness of the importance of understanding this organ as a key to unlocking pregnancy disorders in which the placenta plays a primary role. Visit the Pantham Lab to learn more.
GLOBAL RECOGNIZED FOR CLINICAL EXPERTISE INTEGRATED WITH THE HIGHEST QUALITY OF CARE
IN STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITIES, THE UC SAN DIEGO CARDIO-OBSTETRICS PROGRAM MANAGES THE COMPLEX CARDIOVASCULAR NEEDS OF HIGH-RISK PREGNANCIES. THIS PROGRAM ARDENTLY SERVES OUR LOCALS AND WELCOMES PATIENTS WHO TRAVEL TO BE SEEN BY OUR RENOWNED MATERNAL-FETAL MEDICINE SPECIALISTS, CONGENITAL CARDIOLOGISTS, ELECTROPHYSIOLOGISTS, ANESTHESIOLOGISTS, AND SKILLED NURSING PARTNERSHIP TEAM WHICH DEVELOPS INDIVIDUALIZED PATIENT PLANS FOR OPTIMAL CARE.

CLINICAL INNOVATIONS

UC San Diego Cardio-Obstetrics Program is a Beacon for Cardiovascular Disease in Pregnancy and a Benchmark for Subspecialty Collaboration Leading to Optimized Prenatal and Postpartum Outcomes

Globally recognized for clinical expertise integrated with the highest quality of care in state-of-the-art facilities, the UC San Diego Cardio-Obstetrics Program manages the complex cardiovascular needs of high-risk pregnancies. This program ardently serves our locals and welcomes patients who travel to be seen by our renowned Maternal-Fetal Medicine specialists, Congenital Cardiologists, Electrophysiologists, Anesthesiologists, and Skilled Nursing partnership team which develops individualized patient plans for optimal care.

In February of 2022, the Adult Congenital Heart Association (ACHA) awarded the UC San Diego Health Adult Congenital Heart Disease Program a 5-year status of an ACHA ACHD Accredited Comprehensive Care Center (only accreditation in greater San Diego County) thanks to the structured multidisciplinary approach put in place by leading Cardiologist Dr. Laith Alshawabkeh. Unofficially, the UCSD Cardio-Obstetric program began in 2017 when Dr. Alshawabkeh transferred from Harvard bringing with him rare expertise and an influx of patients. The program then materialized by distinguished Maternal-Fetal Medicine Specialist, Dr. Maryam Tarsa. Dr. Tarsa has been with UCSD since 1998, first as a resident and then as a fellow prior to joining faculty in 2005 and becoming a board-certified perinatologist with expertise in fetal imaging and congenital cardiac disorders. Blending specialties has become a life-saving line of care for the community.

The Cardio-OB team is well organized with superior clinical training for fellows. Out of the University of California Health Systems (UC5), only a few have cardio obstetrics programs: UCLA has Maternal-Fetal Medicine Cardio-Obstetrics, UCSF has PACT (Pregnancy and Cardiac Treatment), and UC Irvine has developed cardiovascular screening measures incorporated into EPIC for pregnant and postpartum patients via a joint UCSD and University of Tennessee MORE Foundation grant with Dr. Maryam Tarsa.

Cardio-OB Leadership and Team

Maryam Tarsa, MD
Maternal-Fetal Medicine Perinatologist, Professor of Ob/Gyn & Reproductive Sciences

Laith Alshawabkeh, MD, MSCI, FACC
Director, Adult Congenital Heart Program. Associate Professor of Clinical Medicine

Cardiology:
Matthew Carazo, MD
Deborah Raleigh, NP
Marcus Urey, MD
Hilary Shapiro, MD
Frederick Han, MD

OB Anesthesia:
Erin Martin, MD
Larry Weinstein, MD

Maternal Fetal Medicine:
Jerry Ballas, MD
Ukachi Emeruwa, MD, MPH
Cynthia G Yamfi-Bannerman, MD, MS
Thomas Kelly, MD
Andrew Hull, BMBS
Leah Lamale-Smith, MD
Louise Laurent, MD, PhD
Thomas Moore, MD
Sandy Ramos, MD
Douglas Woelkers, MD
Richard Wolf, DO
About the Cross-disciplinary Cardio-OB Program

Specialized care begins with prenatal screening of obstetrics patients with pre-existing heart conditions and congenital heart disease followed by maternal-fetal consults (Dr. Tarsa and MFM team) and cardio consults (Dr. Alshawabkeh and Cardiology team). These patients are monitored closely by both groups who meet monthly at the Cardio-OB conference (all health members contributing to the unique needs of the patient including anesthesiology and nursing) to discuss treatment measures. The goal is to optimize health outcomes for patients with complicated conditions and their babies by providing evidenced-based advanced care across subspecialties. Because cardiovascular disorders can be triggered by pregnancy, the team evaluates patients to identify heart defects, vascular disease, the presence of arrhythmias, and high blood pressure. At times, the heart failure team and nursing service managers are involved for additional nursing arrangements such as telemetry cardiac monitoring. Pregnancy places added stress workload on the pumping heart and increases blood volume to support a growing baby. Although an increase in heart rate can be a normal symptom during pregnancy, this extra exertion from the heart can harm the cardiovascular system or exacerbate underlying heart issues. Dr. Tarsa advises screening patients for cardiac symptoms that may mimic normal pregnancy discomfort such as shortness of breath, lower extremity swelling, and monitoring fluid changes.

Cardio-OB Metrics at UC San Diego

Currently, there is a roster of 136 patients in EPIC with identified cardio-obstetrics needs with 14 active patients. This list has grown to over 150 over the course of the years as reputation is strong with ACHA recognition coupled with advances in cardio-thoracic surgery, fertility treatments, and referrals from Palomar Hospital and medical centers in Murrieta, Riverside County, and Orange County.

Postpartum Continuation of Care

Some cardiovascular conditions worsen after pregnancy so what sets this Cardio-OB team apart is the continuation of exceptional care after birth. The multidisciplinary service nature of the team approach has contributed to the success of the program with excellent outcomes. Thank you, Cardio OB team for going above and beyond to provide patients with remarkable specialized care!

CLINICAL INNOVATIONS

Centering Pregnancy Program at UC San Diego Health Provides Exceptional Group Prenatal Care for Improved Pregnancy Outcomes and Customizable Birth Choice

Christine Cortes, MSN, CNM, with patients and their infants at a Centering reunion.

A highlight of Centering is the postpartum reunion when moms bring their babies to the visit.
UC San Diego Health’s **Centering Pregnancy Program** is a community-wide highlight discussed here by Dr. Alice Sutton, Medical Director. Karen Perdion, Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM), Director of Nurse Midwifery Services, realized her vision to bring group prenatal care to UCSD in 2021. Since then, over 53 babies have been born to parents participating in Centering. Centering Pregnancy is an evidence-based model for prenatal care that has been shown to improve pregnancy and postpartum outcomes and decrease health disparities. Participants report benefits including strengthening of partner relationships, a better understanding of pregnancy, and increased self-efficacy. Centering Pregnancy fosters a sense of community that is highly valued by expectant parents. One UCSD participant wrote:

“It was so helpful to have conversations with other women going through the same things at the same time. It was incredible, I would recommend it to anyone having a baby!”

In a demonstration of the power of Centering to build community, the inaugural group of Centering Pregnancy patients returned to UCSD in October 2022 to participate in a panel discussion during Grand Rounds to celebrate the first anniversary of the Centering program. Their lively discussion and palpable bond was later captured by UCTV’s Motherhood Channel in this program that won a Bronze Telly Award.

Centering also improves the health care provider experience by disrupting the usual prenatal care paradigm. Instead of repeating the same advice during a series of 15-minute return obstetric visits, Centering facilitators enjoy longer visits with their groups and the opportunity to foster conversation around important health issues. The midwives facilitating Centering groups find the program is economic, efficient, and empowers patients to take charge of their care while still delivering the comprehensive support, prenatal screening, and pregnancy risk assessment that is a hallmark of prenatal care at UCSD.
Centering Framework

Centering groups are composed of 6-10 patients with similar due dates. Patients have at least one individual early pregnancy visit to confirm pregnancy dating, review their health history, and assess eligibility for group prenatal care. Each group typically meets 9 times, and the participants receive a schedule with the dates and times for all future meetings upon entry to the program. In a Centering visit, the first half hour is a time for patients to socialize and take turns checking and recording their blood pressures, while the CNM and MA co-facilitators briefly check in with each patient and measure fundal height and fetal heart tones. Afterwards, the group assembles to do an opening activity and then moves on to a discussion of one or two key topics the facilitators have pre-selected based on gestational age. For example, during the first visit the group often discusses nutrition during pregnancy and common pregnancy discomforts and options for management. Participants can also bring their own concerns to the group for discussion. The session often closes with a mindfulness activity.

“When I first learned about Centering, I had trouble imagining how this would work. Would I trust patients to check and record their own vital signs? Would patients want to participate in 2-hour sessions? Would a group discussion of a sensitive topic spread medical misinformation? During facilitator training, I discovered that patients are empowered to manage their own health when they learn to check their vital signs. I also learned techniques for facilitating a discussion so that patients can teach each other accurate and appropriate information. Finally, I have observed that while the initial time commitment for Centering seems large, a visit that begins and ends promptly and is scheduled well in advance is more convenient than the traditional prenatal schedule for many patients.”

– Dr. Alice Sutton

Creating and running Centering Pregnancy requires a group effort! Each Centering group at UCSD is led by two facilitators, a Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM) and a medical assistant (MA). The skilled CNMs and MAs selected for participation attended a 4-day intensive workshop to become Centering facilitators before the program was launched. The program is led by Program Manager, Lizette Lozano, and Centering Steering Committee members Vanessa Wright, CNM, Karen Perdion, CNM, and Alice Sutton, MD.

The Centering Pregnancy Program is located in a dedicated clinic space in central San Diego at the Kearny Mesa Clinic. If you are a patient interested in Centering, or a provider who would like to refer a patient, please contact midwifery@health.ucsd.edu. For more information about Centering and/or Midwifery at UCSD, visit Centering Pregnancy and Certified Nurse-Midwife Services. Centering Healthcare Institute is a national organization that provides accreditation, training and support to individual institutions. More information can be found at centeringhealthcare.org.
Culture & Justice

Juneteenth and Pride Month Celebrations at UC San Diego

The Culture & Justice Quorum (CJQ) was excited to share in the UC San Diego Juneteenth celebrations around campus. Juneteenth, also known as Juneteenth National Independence Day, Freedom Day, and Jubilee Day, is significant for commemorating the end of slavery in the United States. As a community, we embrace this federal holiday (June 19th), acknowledging and commemorating this day not just as a historical event but as a representation and reminder of American progress towards justice and an equitable society.

At Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Sciences (OBGYN & RS), we embrace our opportunity and responsibility to be an academic community whose culture values diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and justice (JEDI). In doing so, we actively build on our foundation of respect and appreciation for everyone through cultural celebration, appreciation, and education.

Summer celebrations for Pride Month at UC San Diego at the health system and university provided us with a colorful and joyful celebration of our identities and brought awareness of inclusive values that honor all SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identities, and experiences). This celebration unites our medical students, faculty, staff, patients, and communities acknowledging the beauty of our individualities while fostering a sense of belonging and understanding among us.

American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) IX CLEAR Initiative

The Culture and Justice Quorum promotes ongoing JEDI education within the context of advancing systemic equity in healthcare. ACOG’s Continuous Learning in Equity, Advocacy, and Race in Healthcare (CLEAR) Initiative in District IX is an ongoing effort to advance equity through education. Dr. Audra Meadows recently held a CLEAR Initiative Webinar for ACOG “Maternal Equity: A Demonstration of Inclusion Excellence in Obstetrical Care” showcasing the demonstrated successes of maternal quality initiatives to achieve equity. Learn more about the IX CLEAR Initiative.

At Your Cervix (AYC) Resident Leads
- Milli Desai, MD, MAS, MHS
- Rafa Ifthikhar, MD
- Kellie Schueler, MD
CONGRATS GRADUATING FELLOWS

Congrats to our graduating fellows, hurrahs and wishes for rewarding and gratifying opportunities ahead! See whose in luck to have a spectacular UCSD fellow coming ...

Katherine Coakley, MD  
Kaiser Permanente Downey Medical Center in Downey, CA

Lauren Gabby, MD  
High Risk Obstetrical Consultants in Knoxville, TN

Marianne Horn-Tedla, MD  
Main Line Health in Philadelphia, PA

Alexa Medica, MD  
Fertility Specialists Medical Group in San Diego, CA

Marielle Meurice, MD  
Northwest Permanente in Portland, OR

Nemi Shah, MD  
Trivalley Urology in Temecula, CA & adjunct faculty appt. at UCSD!

CONGRATS GRADUATING RESIDENTS

Congrats to our graduating residents and cheers to a bright future in OBGYN and the reproductive endeavors! See where they're venturing ...

Allison Brodsky, MD  
Gynecologic Oncology: MD Anderson Cancer Ctr., Houston, TX

Estefania Fernandez, MD, PhD  
Gynecologic Oncology: MD Anderson Cancer Ctr., Houston, TX

Diana Ha, MD, MPH  
OB/GYN Generalist at Kaiser Permanente, Oakland, CA

Tatyanna Henderson, MD  
Urogynecology & Reconstructive Pelvic Surgery: UC San Diego Health Sciences

Joseph Mims, MD  
Maternal Fetal Medicine: University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT

Christine Zacheck, MD, MPH  
Critical Care Medicine: Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA
NEW RESIDENT BIOS

Meet Our Incoming Residents!

**LUQMAN HODGKINSON, MS, PhD, MS**

**Hometown:** Kakamega, Kenya  
**Graduate School:** University of California, Berkeley; Columbia University (New York, NY)  
**Undergraduate School:** Hiram College (Hiram, OH)  
**Medical School:** Stanford University School of Medicine  
**Career Interests:** To provide care for people in poverty and medical infrastructure in Kenya

Luqman Hodgkinson is from Kenya where he helped to open the Masinde Muliro School of Medicine, the first medical school in the former Western Province of Kenya. He conducted the first study of 10-year survival for patients with HIV on ART in Kenya and taught pre-clinical students. He earned his medical degree and Masters in Public Policy (MPP) from Stanford University preceded by a PhD with pre-medical curriculum at the University of California, Berkeley in Computational Biology and a Master’s of Science degree at Columbia University in Computer Science. His undergraduate studies were from Hiram College in Ohio where he graduated with a B.A. in Political Science and Computer Science. As a Medical Student Researcher at Stanford, he looked for evidence of language site migration after neurosurgeries near language sites for patients with medically refractory epilepsy. For wellness, he enjoys running outdoors in nature.

**REBECCA KOLODNER, MD**

**Hometown:** Baltimore, MD  
**Undergraduate School:** Washington University (St. Louis, MO)  
**Medical School:** George Washington University School of Medicine  
**Career Interests:** Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, Complex Family Planning, and Immigrant Health

Hi! I’m Becca Kolodner. I grew up in Baltimore, MD and attended college at Washington University in St. Louis where I double majored in Philosophy-Neuroscience-Psychology and Spanish. I volunteered as a campus EMT and found my niche advocating for individuals who had experienced sexual violence, serving as student liaison to the University’s Office of Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention. In 2016, I had the opportunity to live and study in Santiago, Chile for 7 months. I loved my time living with a host family, learning about Chilean culture and history, and playing varsity soccer at La Católica. I returned with a clarity of purpose and new language skills which enabled me to work as a Spanish medical interpreter in a clinic serving refugees, immigrants, and under-insured individuals. Upon graduating college, I worked in OBGYN clinical research at Barnes Jewish Hospital / Washington U. I pursued my passion for reproductive and immigrant health as a medical student in D.C. at George Washington University School of Medicine; teaching evidence-based sexual health curriculum at local public middle schools, leading medical Spanish courses for fellow health-professional students, and conducting research on patient-center maternity care for immigrant women in Southern California. Outside of medicine, I enjoy yoga, weightlifting, trying new tea flavors, and spending time outside with my fiancé, Michael. We are absolutely thrilled to be moving to San Diego!

**ASHLEY LOPEZ, MD**

**Hometown:** San Diego, CA  
**Undergraduate School:** Harvard College  
**Medical School:** Columbia University  
**Career Interests:** Medical Education, Maternal Fetal Medicine

I am a San Diego native and after spending 8 years on the east coast for college and medical school, I am thrilled to make my way back home to care for the people of my home community. In addition to women's health, I have a strong interest in border and global health, medical education and maternal fetal medicine. In my free time, I enjoy running, learning to cook new dishes, heading to the beach with my dogs, going to TJ to the CECUT [Tijuana Cultural Center] and for the food, and spending time with family.
NEW RESIDENT BIOS

Meet Our Incoming Residents!

NYEROVWO FAITH OKIFO, MD

Hometown: Naugatuck, CT
Undergraduate School: University of Connecticut
Medical School: Yale School of Medicine
Career Interests: I am interested in pursuing a fellowship in one of the OB/GYN subspecialties. In particular, I am interested in MFM and REI.

My name is Faith Okifo. I was born in New York City and grew up in Naugatuck, CT. I attended the University of Connecticut (UConn) for undergrad and Yale for medical school. I am excited to be joining the UC San Diego OB/GYN subspecialties. My hobbies include creative writing, listening to music, and exploring beautiful outdoor spaces.

MCKENSIE WALL, MD

Hometown: Lexington, NC
Undergraduate School: University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Medical School: University of North Carolina School of Medicine
Career interests: Family Planning

I was born and raised in North Carolina – I earned my undergraduate degree from UNC Chapel Hill where I stayed for medical school and also received a master’s degree in public health. Between my undergraduate and medical education, I worked as a CNA for two years at a skilled nursing facility in Concord, NC where I had worked since I was 16 in almost every conceivable position. In my free time you’ll find me hanging out with my two mini schnauzers, Homer and Mylan, tending to my plant children, attempting some DIY project or taking in sunny days doing an outdoor activity. My pups and I are so excited for the food scene and to explore the gorgeous landscape of Southern California!

EMILY YANG, MD

Hometown: San Diego, CA
Undergraduate School: Dartmouth College (Hanover, NH)
Medical School: UC San Diego
Career Interests: Medical Education/Mentorship, oncofertility, fertility preservation, health systems research

Emily Yang grew up in San Diego and attended Dartmouth College, where she majored in biology modified with anthropology. She returned homes to complete medical school at UC San Diego, where she was passionate about teaching, mentorship, and research in health systems and oncofertility. She is excited to stay at UC San Diego for residency and to join an amazing team in her hometown. In her spare time, she enjoys yoga, gardening, baking, and spending time with her family.
NEW STAFF HIRES

Welcome to the Department of OBGYN and RS!

- **Bianca Arce** | Admin for the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology & Reproductive Sciences

- **Nathalie Choi, CNM** | Nurse Practitioner, Certified Nurse Midwife (CNM) for Hillcrest Inpatient

- **Andrea Corry, CNM** | APP for Women’s Health Services

- **Alyssa Rodriguez** | Admin/Fellowship Coordinator for the Gynecologic Oncology Division

Laurent Lab

- **Sierra Adkins** | Assistant Clinical Research Coordinator in Dr. Laurent Lab
- **Lilliana Osuna** | Assistant Clinical Research Coordinator in Dr. Laurent Lab
- **Maya Selvaraj** | Assistant Clinical Research Coordinator in Dr. Laurent Lab
- **Cassandra Wauer** | Master’s Student

Lewis Lab

- **Marilyn Aagard** | Research Assistant to Lab Manager in Dr. Lewis Lab
- **Luis Ramirez Hernandez** | Research Assistant to Lab Manager in Dr. Lewis Lab
- **Delfruz Hosseini** | Research Assistant to Lab Manager in Dr. Lewis Lab
- **Hillary Zhou** | Research Assistant to Lab Manager in Dr. Lewis Lab

Mellon Lab

- **Geneva Dunn** | Reproductive Neuroendocrine Research Associate (SRA)

Breen Church Lab

- **Helen Bell** | Undergraduate Researcher

RECENT EVENTS

- **Screen Shot 2023-03-28 at 10.50.40 AM**

2023 March of Dimes March for Babies UC San Diego ‘Miracle Marchers’ Team led by Team Captains Jerry Ballas, MD and Henry Lee, MD in Balboa Park

- **Pratima Gupta, MD, MPH (left) and Audra Meadows, MD, MPH (right) at the May 2023 ACOG Annual Clinic and Scientific Meeting held May 20th in Baltimore, MD. Dr. Meadows presented The Hale Endowed Lectureship ‘Why Maternal Health Equity is Maternal Health Quality: A Tale of Priorities, Metrics, and Action.’**
The Department of OBGYN & RS 2023 Research Retreat was held on May 31, 2023 in the Goldberg Auditorium at Moores Cancer Center and featured cutting-edge research presentations by fellows, residents, and scientists.

Department members watching inspiring research presentations by OBGYN & RS School of Medicine fellows and residents.

Drs. Gyamfi and speaker Jason D. Wright, Gyn Onc Division Chief from Columbia University Department of OB/GYN.
Dr. Antoni Duleba, Director, Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, and Dr. Charlotte Pickett, Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgeon, present at the Endometriosis, Infertility, and Pain Community Seminar held June 9th at the UC San Diego Medical Education and Telemedicine (MET) Building.