Cathy Alessi, MD

Q&A

Cathy Alessi, MD, is a master of balance. Balancing a rich professional and personal life isn’t easy, but Dr. Alessi has shown us that it can be done – and done expertly. She is very busy, in both local and national professional activities, yet she seems to be unflappable and totally focused on the task at hand. There is a sweetness and calmness about her that just makes you happy to be part of her life. We had a chance to meet with Dr. Alessi and explore her career as a geriatrician and learn about her family, her life isn’t easy, but Dr. Alessi has shown us that just makes you happy to be part of her life. There is a sweetness and calmness about her that just makes you happy to be part of her life. We had a chance to meet with Dr. Alessi and explore her career as a geriatrician and learn about her family, her professional roles and responsibilities?

I have two main, yet interrelated professional roles – my main efforts are at the Veterans Administration (VA) Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System’s Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center (GRECC), and I am also on faculty at UCLA. At the VA, I am the Deputy Director of our GRECC and do 100% of my clinical work at VA facilities providing geriatric care. I am also Associate Director of Clinical and Health Services Research, direct the VA Advanced Geriatric Fellowship and am on the VA’s Institutional Review Board.

At UCLA, I am a Professor of Medicine and serve on the MPGMG Executive Committee. I am affiliated with the Anna & Harry Borun Center for Gerontological Research and have directed the UCLA Intensive Course in Geriatric Medicine and Board Review since 2000. I mentor post-doctoral researchers in psychology and geriatric medicine, as well as mentor one of the fellows in the mid-career interdisciplinary fellowship program supported through the HRSA Bureau of Health Professions.

Question: What are your current professional roles and responsibilities?

I found out about the work of former Borun Center director, Jack Schnelle, PhD, who was using wrist actigraph technology to objectively measure sleep and behavioral research to improve sleep for nursing home residents. I continued to focus my research on issues of sleep and how to improve sleep through non-pharmacological interventions. Currently, I have several studies, including a randomized controlled trial (RCT) with VA rehabilitation patients to test non-pharmacological interventions to improve sleep; an RCT in the outpatient setting to test the provision of behavioral interventions by allied health professionals to improve sleep; and a one-year pilot project to identify barriers to providers’ use of best practices in insomnia care of older veterans. I am also a co-investigator with Jennifer Martin on two of her newly funded studies; one is an RCT to treat insomnia in older veterans who participate in adult day health care programs, and the other is a pilot study of sleep in women veterans.

As a leader in sleep research, aren’t you also professionally involved at the national level?

Thank you for the compliment, and yes I am involved in several national efforts. I am on the Board of Directors at the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) and participated with the International Longevity Center on recommendations for the management of sleep problems in older adults. I am also chair-elect for the Health Sciences section of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA). Last year I edited a new textbook on geriatric sleep disorders with Dr. Alon Avidan at UCLA. I have really enjoyed these activities since each one gives me the opportunity to meet new circles of people and make new friends among colleagues.

Question: What led you to the field of geriatric medicine?

I went to the University of Illinois College of Medicine in Chicago and did my internal medicine residency at the Michael Reese Medical Center. At the time, Christine Cassell, MD, was the director of the geriatric medicine fellowship at the University of Chicago (UC) and she recruited me as a fellow. I did a 3-year clinical and research fellowship with her, and knew I wanted to work in geriatric academic medicine.

I had the opportunity to work with Drs. Christine Cassell and Peter Pompei in their research on delirium during my 2nd year fellowship and I was “sold” – I fell in love with research and knew that’s what I needed to do. Chris was extremely encouraging and was an important mentor. As a highly successful woman in academic geriatrics, she showed me the possibilities that were open in the field. But it was Cheryl Woodson, MD, based at UC and trained at UCLA, who told me about the program.

In my 3rd fellowship year, I was feverishly applying for jobs, interviewing widely, and I met with John Beck, MD. He explained the tremendous opportunities at UCLA and brought me out for an interview. He put together a job for me, half-time with UCLA on his Dana Foundation Fellowship and the
In the spring column, I wrote about how the economic downturn was affecting us at UCLA. To use a California analogy, what seemed to be an acute blaze has become a long, slow burn. Many of the predicted consequences have occurred but less dramatically and more controlled than expected. Much of this “softening of the blow” was due to good planning, hard work, and excellent leadership throughout the institution. In addition, the economy has stopped its free-fall plummet. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 and other public and private stimulus measures have also helped.

Nevertheless, the recession has changed us, at least temporarily. Several employees who left for personal reasons are not being replaced. Some faculty have changed their responsibilities to bring in additional income to support their salaries. The productivity expectations have increased for clinician educators who receive Department support. A few projects have been placed on hold with the hopes that they can be restarted next year. Researchers are submitting even more grants and many of their efforts have been successful. Several ARRA-funded grants, including RC Challenge grants, have been awarded to UCLA geriatrics researchers. All tolled, the UCLA MPGMG has survived this recession thus far and the atmosphere of crisis is gradually dissipating.

This fall, we are launching a new version of our GeroNet website: www.geronet.ucla.edu. Geronet has been one of the pioneer websites on aging but was desperately in need of updating. We have broadened the site’s functionality to provide information about UCLA aging and geriatrics programs to those outside the UCLA community as well as those within, and to patients as well as health professionals. We intend for GeroNet to truly serve as a one-stop shopping for aging resources at UCLA.

Nationally, we are closer to enacting health care reform than ever before. At the time of this writing, bills are being brought to both chambers of congress. If legislation is passed and signed, it will be far less than the overhaul that is needed to “right the ship” of health care. The major impact will almost certainly be on access to health care (eg, increasing coverage, eliminating denials for those with pre-existing conditions), with much smaller emphasis on containing costs and aligning incentives. Most of the focus on cost containment will be on demonstration projects and pilots rather than fundamental changes in payment that are widely implemented. Thus, health care reform in 2009 must be viewed as only a first step with many more, perhaps even harder, steps ahead.

Finally, this summer I assumed the role of Chair-elect of the Board of Directors of the American Board of Internal Medicine. Although this year is preparatory for next year’s term as Chair, the work has already begun. This role is both a terrific honor and an opportunity to infuse into internal medicine what I have learned as a geriatrician. Of course, the Board’s scope of responsibilities extends far beyond geriatrics. Nevertheless, many of the issues that we face in caring for older persons (eg, managing complexity, coordinating care across providers and settings, establishing patient goals, and ensuring that the physician workforce is prepared and provides high quality care) are emblematic of the challenges that face all of internal medicine. And I believe that for many of these problems, the principles of good geriatric care can be part of the solution.

The three-pronged mission of the UCLA Division of Geriatrics is to provide outstanding, compassionate care to persons 65 years of age and older; to train physicians and other health professionals to provide high quality care for older persons; and to conduct research that improves health in later life. Our ability to excel in each of these areas has enabled the geriatrics program to maintain its ranking as the #1 program in the country by U.S. News & World Report for the seventeenth consecutive year.

Part of the key to the success of the UCLA Division of Geriatrics has been the generous support of donors. Gifts can be directed to support the overall mission of the Geriatrics Division through an unrestricted gift to meet the most pressing needs. Your dollars can also be directed to support patient care through the clinical programs offered within the UCLA Health System.

Contributions can also be directed to research programs of a specific faculty member or toward the educational program, which aims to provide superb geriatrics to physicians and other health professionals in training at UCLA.

Donations in any amount are greatly appreciated. Please consider a founding membership in the UCLA Friends of Geriatrics donating at the following special levels: Friends Circle, $1,000; Patrons Circle, $2,500 Chief’s Circle, $5,000, Dean’s Circle, $10,000.

The Friends of Geriatrics will provide a forum to address research advances, relevant educational programs and receive information addressing a variety of physical, mental and social issues associated with aging.

If you are interested in learning more about planned gifts, please contact Ms. Becky Mancuso-Winding, Director of Development at bmwinding@support.ucla.edu or (310) 825-5328.

The UCLA Multicampus Program in Geriatric Medicine and Gerontology (MPGMG) provides clinical care for older persons, teaches physicians and other health professionals how to better care for older persons, and conducts research aimed at improving the health and independence of older persons.
The current volatile economic conditions have had some effect on the research activity within the Division of Geriatrics, but investigators have been successful at adjusting to these demands. Many private foundations are limiting their support of research, but federal funds allocated as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) have provided new opportunities.

Competition was fierce for these funds. We are fortunate to be associated with four of the projects funded. The first is an extension of a clinical trial conducted by Gail Greendale, MD, evaluating the effectiveness of yoga as an exercise for older adults. While yoga is widely recommended, done incorrectly it can be ineffective or injurious for older adults. In the new study, led by Dr. George Salem from the University of Southern California, a carefully structured program of yoga will be provided to participants. The physical demands of the program will be assessed via biomechanical investigation conducted using high-speed cameras, force platforms, and musculoskeletal modeling. This information will then be used to develop an evidence-based version of yoga that can be evaluated through a randomized trial.

The second study, funded through the National Institutes of Health’s highly competitive RC Challenge mechanism, evaluates the usefulness of a protocol for evaluating syncope (or unexplained fainting) in hospital emergency rooms. Led by Dr. Benjamin Sun, faculty member at UCLA with a joint appointment at the West LA Veterans Administration facility, the study will randomly assign eligible ER patients to usual care or to an evidence-based observation protocol. Patients will be enrolled from USC and Brigham and Women’s hospitals, with follow-up interviews conducted by Division of Geriatrics staff.

Drs. Sally Frautschy and Greg Cole were also awarded a Challenge Grant on, “Diet and Exercise for Alzheimer’s Disease Prevention” (see GRECC report).

A fourth ARRA-funded project is described in the RCMAR update.

We are excited about these new opportunities and look forward to sharing progress on these and other projects with you in future updates. For more information about the Research Operations projects, please contact Dr. Heather McCreath at hmcreath@mednet.ucla.edu.

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The UCLA Academic Geriatric Resource Center (AGRC), now in its 25th year, is dedicated to promoting intra- and inter-disciplinary training in geriatrics and gerontology throughout the campus and community. For 2009-2010, the AGRC is focused on faculty development, recruitment into careers in aging, and revitalization of the UCLA GeroNet website. The UCLA AGRC includes program directors from geriatrics, geriatric psychiatry, neurology, nursing, dentistry, social welfare, public health, and the gerontology minor program in the College of Letters and Sciences.

For the faculty development focus, the AGRC offers the Gero Mini-Fellowship on February 10-12, 2010 to selected faculty in the above disciplines. This activity provides new geriatric/gerontology content and teaching skills to faculty who wish to enhance their training in these content areas. In addition, scholarships are offered to attend the Intensive Course in Geriatric Medicine and the Leadership and Management in Geriatrics conference. Promoting interest in careers in aging is a new area for the AGRC in recognition of the importance of recruiting students and trainees into the many fields that are age-related. Information about careers in aging will be disseminated through the new GeroNet website as well as at the Careers in Aging Bootcamp for UCLA students on April 9, 2010. Student Interest Groups in nursing, social welfare, and geriatrics have each received financial support from the AGRC. The massive restructuring of the UCLA GeroNet website is nearing completion, and the new GeroNet will provide a portal into the extensive aging resources at UCLA.

The UCLA AGRC is also collaborating with the five other California AGRCs in a project to develop evaluation tools to measure the core competencies of medical students. This project will culminate in a toolkit for national distribution.

For more information about the activities of the UCLA AGRC, please contact Ms. Diane Katz, dkatz@mednet.ucla.edu or (310) 312-0531.
The 26th Annual UCLA Intensive Course in Geriatric Medicine and Board Review and concurrent program, Geriatric Pharmacy and Board Review, was held September 23 – 26, 2009 at the Marina Marriott Hotel in Marina Del Rey, CA. This program provided geriatric training to over 288 physicians, pharmacists, nurse practitioners and other health care providers specializing in the field of aging. During the course, participants enjoyed lectures, small-group sessions, and interactive board review question and answer sessions. Our nationally renowned speakers shared the latest updates in geriatric medicine and gerontology topics such as incontinence, dementia, heart failure, infections, falls and pharmacotherapy in older adults.

The course proudly presented the 2009 David H. Solomon Award to Jeffrey Halter, MD, PhD, Director, Geriatrics Center and Institute of Gerontology, University of Michigan, who lectured on “The Challenge of Managing Older Patients with Diabetes.” The Annual Arthur Cherkin Memorial Award was presented to Carl Cotman, PhD, Director, Institute for Brain Aging and Dementia, University of California, Irvine. Dr. Cotman intrigued the audience with his talk, “Exercise Builds Brain Health Even in Old Age: Cellular and Molecular Mechanisms.”

As a pre-conference to this year’s course, the California Geriatric Education Center (CGEC) held an interdisciplinary symposium, Health Literacy: Providing Clear Communication in Geriatrics, on September 22-23 for 38 health care providers practicing across seven different disciplines. This two-day symposium provided attendees with didactic and interactive sessions on patient care tools to address limited health literacy, cultural and legal issues and competency-based teaching about the impact of limited health literacy.

Participants utilized a small group session with course faculty and colleagues to formulate action plans. By the end of the conference, action plans entailed use of the Brown Bag method to assess patients’ understanding of how to use their medications, clinician education to increase use of the “Teach Back” method with patients, and pharmacist advocacy to standardize prescription bottles to increase legibility, comprehension and adherence by consumers.

Next year’s Intensive Course in Geriatric Medicine, Geriatric Pharmacy and Board Review is scheduled for September 29 – October 2, 2010. For more information, please contact Ms. Victoria Kemp at vkemp@mednet.ucla.edu or (310) 312-0531.

For more information about Health Literacy: Providing Clear Communication in Geriatrics, please contact Ms. Christy Ann Lau, MSW at christylau@mednet.ucla.edu or (310) 312-0531.

ICON
Due to economic and other considerations, it was determined that the ICON Awards Banquet, the primary fundraising event for the UCLA Center on Aging for the last 12 years, would be replaced with a Non-Event. Non-event invitations were sent to regular banquet attendees asking for continued support of the Center’s mission to help all people “Live Better, Longer.”

The Center had identified previous ICON honorees Jerome and Judith Tamkin to receive the UCLA Center on Aging Lifetime Achievement Award. This award was presented at the Technology and Aging Conference in October. In addition, ICON 2009 nominees Dr. and Mrs. Bradley Straatsma, will receive the award at a future event. “The over-60 population will soon become the largest age group in the world,” said Dr. Gary Small, UCLA Center on Aging Director. “I am hoping our long-time friends will continue to support us as we work to make the senior years as vital and healthy as they can be.”

Technology Aging Conference
With presentations spanning everything from safe driving to architecture design, the UCLA Center on Aging’s 2nd Annual Technology Aging Conference was held on Friday, October 30, 2009 at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles. “This unique conference has given us an opportunity to present opinions and information from experts in fields that may not have traditionally been associated with healthy aging, such as human-technology interfacing and health care access,” said Dr. Small. “This year was no exception.” The keynote address by Dr. Small was titled “Technology, Aging, and the Brain: Banishing the Senior Moment”.

For more information about the UCLA Center on Aging activities, please visit www.aging.ucla.edu or (310) 794-0676.
UCLA Reynolds Program: Speed-Dating with Dr. Reubens

Times have changed and everything seems to move at lightning speed. Enter the fast-paced world of speed-dating at the Donald W. Reynolds Consortium for Faculty Development to Advance Geriatric Education (FD-AGE) workshop, “Surviving Academia as a Clinician-Educator.” Twenty-six clinician-educators attended our innovative workshop as a pre-conference to the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) Annual Meeting in Chicago, IL.

As part of our half-day workshop, participants were given the opportunity to “speed-date” the Principal Investigators and senior faculty from each consortium site: Duke, Johns Hopkins University, Mount Sinai School of Medicine and UCLA. Each small group had 45 minutes with the faculty experts to describe their current scholarly projects and pose one challenge in academia. At the end of the round, a bell rang and the small group moved on to their next “date.”

UCLA Chief of Geriatrics and Principal Investigator, David B. Reuben, MD, started his first date by asking “Where are you from and what do you do?” Although the casual conversations made the participants comfortable, the speed-dating session had serious aims. The goal was to open discussion amongst the participants, problem-solve, gather feedback and share accomplishments.

Challenges faced by the participants included lack of administrative support, juggling between clinic duties and teaching responsibilities and resistance to change. Many participants shared similar struggles and were relieved that they did not have to figure them out alone. The groups provided strategies to overcome barriers, recommended available resources and offered techniques to navigate the academic environment.

This workshop was a part of our goal to strengthen the geriatrics education at academic health institutions nationwide.

The Donald W. Reynolds Program at UCLA also offers the Mini-Fellowship, a three-day course for clinician-educators seeking to improve their geriatric teaching skills. For more information about the Reynolds Program, please contact Ms. Anne Hu at annehu@mednet.ucla or (310) 312-0531.

Evidence-Based Health Promotion

The California Geriatric Education Center (CGEC) and the Systems Approach to Gerontology Education (SAGE) Project co-sponsored their second Evidence-based Health Promotion for Older Adults: Competencies, Content and Curricula program in June 2009. Forty-nine faculty learned about new models of evidence-based health promotion programs such as chronic disease self-management, falls prevention and medication management. Faculty attending participated in an extensive personal action planning process pre- and post-conference, where nearly 60% developed plans to implement curricula change at their institutions.

The SAGE project, under the direction of Janet C. Frank, DrPH, is completing its final year of funding from the U.S. Department of Education. To further expand the efforts of the SAGE Project, Dr. Frank was awarded a new educational training grant to develop an Evidence-based Health Promotion Educator community college certificate program.

Partnering with Santa Barbara City College and the College of the Canyons, the project will begin January 2010.

For more information about CGEC and SAGE, please contact Ms. Rachel Price at rprice@mednet.ucla.edu or (310)312-0531.

8th Annual LMG

The 8th Annual Leadership and Management in Geriatrics Conference (LMG), under the direction of Dan Osterweil, MD, CMD, will be offered April 9-10, 2010 in Long Beach, CA. LMG was created in 2002 in recognition of the importance of developing a cadre of leaders in geriatrics and the lack of training in this area during professional training. LMG fills this gap by offering basic leadership and management training to academic and clinical health professionals throughout the country at different points in their career trajectories.

LMG employs a unique practice/behavior improvement model. In advance of the conference, participants prepare a narrative on a worksite leadership challenge. There is ample opportunity during and after this small, highly interactive conference to focus on constructing and implementing an action plan. Participants receive input from both faculty and peer experts during the conference and work one-on-one with a mentor after the conference.

For more information about LMG, please contact Ms. Diane Katz, dkatz@mednet.ucla.edu, (310) 312-0531 or visit www.geronet.ucla.edu.

Pepper Center News

The UCLA Pepper Center received an administrative supplement from the NIH to fund its Rapid Grant Award Mechanism. The goal of the Rapid Grant Award is to provide funding that will advance the independent research careers of junior faculty and advanced trainees in aging-related basic, clinical and health services research.

Previously funded Rapid Pilots include:

- Immunophenotyping of regulatory T cells in young and older RA patients
  Ram P. Singh, PhD

- Vasoactive intestinal peptide (VIP) restores age-related sleep and circadian dysfunctions
  Takahiro Nakamura, PhD

- Development of a flow cytometry method for sensitive detection of multifunctional varicella zoster virus-specific T-cells
  Stoyan Dimitrov, PhD

- Identification of Transcriptional Regulators of Puromycin Sensitive Aminopeptidase
  Liubov Parfenova, PhD and Stanislav L. Karsten, PhD (Mentor)

For more information on the UCLA Pepper Center and funding opportunities, please contact Mr. Lucio Arruda at larruda@mednet.ucla.edu.
RCMAR National Coordinating Center at UCLA Receives ARRA Funding

The Resource Centers for Minority Aging Research (RCMAR) National Coordinating Center is pleased to announce its successful application for NIA supplemental funding under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. The purpose of this administrative supplement is to provide funding to minority scholars at multiple RCMAR Centers to engage in a mentored cross-center pilot project on an important minority aging research topic. Applications are limited to RCMAR affiliates only.

The Coordinating Center is also pleased to offer the second workshop in its annual series of scientific research conferences that focus on “State-of-the-Science” in minority aging research. Key themes and agenda topics for each conference were selected from the research agenda developed by the National Research Council (NRC), “Understanding Racial and Ethnic Differences in Late Life” (2004), and address one or more of NIA's crosscutting research priority themes. The NRC report identified eighteen research area priorities within three major themes: life course perspectives, bio-psycho-social mechanisms and linkages to health differences, and comprehensive approaches to evaluation of interventions designed to reduce health differences.

The next workshop in this series sponsored by the RCMAR Measurement and Methods Workgroup is titled “Using, Adapting, and Modifying Existing Measures for Studies of Diverse Population Groups: An NIA Translational Conference to Promote the National Research Council’s Recommendations for Minority Aging Research.” This training is a pre-conference workshop preceding the Gerontological Society of America’s (GSA) 62nd Annual Scientific meetings, held November 18-22, 2009 in Atlanta, GA.

For more information about RCMAR activities, please contact Ms. Victoria Kemp at vkemp@mednet.ucla.edu or (310) 312-0531 or visit www.rcmar.ucla.edu.

Cathy Alessi, MD
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other half at the VA. I took statistical and research classes at the UCLA School of Public Health and at the RAND Corporation.

Question: What do you see as your biggest challenges?

For me, its juggling competing demands, deadlines and choices – I can’t do it all as much as I’d like to. I need to juggle local demands and national activities. I have to figure out how best to meet the needs of the junior faculty and administrative staff that I supervise and mentor while keeping my own research agenda moving. I also try not to miss opportunities when I’m busy.

Question: Let’s turn now from your busy professional life to your busy personal life. Tell us about your family and what you like to do for fun.

I met my husband, Joe, once I moved to Los Angeles and we got married in 1992. We have three children: Sarah who is 16, Daniel who is 13 and Thomas who is 11. We live in “the burbs” in Thousand Oaks, having moved there to have more room for the kids. I know all “moms” probably say this, but they are really terrific kids and we have so much fun as a family. All of them are into sports in a major way and a lot of my best times revolve around the kids and their sports and school activities. We also love to travel as a family and have attended almost all of the recent summer Olympic games.

My parents taught me the importance of family. Both my parents are still living in Washington, Illinois, where I grew up. I came from a big family – four brothers and one sister – and we still have annual family reunions. Last summer, Dad turned 80, and this was a great occasion for all of us to get together and have a big party. My dad retired after working many years in a brewery – he was the supervisor for their boiler room. My mom returned to school after tired after working many years in a brewery – he was the supervisor for their boiler room. My mom returned to school after having children to become a cardiac nurse. She was a big promoter of education and made sure we all got a good education. Both my mom and dad are kind-hearted people and instilled in all of us the importance of treating people well. We had a close family and were fortunate to have both sets of our grandparents active in our lives while we were growing up.

Borun Center for Gerontological Research

Communication affects all aspects of caring for persons with long term care needs. Borun Center researchers are developing communication strategies that providers and families can use to better understand needs, bring the voice of older adults into care evaluations. She recently received funding from the Picker Institute to develop Video on Interviewing Vulnerable Elders (VIVE) as a response to national evidence that health care providers need skills training to conduct interviews with frail populations.

Barbara Bates Jensen, PhD, RN, Associate Director of the Borun Center and Associate Professor, received a National Institute of Nursing Research grant to evaluate a dermal phase meter as a method of detecting and predicting early pressure ulcer damage. This method may help providers intervene earlier in preventing or minimizing tissue damage.

The Anna & Harry Borun Center for Gerontological Research is a collaboration between the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and the Jewish Home for the Aging.

Director, Associate Professor of Medicine and Research Physician at the GRECC, developed approaches that systematically bring the voice of older adults into care evaluations. She recently received funding from the Picker Institute to develop Video on Interviewing Vulnerable Elders (VIVE) as a response to national evidence that health-care providers need skills training to conduct interviews with frail populations.

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The Anna & Harry Borun Center for Gerontological Research is a collaboration between the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA and the Jewish Home for the Aging.
Cathy Alessi, MD. GRECC Deputy Director and Associate Director for Clinical and Health Services Research was awarded a new grant to develop and test behavior interventions for insomnia among outpatient older Veterans.

Cathy Alessi, MD and co-investigator Jennifer L Martin, PhD were awarded a grant to further work on a randomized controlled trial testing behavioral sleep interventions among older veterans undergoing inpatient rehabilitation after acute hospitalization.

Carolyn Crandall, MD and Arun Karlamangla, MD are Co-Principal Investigators of an R01 grant to examine how socioeconomic and psychological status and social relationships are related to bone health.

James Davis, MD received the Serge and Yvette Dadone Clinical Teaching Award from the Medical School Graduation. This award is in honor of Dr. Saleh Salehmoghaddam. Dr. Davis also received the Founders Award from the Optimistic People in a Caring Atmosphere (OPICA).

Shawkat Dhanani, MD received two supplementary grants from the VA Rehabilitation Research and Development to study the role of post traumatic stress disorder on home exercise adherence.

Rita B. Effros, PhD received an award to study the effects of aging on mucosal immune system. This is the first comprehensive analysis of age-associated immune changes in the human gut, the largest lymphoid organ in the body.

Janet C. Frank, DrPH, Assistant Director for Academic Programs, received an ARRA grant to develop a research project with the national Resource Centers in Minority Aging Research. Dr. Frank also received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to develop the Evidence-based Health Promotion Educator Certificate Program at community colleges.

Sally Frautschy, MD and Greg Cole, MD were awarded a Challenge Grant (part of NIH/President ARRA) to study “Diet and Exercise for Alzheimer’s Disease Prevention.”

Josea Kramer, PhD received a grant from the VA Office of Rural Health to educate VA primary care providers who work in rural clinics in the principles and practice of geriatric medicine.

Jennifer L Martin, PhD. Adjunct Assistant Professor and GRECC faculty, was awarded a new VA Rehabilitation Research and Development Merit Review grant to examine whether the intervention leads to improved self-reported and objectively-measured sleep.

Lillian Min, MD was awarded second place in the 2009 Department of Medicine Research Day Poster Competition in Clinical and Health Services Research, Junior Faculty Category.

David B. Reuben, MD, Chief of the Division of Geriatrics, was appointed Chair-Elect of the American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM) Board of Directors.

Laurence Rubenstein, MD, MPH was selected for the VHA Marsha Goldwin-Beck Interdisciplinary Excellence in Geriatrics Award, Excellence in Leadership.

Debra Saliba, MD, MPH led a national VA Nursing Home Collaborative team to develop and validate items for the national Minimum Data Set version 3.0 (MDS 3.0) for nursing homes.

Teresa Seeman, PhD received a grant titled “Histories of Social Engagement and Cognitive Functioning.” This project will examine relationships between adults’ histories of social engagement, including relationships with family and friends with regards to cognitive function.

Gary Small, MD received a new R01 Grant from the NIA, “Glucose Metabolic, Amyloid, and Tau Brain Imaging in Down’s Syndrome and Dementia.” Dr. Small was also appointed Director, Division of Geriatric Psychiatry.

Edward Teng, MD, PhD, newly hired GRECC junior faculty and new UCLA faculty, Jonathan Wanagat, MD, PhD were awarded the Paul Bessler Career Development Award in Aging Research. The Beeson program continues to foster clinically trained investigators, whose research and leadership are enhancing the health of older Americans.

Arelii Tillou, MD, Assistant Professor in the Department of Surgery, was selected for a one-year K12 Award. This award will provide Dr. Tillou support to standardize and optimize the hospital care and outcomes of severely injured elderly and elderly undergoing emergency abdominal surgery.

Jonathan Wanagat, MD, PhD was honored with an associate membership in the Molecular Biology Institute (MBI) at UCLA. The Institute is designed to bring together researchers in molecular biology.

Thomas Yoshikawa, MD was selected by the GRECC Directors to be the Chair of the GRECC Directors Association for the period 2009-2011.

New MPGMG Staff and Faculty

Sheila Mazdasyasi is a Staff Research Associate with the UCLA Division of Geriatrics. She recently graduated from UCLA with a bachelor’s degree in Psychobiology.

Jill Moniz, PhD joined the MPGMG in June 2009. She is a project manager for the Borun Center’s MDS 3.0 training video. She is also assisting with the creation and launch of the new GeroNet website. Dr. Moniz received her PhD in cultural anthropology from Indiana University Bloomington.

Eric Morley, MPH joined the Division of Geriatrics as a Public Administrative Analyst. He received his bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Tufts University, and recently completed his master’s degree in Public Health at UCLA.

Lynn Nishimoto, MA joined the MPGMG in August 2009 as a Program Representative. She previously served as the Community and Education Outreach Coordinator for the Easton Center for Alzheimer’s Disease Research at UCLA. She received her master’s degree in psychology from Pepperdine University.
Calendar of Events

November 18th
GSA Pre-Conference: Using, Adapting and Modifying Existing Measures for Studies of Diverse Population Groups
Atlanta, GA

November 24th
Alzheimer’s Disease Diagnosis, Treatment and the Social Work Role
UCLA School of Public Affairs Room 2343

February 10-12th
Donald W. Reynolds FD-AGE Mini-Fellowship Program
UCLA

April 9th
CCGG 2010 Annual Meeting
UCLA Covel Commons

April 9-10th
Leadership and Management in Geriatrics Conference
Long Beach, CA

June 2-4th
Donald W. Reynolds FD-AGE Mini-Fellowship Program
UCLA

July 17-18th
CALTCM 2010 Annual Meeting - Creating a Culture of Patient Safety
Omni Los Angeles Hotel
Los Angeles, CA

September 29-October 2nd
26th Annual Intensive Course in Geriatric Medicine and Board Review

For more information about our upcoming events, please call 310-312-0531 or visit our website at www.geronet.ucla.edu