

EINSTEIN-ROCKEFELLER-CUNY CENTER FOR AIDS RESEARCH NEWSLETTER



Message From The ERC-CFAR Director Harris Goldstein, M.D.

Dear ERC- CFAR members,

As Winter quickly approaches, I am delighted to share some of the ERC-CFAR's exciting accomplishments from the Summer and Fall. In the latest round of applications for pilot funding from the Developmental Core, we received excellent applications and were able to fund two pilot projects and two microgrants this cycle. The pilot projects from **Dana Watnick, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics (Einstein), and **Danielle Berke, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Psychology (CUNY), respectively, are both focused on researching strategies to increase HIV prevention through PrEP and other prevention behaviors. The Developmental Core also distributed two microgrants that will enable two researchers, **Natalia Zotova, Ph.D.** Instructor of Medicine (Einstein) and **Pabitra Parua, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Molecular Pharmacology, to begin initial research and gather preliminary data that can demonstrate their projects' potential success for a future large grant.

The Developmental Core also recently released a new request for applications for the Catalytic Pilot Projects award. The applications are open until February 28, 2024 and are geared towards early-stage investigators and any researcher new to HIV research from Einstein, Rockefeller, or CUNY. More information about the application can be found below.

As we turn the page and look ahead to 2024, I look forward to all of the new research, developments, and collaborations that will emerge from the ERC-CFAR this coming year.

With best wishes for a happy and healthy new year,
Harris Goldstein, M.D.

Director, Einstein-Rockefeller-CUNY Center for AIDS Research
The Charles Michael Chair in Autoimmune Diseases
Professor of Pediatrics and Microbiology & Immunology



New Grants

New Pilots and Micro Grants Awarded by the ERC-CFAR Developmental Core

The ERC-CFAR developmental core is proud to announce four new projects that were recently funded. Two early-stage investigators (ESIs), **Dana Watnick, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics (Einstein), and **Danielle Berke, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Psychology (CUNY), each received \$50,000 for pilot funding for their respective research projects. Dr. Watnick's study, "College Prep: Implementing A Universal Offer for HIV Prep on College Campuses", will develop strategies for offering PrEP universally by partnering with three CUNY colleges in The Bronx. Dr. Berke's study, "A Community-Based Behavior Activation/Exposure Group Therapy Intervention To Address Syndemic Mental Health And HIV Risk Among Transgender Women", aims to develop an intervention to target avoidance of HIV treatment/prevention behaviors specifically and to evaluate the feasibility and acceptability of such a program delivered to transgender women in a community.

Another two ESIs were awarded microgrants of \$10,000 each for their proposed projects. Microgrants provide initial funding and are essential for ESIs to build a strong basis for future research grant applications. **Pabitra Parua, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Molecular Pharmacology, (Einstein) will investigate the roles of Cdk9-PP4 antagonism in HIV transcription. **Natalia Zotova, Ph.D.**, Instructor of Medicine (Einstein), will collect formative qualitative data for an intervention to facilitate HIV status disclosure and reduce HIV transmission among heterosexual couples in The Democratic Republic of Congo.



Montefiore AIDS Center Awarded \$6.8 Million to Curb the Disproportionate Impact of HIV on Black, Hispanic, and LGBTQ+ Communities

The Montefiore AIDS Center was recently featured in the news about its new funding for three grants totaling \$6.8 million from the New York State and New York City Departments of Health.

"The funding from New York State and City allows us to expand services, and enhance our team with more counselors, patient educators, and mental health support to ensure our patients obtain the comprehensive care required to meet their medical and psychosocial needs, both to optimally treat those living with HIV, and to prevent new infections."



Tina Kim, MSPH: Acting Deputy Commissioner, Office of Health Equity and Human Rights, NYS DOH; Johanne E. Morne, MS: Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner, NYS DOH; Barry Zingman, M.D., the principal investigator at Montefiore for all three grants and Medical Director of the AIDS Center at Montefiore; Sandra Arevalo, MPH, RDN, CDE: Administrator, JPPWC of Montefiore Nyack Hospital; Joseph Kerwin: Director, AIDS Institute, NYS DOH at New York DOH's Annual World AIDS Day Event.

HIV and to prevent it in people who are at higher risk. Importantly, the new funding also enables us to increase services that will help us to identify and address barriers to care like lack of healthy food, unhealthy living conditions, and unstable housing." said Dr. Barry Zingman, director of the Montefiore AIDS Center.

The three grants include:

1. **Advancing Health Equity through Comprehensive Community-Based HIV Ambulatory Care Services: Component A, Retention and Adherence Program (for The Center for Positive Living/ID Clinic)**
2. **Advancing Health Equity through Comprehensive Community-Based HIV Ambulatory Care Services: Component B, Centers for Young Adults (for The Oval Center at Montefiore):**
3. **24-PHC-165P for PlaySure Network 2.0 in Health Care Settings**

[Read the Entire Article Here](#)

Improving Mobility in Older Adults Living with HIV

Two ERC-CFAR members, **Roe Holtzer, Ph.D.**, and **Anjali Sharma, M.D., M.S.**, were recently featured on Einstein's "Research Briefs" news series for their \$4 Million NIH grant to study the role of brain circuits and neuroinflammation in causing walking problems and falls in older persons living with HIV (OPWH) and to determine whether training could improve mobility in OPWH.

[Read the Research Brief Here](#)

Meet Some of the New ERC-CFAR Members

Meet a new ERC-CFAR member- Dr. Phil Kreniske

Philip Kreniske, Ph.D., Assistant Professor at CUNY and The Institute for Implementation Science in Public Health (ISPH), joined the CUNY School of Public Health and the ERC-CFAR this past summer. Dr. Kreniske first began to study the sociocultural and gendered aspects of HIV acquisition when he assisted a small team of ethnographers among the Kalahari San people of southern Africa from 2000-2010. This led to his first publication describing how San youth were using digital technology to advocate for their land rights and human rights. He formally entered the field in 2017 as a T32 Postdoctoral Fellow at Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies. These experiences laid the groundwork for his current program of research using implementation science to study adolescent health, focusing on digital technology and health inequities in the United States and sub-Saharan Africa.

When asked where he finds inspiration in his research, Dr. Kreniske responded: *"Witnessing the transformation of HIV from a death sentence to a chronic illness in my lifetime fuels my belief that we have the tools to end the epidemic. To equitably distribute these life-saving tools we just have to change the way the world works, literally. For me, this means collaborating with my remarkable local and international colleagues to create equitable access to HIV prevention and treatment."*



Dr. Kreniske is excited to join the ERC-CFAR community and contribute to the ongoing advancements in HIV/AIDS research and public health initiatives for vulnerable populations. Additionally, he brings a longstanding connection with CUNY, having earned his MS in Ed from Lehman College while teaching high school in the South Bronx. Later, he completed his PhD in Psychology at the Graduate Center, where he designed a successful digital intervention to support low-income and first-generation CUNY students during their transition to college. *"Now, as a proud member of ERC-CFAR, I am thrilled to be back at CUNY."*

News From the ERC-CFAR Cores

ERC-CFAR Trans-Institutional Seminar Series

The ERC-CFAR Trans-Institutional Seminar Series takes place every other Friday at 9 AM on Zoom, where investigators from the ERC-CFAR present updates on their research, look for collaborators, and receive feedback from other researchers. ESI's who present are also invited to a private session afterward with several members of the Developmental Core for mentorship and advice. Please **add the seminars to your calendar** and we look forward to seeing you!

The Einstein- Rockefeller- CUNY
Center For AIDS Research
Trans-Institutional Seminar Series

WINTER - SPRING 2024
FRIDAYS 9 AM

January 5

Shanye Yin, PhD

January 19

**Danielle Berke, PhD
Brandilyn Peters-
Samuelson, PhD**

February 2

**Gus Klein, PhD, MSW
Qibin Qi, PhD**

February 16

**Pabitra Parua, PhD
Preeti Pathela, DrPH**

March 1

**Justina Groeger, MD
Phil Kreniske, PhD**

March 29

**Caroline Mullis, MD, MS
Aaron Breslow, PhD**

March 15

**Teresa López-Castro,
PhD**

April 12

**David Hanna, PhD
Uriel Felsen, MD, MS**

May 17

**Matthew Akiyama, MD
Bryan Kutner, PhD, MPH**

May 3

**Hector Perez, MD
Deepika Slawek, MD, MS**

Join us on [Zoom](#)

Community Participatory Partnership Looking to Expand

Do you collaborate with a community-based organization in your research? The Community Participatory Partnership (CPP) is expanding its membership and is specifically looking to invite new community members who have previous experience working with CFAR investigators. Please fill out the form below to let the CPP know if you have any recommendations or would like to join!

[CPP
Survey](#)

New Publications (ERC-CFAR Members in Bold)

Experiences of Stigma and HIV Care Engagement in the Context of Treat All in Rwanda: A Qualitative Study

Researchers from Einstein and the Rwanda Military Hospital, as part of the Einstein-Rwanda Research and Capacity Building Program, recently published the results of a qualitative study they collaborated on in BMC Public Health. The paper, titled "Experiences Of Stigma And HIV Care Engagement In The Context Of Treat All In Rwanda: A Qualitative Study," details the results of a qualitative study with 37 people living with HIV (PLWH) in Rwanda who received care through Treat All, an approach that recommends ART initiation for PLWH as soon as possible after diagnosis regardless of immunological or clinical status. The participants explained that engaging in care increased their visibility as PLWH, which on the one hand, helped normalize HIV and the use of ART but also led to high levels of anticipated and actual stigma. The researchers found that overall, engaging in care provided opportunities for PLWH to receive psychosocial and emotional support from their families, communities, and healthcare workers.

Ingabire C, **Watnick D**, Gasana J, Umwiza F, Munyaneza A, Kubwimana G, Murenzi G, **Anastos K**, **Adedimeji A**, **Ross J**. Experiences of stigma and HIV care engagement in the context of Treat All in Rwanda: a qualitative study. BMC Public Health. 2023 Sep 19;23(1):1817. doi: 10.1186/s12889-023-16752-y. PMID: 37726734; PMCID: PMC10507909.

Awareness and Willingness to Use HIV Infection Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis among Rwandan Men Who Have Sex with Men: Findings from a Web-based Survey

Munyaneza A, Patel VV, Gutierrez NR, Shi Q, Muhoza B, Kubwimana G, Ross J, Nsereko E, Murenzi G, Nyirazinyoye L, Mutesa L, Anastos K, Adedimeji A

A Community-Based Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis Telehealth Program Focused on Latinx Sexual Minority Men

Andrade EA, Betancourt G, Morales G, Zapata O, Marrero L, Rivera S, Nieves E, Miranda C, Diaz C, Beil R, Patel VV, Ross J

Subclinical Atherosclerosis Across the Menopausal Transition in Women With and Without HIV

Peters BA, Whalen A, Xue X, Topper EF, Weber KM, Tien PC, Kassaye SG, Minkoff H, Fox E, Fischl MA, Collins LF, Floris-Moore M, Hodis HN, Qi Q, Hanna DB, Sharma A, Anastos K, Kaplan RC

Testing the Effectiveness of a Motivational Interviewing Intervention to Reduce HIV Risk and Drug Use in Young Sexual Minority Men in a Community-Based Organization Setting

Starks TJ, Samrock S, Lopez D, Bradford-Rogers J, Marmo J, Cain D

Public HIV Stigma: Still Common Around the World.

Hanna DB, Patel VV

Low Birth Weight Among Infants and Pregnancy Outcomes Among Women Living With HIV and HIV-negative Women in Rwanda

Zotova N, Munyaneza A, Murenzi G, Kubwimana G, Adedimeji A, Anastos K, Yotebieng M

Shared and Unique Antibody and B Cell Profiles in HIV-positive and HIV-negative Individuals With Cryptococcal Meningoencephalitis

Yoon H, Nakouzi AS, Duong VA, Hung LQ, Binh TQ, Tung NLN, Day JN, Pirofski LA

Upcoming HIV-Related Seminars, Symposia, and Conferences

SYNC 2024: Registration Now Open & Call for Abstracts

May 29-31, 2024
Washington, DC

CROI: Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections 2024 (Abstract Submission here)

March 3-6, 2024
Denver, CO

Save the Date – National 2024 Ryan White Conference on HIV & Treatment (AIDSWatch)

March 17-19, 2024
Washington, DC

IAS 2024 – Registration Now Open

July 22-26
Munich, Germany

National LGBTQ+ Health Conference

August 15-17, 2024
Atlanta, GA

2024 National Ryan White Conference on HIV Care & Treatment

August 20-23, 2024

National CFAR Directors Meeting Scientific Symposium

October 29, 2024
New York City

HIV Related Funding, Training, and Mentoring Opportunities

New RFA for Pilot Funds from the ERC-CFAR

A major goal of the ERC-CFAR is to stimulate collaborative, translational HIV/AIDS research by funding HIV/AIDS-related catalytic pilot projects. We are excited to announce the opportunity to apply for a catalytic pilot project grant for \$50,000 or \$75,000.

We encourage applications that are:

1. Focused on the priorities of ERC-CFAR **Scientific Working Group (SWG) – HIV and Mental Health**
2. Include trans-institutional collaborations involving investigators from at least two of the three ERC-CFAR institutions – Einstein, Rockefeller and/or CUNY (SPH or Hunter College).

Faculty eligibility to apply:

1. The PI of the catalytic pilot project **MUST BE** an Einstein, Rockefeller or CUNY (School of Public Health or Hunter College only) CFAR Investigator
2. The PI of the catalytic pilot project must be either an **early-stage investigator** (ESI) or an investigator at any rank who has never had HIV/AIDS research funding before (non-HIV investigators)

Applications are due February 28, 2024

[Read the full RFA here](#)

Rustbelt CFAR – "Drug-drug interactions between hormones and antiretrovirals"

Dec 21, 2023 4 PM EST

The Sex and Gender Scientific Working Group of the Rustbelt Center for AIDS Research is excited to invite you to a presentation by Dr. Kimberly Scarsi, PharmD, MS, FCCP. Please click on the Teams link [here](#) to join the lecture on Thursday, December 21, 2023, at 4PM EST

NIDA HIV Seminar Series with Dr. Sandra Springer

Jan 24, 2024 1 PM EST

Join the NIDA HIV Research Program for the upcoming NIDA HIV Seminar with Dr. Sandra Springer of Yale School of Medicine, 2022 recipient of the NIDA HIV Avant-Garde Award, for her presentation "Integrating Addiction and HIV Prevention and Treatment for Everyone and Bringing it to Where They Live." Sandra Springer, M.D., is a Professor of Medicine at the Yale School of Medicine. Her research

integrates aspects of substance use and infectious diseases, with a focus on opioid use disorder treatment and the treatment and prevention of HIV among people with carceral experience. Click the link for the Zoom registration here.

HPTN Scholars Program (2024-2025 Cohort)

"The HIV Prevention Trials Network (HPTN) is proud to offer two scholarship programs for early-career investigators funded through a supplement from the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). The HPTN Scholars Program now includes two components: a domestic (U.S.) program and an international program. Both programs seek to increase opportunities for scientists from groups under-represented in HIV prevention research." More information available [here](#).

HIV Vaccine Trials Network: Research and Mentorship Program (RAMP)

"Seeking African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Islander medical students interested in HIV vaccine research. The HIV Vaccine Trials Network (HVTN) is now accepting applications for Research and Mentorship Program (RAMP) Scholar Grants to attract Black, Indigenous and other People of Color (BIPOC) medical students who want to make a difference in their communities and contribute to the development of an effective HIV vaccine." Applications due January 2, 2024. See more information [here](#).

NIH Funding Opportunities

Addressing the Impact of Syndemics on the Health of People with HIV and Diseases and Conditions within the Missions of NIDDK and NHLBI (R01 Clinical Trial Optional)

Funding Opportunity Number: RFA-DK-25-001
Posting Date: November 30, 2023
Opening Date: February 20, 2024
Close Date: Various – See announcement

Engineering and Preclinical Development of Biological Products that Eliminate HIV-infected Cells (UG3/UH3 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

Funding Opportunity Number: RFA-AI-23-060
Posting Date: October 25, 2023
Opening Date: February 13, 2024
Close Date: March 14, 2024

Addressing the Impact of Structural Racism and Discrimination on Minority Health and Health Disparities (R01 - Clinical Trial Optional)

Funding Opportunity Number: PAR-23-112
Posting Date: January 31, 2023
Opening Date: February 24, 2023
Close Date: Various – See announcement

Engaging Survivors of Sexual Violence and Trafficking in HIV and Substance Use Disorder Services (R34 Clinical Trial Optional)

Funding Opportunity Number: RFA-DA-25-018
Posting Date: August 21, 2023
Opening Date: July 5, 2024
Close Date: August 2024

Addressing HIV in Highest Risk Sexual and Gender Minorities (R01 Clinical Trial Optional)

Funding Opportunity Number: RFA-DA-25-001
Posting Date: July 31, 2023
Opening Date: July 14, 2024
Close Date: August 14, 2024

Addressing HIV in highest risk sexual and gender minorities (R34 Clinical Trial Required)

Funding Opportunity Number: RFA-OD-23-018
Posting Date: July 31, 2023
Opening Date: July 14, 2024
Close Date: August 14, 2024

Notice of Special Interest (NOSI): Research on HIV-associated Malignancies

Funding Opportunity Number: NOT-CA-23-070
Posting Date: June 5, 2023
Opening Date: September 07, 2023
Close Date: September 08, 2026

NIAID Research Education Program Advancing the Careers of a Diverse Research Workforce

Funding Opportunity Number: PAR-23-282
Posting Date: November 03, 2023
Opening Date: December 26, 2023
Close Date: Various – See announcement

Opportunities for HIV Cure Strategies at the Time of ART Initiation (R01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

Funding Opportunity Number: PAR-23-297
Posting Date: September 19, 2023
Opening Date: December 7, 2023
Close Date: Various – See announcement

Opportunities for HIV Cure Strategies at the Time of ART Initiation (R21 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

Funding Opportunity Number: PAR-23-296
Posting Date: September 19, 2023
Opening Date: December 7, 2023
Close Date: Various – See announcement

Innovations to Optimize HIV Prevention and Care Continuum Outcomes (R01 Clinical Trial Optional)

Funding Opportunity Number: PAR-23-061
Posting Date: January 11, 2023
Opening Date: April 09, 2023
Close Date: January 10, 2026

Formative and Pilot Intervention Research to Optimize HIV Prevention and Care Continuum Outcomes (R34 Clinical Trial Optional)

Funding Opportunity Number: PAR-23-060
Posting Date: January 11, 2023
Opening Date: April 09, 2023
Close Date: January 10, 2026

Notice of Special Interest (NOSI): Implementation Science to Advance the United States HIV Prevention and Treatment Goals and the Global HIV Prevention and Treatment Targets

Funding Opportunity Number: NOT-MH-23-275
Posting Date: June 5, 2023
Opening Date: September 07, 2023
Close Date: September 08, 2026

NIAID New Innovators Awards (DP2 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

Funding Opportunity Number: PAR-23-198
Posting Date: June 02, 2023
Opening Date: September 13, 2023
Close Date: Various – See announcement

Click [here](#) for additional funding opportunities available from the National Institutes of Health.

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