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IN THE NEWS

VA & UM Doctors Address White House Conference on Aging

The White House Conference on Aging held once a decade took place on July 13. The 2015 Conference focused on four areas: ensuring retirement security; promoting healthy aging; providing long-term services and supports; and protecting older Americans from financial exploitation, abuse, and neglect.

For several months leading up to the recent White House Conference on Aging, experts from UM's

Departments of Public Health Sciences and Medicine and the Miami VA Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center (GRECC) have worked as part of the National Committee on Aging to identify the medical needs and health care issues facing seniors, as well as devise solutions and methods of implementation for assistance programs, outreach services and research studies. The committee's work focused on areas such as health care policy, healthy aging, physical activity, and preventive services.





Hermes Florez, MD, PhD, MPH
*GRECC Director, Miami VA Healthcare System,
Division Chief, Geriatrics Medicine & Epidemiology,
University of Miami Miller School of Medicine*

President Barack Obama and other top government officials spoke on the importance of improving the lives of seniors through health care. Aimed to address the demographic shift occurring among seniors in the United States, the event was also attended by health providers, researchers, government staff, caregivers, advocates, community leaders and experts in the aging field.

“Health care providers, scientists and public health experts, have come together to promote what needs to be done to seek good quality of life for the aging population,” said Hermes Jose Florez, MD, PhD, MPH.

“Our collective efforts can lead to better health care for the senior community, especially in South Florida where the different cultural issues can be challenging,” said Florez. Departments of Medicine and Public Health Sciences have also trained students, residents and fellows, so that future health care providers are more sensitive to needs of the aging population.”

Dr. Florez coordinated efforts with VA leadership to promote physical activities (Go4Life campaign and others) as part of the activities of the White House Conference on Aging (WHCoA). Mary Worstell, Senior Advisor to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health-Woman’s Health in the Department of Health and Human Services and Co-Lead, Healthy Aging, WHCoA, contacted Dr. Florez regarding VA participation. Sophia Hurley, Prevention Programs Coordinator at the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) agreed to support the promotion of physical activity in coordination with the MOVE weight management program.

Go4Life is an exercise and physical activity campaign from the National Institute on Aging at NIH. It is designed to help the aging population fit exercise and physical activity into your daily life. Motivating older adults to become physically active for the first time, return to exercise after a break in their routines, or build more exercise and physical activity into weekly routines are the essential elements of Go4Life.

Karen M. Pocinki, MA, Director, Go4Life® Campaign, provided a toolkit to use in planning Go4Life Month activities. Dr. Florez promoted the September Go4Life initiative and sought broader participation at the different VA facilities, in coordination with the Health Promotion and Disease Prevention and Patient Aligned Care Teams. The Office of Geriatrics & Extended Care/ Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Centers (GRECCs) proposed having a Physical Activity Summit to promote evidence-based program for older Veterans. Dr. Miriam Morey, Associate Director of Research of the Durham VA GRECC, led a team working on the specific details.

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Introduction to Special Issue in Honor of Michael D. Norenberg, MD

Pathologist Who Incorporated Glutamine to the Astrocytic Neuronal Crosstalk



The special issue of Neurochemical Research was devoted to Dr. Michael D. Norenberg, a pathologist whose thorough analytical attitude to the microscopy of brain tissue, combined with intuitive feeling for the biology of the central

nervous system have led to breakthrough observations regarding the role of astrocytes in the normal and pathological brain. [Read more](#)

Anat Galor, MD, MSPH, Staff Physician, Miami Veterans Affairs Medical Center and Assistant Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology Bascom Palmer Eye Institute

The overarching goal of the clinical laboratory is to study the relationship between dry eye and nerve function. The multi-disciplinary team consisting of a dry eye expert (Dr. Galor) and pain experts (Drs. Felix, Levitt, and Sarantopoulos) found that many patients with dry eye symptoms describe features of neuropathic pain, including



From left to right: Levitt, R; Sarantopoulos, K.D; Felix, E; Galor, A.

spontaneous eye pain, dysesthesias (unpleasant, abnormal sensations), hyperalgesia (exaggerated pain response to supra-threshold noxious stimuli such as wind), and allodynia (pain response to normally non-noxious stimuli such as light). These complaints are more common in those with more severe and persistent dry eye symptoms. Dry eye symptoms correlated more closely to non-ocular complaints, such as non-ocular pain, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder, than to traditionally measured

signs of dry eye (tear production, evaporation, corneal damage). Together, these suggest that dry eye symptoms may represent a problem that extends beyond the ocular surface. The research group has an open research study to further study the link between dry eye and nerve dysfunction. Recruitment of patients with dry eye and without (to serve as controls) to participate in the 1 day study are being conducted. Please contact Mireya Hernandez (mireya.hernandez@va.gov; 305-342-1483) for more information.

As part of their research, the laboratory has focused on developing novel tools to evaluate nerve status and ocular surface inflammation. The findings have been presented in several meetings this year including the Association for Research and Vision in Ophthalmology (Confocal microscopy for the analysis of the sub-basal corneal nerves) and American Society of Cataract and Refractive Surgery (Tear eicosanoid levels in dry eye).

Priyamvada Rai, PhD, GRECC Investigator and Associate Professor of Medicine, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine participated in grant reviews by the Government of Hong Kong Health and Medical Research Fund Grant Review Panel. Dr. Rai has been a standing member of this panel since 2013.

PRESENTATIONS

Daniella David, MD, Chief, Psychiatry Service, Medical Director, PTSD Program, Miami VA Healthcare System

Senior residents, Drs. Michael Jacobs and Krystal Kleinberg, presented their study entitled *Risk Factors for Non-completion of Evidence Based Therapy for Combat-Related PTSD* at the annual American Psychiatric Association Meeting that took

place in Toronto, Canada in May 2015.

Other authors included Gary Kutcher, Ph.D., Pamela Slone-Fama, Ph.D., Camille Gonzalez, Psy.D., Michael Sanfilippo, M.D., Daniella David, M.D.

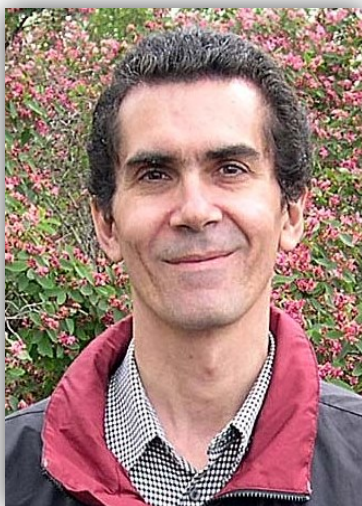


Priyavada Rai, PhD, GRECC Investigator and Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine was invited to present her work titled *The Yin and Yang of Oxidative Stress in Aging and Cancer* at the Florida International University, Doctoral Programs Colloquium Series earlier this year.

Dr. Rai also presented her work titled *MTH1 as a Novel Facilitator of Proliferation and Tumorigenicity in RAS-Driven Tumor Cells* at the Cell Growth & Proliferation Gordon Research Conference, July 2015 in West Dover, VT.



Gianluca D'Ippolito, PhD, GRECC Investigator and Associate Professor of Orthopaedics at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, presented a poster of his work titled *Marrow-Isolated Adult Multilineage Inducible (MIAMI) Cells Embedded Within Gelatin-Based Electrospun Nanofiber Scaffolds for the Treatment of Peripheral Arterial Disease* at the recent Miami VA Research Week. Co-authors on the work included E. Awadallah, D. Quevedo, and M. Valdez, graduate students working with him from the University of Miami Department of Biomedical Engineering, Drs. C. Monge, visiting scientist, F. Andreopoulos, Associate Professor and R. Ramon, Assistant Professor, both from the UM Department of Biomedical Engineering, and GRECC investigators Drs. G. Delcroix, T. Reiner, and P. Schiller.



Carlos Perez-Stable, PhD, GRECC Investigator was invited to present his work titled *Prostate Cancer-Specific Destruction of Androgen Receptor with Deubiquitinase Inhibitors* at the Drug Discovery & Therapy World Congress 2015 held in Boston, MA, July 22-25, 2015. Co-authors included GRECC affiliates Teresita Reiner, DVM, Alicia de las Pozas, Ricardo Parrondo and Deanna Palenzuela.



Gaetan Delcroix, PhD, GRECC Investigator, and Assistant Professor of Orthopaedics at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, presented a poster of his work at the Miami VA Research Week activity titled *MIAMI Cell Hyaline Cartilage Formation is Enhanced by TGF- β 3-Releasing Pharmacologically Active Microcarriers and Human Cartilage Microparticles*. Co-Authors on the work included GRECC Investigators Drs. G. D'Ippolito, T. Reiner, and P. Schiller, University of Miami Department of Orthopaedics faculty Drs. T. Malinin and H. Temple, and Dr. C. Montero-Menei from the University of Angers, France.

Dr. Delcroix's work titled *MIAMI Cell Hyaline Cartilage Formation is Enhanced by TGF- β 3-Releasing Pharmacologically Active Microcarriers and Human Cartilage Microparticles* was presented at the annual meeting of the Orthopaedic Research Society in Las Vegas, NV. Co-authors on the study included GRECC Investigators Drs. G. D'Ippolito, T. Reiner, P. Schiller, as well as Drs. T. Malinin and H. Temple from the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine Orthopaedics Department, and Dr. C. Montero-Menei from the University of Angers, France.



M.H. Rose van Zuilen, PhD, GRECC Investigator / Educator, and Associate Professor of Professional Practice at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine co-presented her work titled *An Atypical Case of Neurocognitive Disorder with Predominant Biparietal Lobe Atrophy* at the Presidential Poster Presentation session of the Annual Scientific Meeting of the American Geriatrics Society on May 2015 in National Harbor, MD. The abstract of this work was published in *JAGS* 63(Suppl 1), S96, 2015. Co-authors included Drs. N. Hartmann and M. Horvath.

Dr. van Zuilen and her colleagues presented two other posters at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the American Geriatrics Society: *Medical Student Competency in Home Safety Assessment* [*JAGS* 63(Suppl 1), S195-6, 2015] with GRECC associate O. Rodriguez, MD and *An Unusual Mucocutaneous Manifestation of Crohn's Disease* [*JAGS* 63(Suppl 1), S168, 2015] with GRECC associate L.F. Samos-Gutierrez, MD. Additional co-authors included Drs. M. Tehrani, J.P. Mangudo, and M. Reyes-Yera.



Christie M. Hogue, DDS, GRECC Investigator, presented her work entitled *The Importance of Oral Health in Aspiration Pneumonia and Head and Neck Radiation Therapy* at the Evidence Based Treatment Dysphagia – VA Employee Education Services (EES) meeting in Orlando, FL in May 2015.

She also presented her work in the Delphi Study as a poster presentation at the Miami VA Research Day Poster Session, in May 2015.

Dr. Hogue gave an oral presentation of her work titled *Identifying Core Competencies for Geriatric Dental Fellowship* at the American Geriatric Society meeting in National Harbor, MD, held in May 2015.

She also gave a presentation at the 5D Miami VA Residential Substance Use Program - Oral Health and Smoking Cessation titled *Risk of Head and Neck Cancer and Tobacco/Alcohol Consumption* in May 2015.



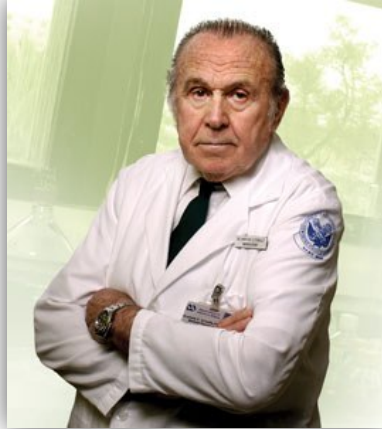
Ramiro Verdun, PhD, GRECC Investigator and Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine presented his work titled *UNG and MSH2 Control Telomere Stability in B-cells Expressing Activation-Induced Deaminase* at the Telomeres & Telomerase meeting in Cold Spring Harbor, NY, April 28-May 2, 2015.

Andrew Schally, PhD, MDhc (Multi), DSc,hc was the Keynote Speaker at the Inaugural VA Research Week Symposium at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital & Clinics in Tampa, FL on May 19 – 20, 2015.

Dr. Schally presented the following talks:

May 19 - *Hypothalamic hormones: From Neuroendocrinology to Therapy of Cancer*

May 20 - *Hypothalamic Hormones: From Neuroendocrinology to Therapy of Various Diseases and Conditions*



Dr. Schally also presented his works titled *Recent data with Growth Hormone-Releasing Hormone antagonists and the FSH system* at the Ferring Medical Affairs Advisory Board in Fountainebleau Hotel, Miami Beach, FL on May 21 – 22, 2015 and *Hypothalamic Hormones: From Neuroendocrinology to Therapy of Cancer and Other Diseases* at the Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center Distinguished Lecture Series – Speaker Forum on June 12, 2015.

HONORS & AWARDS



Carlton S. Gass, PhD, ABPP
Board Certified in Clinical Psychology
Director, Neuropsychology Clinic
Bruce Carter VA Medical Center



Dr. Gass was awarded the diplomat certification in Clinical Psychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology on June 12, 2015. The mission of the American Board of Professional Psychology is to increase consumer protection through the examination and certification of psychologists who demonstrate competence in approved specialty areas in professional psychology.

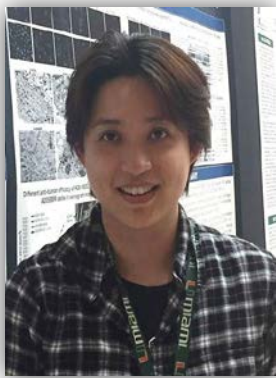


Kevin M. Curtis, PhD, GRECC Investigator and postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine, working with Dr. Guy Howard, GRECC Research Director, was awarded Outstanding Poster of the Meeting at the 18th Workshop on Vitamin D held in Delft, Netherlands, April 21-24, 2015, for his work titled *Vitamin D₃ Metabolites Regulate the Activities of Tap63 γ and Δ Np63 β in Promoting Osteoblastic Differentiation of Human Mesenchymal Stem Cells*.

Priyamvada Rai, PhD, GRECC Investigator and Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine was awarded the first young investigator Department of Medicine Schally Research Award in June 2015.

Miami VA Research Week Poster Winners

As part of the 2015 National VA Research Week, Miami VA organized a two-day program. The Miami VA Research Week Poster Session took place on May 18. Forty-five posters representing the work of numerous investigators were displayed. Investigators, presenters, judges and other attendees were available during this time to discuss their work and its significance to veterans.



Ying-Ying Li, MS
Basic Science

Biochemical alterations in BRAF inhibitor (BRAFi) resistant melanoma cells increase their vulnerability to arginine deprivation



Gaetan Delcroix, PhD
Young Investigator
Basic Science

MIAMI Cell hyaline cartilage formation is enhanced by TGF- β 3-releasing pharmacologically active microcarriers and human cartilage microparticles



Priyanka Chhadva, BS
Clinical Science

The impact of eyelid laxity on dry eye



Nabeel Shalabi, MD
Young Investigator
Clinical Science

Confocal microscopy for the analysis of the sub-basal corneal nerves

UMMSM Promotion and Tenure Awards Effective June 1, 2015

Department of Medicine

DONG, Chunming

Professor

RAI, Priyamvada

Associate Professor

Department of Neurological Surgery

BRAMLETT, Helen

Professor

Department of Surgery

SPECTOR, Seth

Professor of Clinical

Department of Urology

KAVA, Bruce

Professor of Clinical

PUBLICATIONS

Dr. Anat Galor's Laboratory

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[Validating a New Computed Tomography Atlas for Grading Ankle Osteoarthritis](#)

Michael M. Cohen, DPM, FACFAS, Nathan D. Vela, DPM, MPH, Jason E. Levine, DPM, Eran A. Barnoy, MS



Michael M. Cohen, DPM, FACFAS

As the most common joint disease, osteoarthritis (OA) poses a significant source of pain and disability. It

can be defined by classic radiographic findings, particular symptoms, or a combination of the 2. Although specific grading scales have been developed to evaluate OA in various joints, such as the shoulder, hip, and knee, no definitive classification system is available for grading OA in the ankle. The purpose of the present study was to create and validate a standardized atlas for grading (or staging) ankle osteoarthritis using computed tomography (CT) and “hallmark”

findings noted on coronal, sagittal, and axial views extrapolated from the Kellgren-Lawrence radiographic scale. The CT scans of 226 patients at the Miami Veterans Affairs Medical Center were reviewed. An atlas was derived from a retrospective review of 30 remaining CT scans taken from July 2008 to Nov. 2011. After this review, 3 orthogonal static CT images, obtained from 11 remaining patients, were chosen to represent the various stages on the OA

scale and were used to test the validity of the atlas developed by 2 of us (M.M.C. and N.D.V.). A multispecialty panel of 9 examiners independently rated the 11 CT scan subjects. The differences among examiners and specialties were calculated, including an intra-examiner agreement for 2 separate

readings spaced 9 months apart. Although the small number of subspecialty examiners made the intra-specialty comparisons difficult to validate, the findings indicated excellent agreement among all specialty groups, with good intra-investigational (intraclass correlation coefficient 0.962 and 1)

inter-investigational (intraclass correlation coefficient 0.851) values. These results appeared to validate the CT ankle OA atlas, which is believed will be a valuable clinical and research tool, one that will likely be more beneficial than less relevant generalized OA grading scales in use today.

Geriatric Research, Education, and Clinical Center- GRECC

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Giribaldi MG, Munoz A, Halvorsen K, Patel A, Rai P. *MTH1 Expression is required for effective transformation by oncogenic HRAS*. Oncotarget 2015, Advance online pub (PMID:25893378).

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Endocrine, Polypeptide and Cancer Institute

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PEPTIDES 2015 April 2 [Epub ahead of print]

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FUNDING

Senate Appropriations Committee Provides Increase for VA Research

In late May, the Senate Military Construction Veteran's Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee provided \$621.8 million (+ \$32.8 million) for the VA Medical and Prosthetics Research program. The funding matches the President's funding request and the funding provided by the House Appropriations Committee. The funding is the largest increase in VA research funding in over a decade.

In addition to providing funding for the VA research program, the Senate also included report language directing the VA research program to study respiratory illnesses of veterans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Chaturvedi Receives Grant to Research Stroke Prevention in Atrial Fibrillation Patients



Seemant Chaturvedi, MD,
staff physician, Miami VA

Healthcare System, professor of clinical neurology and Vice Chair of VA Programs in the Department of Neurology, received a \$330,000 research grant from drug-maker Boehringer Ingelheim to study new methods for preventing stroke in patients with atrial fibrillation.

Atrial fibrillation (AF), which affects an estimated 5.1 million people in the U.S., is a type of irregular heartbeat often caused by

the two upper chambers of the heart beating unpredictably and sometimes rapidly. These irregular heartbeats can cause blood to collect in the heart and potentially form a clot, which can travel to a person's brain and cause an ischemic stroke. Anticoagulant medications are the most common treatment for the condition. [Read more about the research grant.](#)



South Florida VA Foundation for Research & Education, Inc.

Executed Cooperative Research and Development Agreements

Sponsor: **MiMedx Group, Inc. Phase IIb CT CRADA**

Project: *A Phase IIb, prospective, single-blinded, randomized controlled trial of the micronized dHACM injection as compared to the saline placebo injection in the treatment of plantar fasciitis*

PI: **Kristen Kelley, DPM**

Sponsor: **AbbVie, Inc – Phase IV CRADA**

Project: *An Open-Label, Multicenter Study to Evaluate the Safety and Efficacy of Ombitasvir/Paritaprevir/Ritonavir and Dasabuvir With or Without Ribavirin (RBV) in US Veterans With Genotype 1 Chronic Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) Infection (TOPAZ-VA)*

PI: **Lennox Jeffers, MD**

Sponsor: **Boehringer Ingelheim Pharmaceuticals, Inc., Phase III CT CRADA**

Project: *Randomized, double-blind, Evaluation in secondary Stroke Prevention comparing the Efficacy and safety of the oral Thrombin inhibitor dabigatran etexilate (110 mg or 150 mg, oral b.i.d.) versus acetylsalicylic acid (100 mg oral q.d.) in patients with Embolic Stroke of Undetermined Source (RESPECT ESUS)*

PI: **Seemant Chaturvedi, MD**

CRADAs Under Negotiation

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