

IMPRINT

Internal Medicine Progress in Research, INnovation and Translation



Demetre Daskalakis, MD, MPH

Chair's Corner: Building Momentum Together

As we move into the spring season, I am energized by the continued momentum across our department research enterprise. This issue of IMPRINT reflects what makes our department exceptional - scientific rigor, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a shared commitment to discovery that improves patient care. One of our most important internal priorities this year is strengthening communication, alignment, and infrastructure in support of research productivity. I am grateful to our Vice Chairs of Research and the broader IM Cabinet for their intentional outreach across divisions. Their engagement in divisional meetings and direct dialogue with faculty and staff reflects our commitment to transparency, responsiveness, and shared ownership of our research mission. Research excellence does not occur in isolation, it requires coordination across clinical research, basic science, translational science, education, operations, and finance. We are working

Annual Research Symposium – March 12, 2026

The Department of Internal Medicine will host the 15th Annual Research Symposium on Thursday, March 12, 2026. The day will feature poster presentations from 10 AM-12 PM.

Keynote address: Demetre C. Daskalakis, MD, MPH

Chief Medical Officer at Callen-Lorde Community Health Center / Former CDC Director of the National Center Immunization and Respiratory Diseases.

“Influenza and Pandemic Preparedness”

Thursday, March 12, 2026

12:00 Noon – MSB 7051 In Lieu of FSM

deliberately to streamline processes, enhance pre- and post-award support, and ensure that our investigators are well positioned for success in an evolving federal funding landscape. I am particularly excited about our 15th Annual Research Symposium on March 12, 2026. This event is more than a showcase of scholarship - it is a celebration of our collective intellectual energy. The keynote address by Dr. Demetre Daskalakis on influenza and pandemic preparedness is especially timely given national conversations around public health infrastructure and emerging infectious threats. I strongly encourage faculty, trainees, and staff to attend, engage with our poster presenters, and support one another's work. Finally, I want to congratulate our Pilot Award recipients and clinical trial leaders highlighted in this issue. Their work exemplifies the depth and diversity of discovery within our ten divisions from cardiovascular innovation and oncology metabolism to nephrology immunobiology and infectious disease research. Together, we are building not just projects, but a cohesive research community. I look forward to seeing many of you on March 12 as we continue advancing discovery with purpose.

Anita Afzali, MD, MPH, MHCM, FAGC, AGAF

James F. Heady Endowed Chair, Professor of Medicine, Interim Chair of Internal Medicine

VC Views

One of the most important tools we have to improve research productivity is communication. The VCs of Research have been visiting with Division Directors and joining Divisional Meetings to hear from faculty / staff about needs in support of the research mission. A new initiative being launched by the Vice Chair's Cabinet is focused as well on increasing communication and collaboration to support the mission and goals of the DOIM. The Cabinet is composed of the Vice Chairs of Clinical Research (Dr. Carl Fichtenbaum), Basic Science Research (Dr. Christy Holland), Translational Research (Dr. Kris Hudock) Education (Dr. Eric Warm), Operations and Finance (Ms. Kelly Niederhausen), Faculty Affairs (Dr. Jennifer O'Toole), Inpatient Clinical Affairs (Dr. Arunab Mehta), Ambulatory Operations and Population Health (Dr. Christine Burrows), Quality Improvement (Dr. Danielle Clark), and the Cincinnati Veterans Affairs Medical Center (Dr. Aliecia Hochhausler). IMPRINT is also one of the tools being used to launch these new efforts. The VCs of research would like to encourage any faculty or staff members to reach out and share their ideas. We want to hear from you about your successes, struggles and ideas you have that can help our department move forward. You can reach us by email at:

Carl Fichtenbaum, fichtecj@ucmail.uc.edu;

Christy Holland, hollanck@ucmail.uc.edu;

Kris Hudock, hudockkn@ucmail.uc.edu.

Or just pick up the phone and call us - We hope this new focus on communication and collaboration will engage all of us and build community.



Carl J. Fichtenbaum, MD

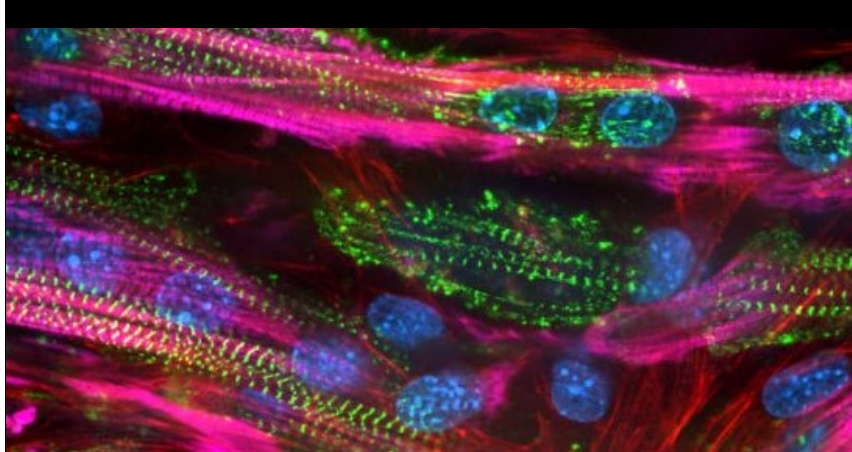
*Gregory W. Rouan
Professor of Internal
Medicine, Vice Chair of
Clinical Research*

Christy K. Holland, PhD

*Hanna Endowed Chair of
Cardiology, Vice Chair of Basic
Science Research*

Kristin Hudock, MD, MSTR

*Associate Professor of
Internal Medicine,
Vice Chair of Translational
Research*



Academic Research Service(ARS) / Announcements

Pre-Award Grant Questionnaire

The College of Medicine Pre-Award team, led by Sandi Newman, has launched an updated Salesforce-based grant intake questionnaire for all COM grant applications. Click '[here](#)' to get to the link. Users should then select the grant list link, then click "Create Application" in the upper-right corner. The updated questionnaire features a single-page, user-friendly layout with all required questions in one place. Retrospective chart review studies, including industry-funded retrospective chart reviews, should be submitted here as well. Please select Teresa Larkin as a Delegate so DOIM can track applications.

To view COM Grant Dashboard, click '[Pre-Award Investigator Resources](#)'.

New NIH Biosketch / Other Support Common Forms

In 2026, the NIH and NSF are now using a common form for NIH, NSF and other biosketches. All required forms and information can be accessed at ScienCV. ARS held a training session led by Dr. Kevin Haworth. Slides from the session are available for review. You can access the slides at:

[NIH Biosketch Training Slides](#)

A recording of the session can be found here:

https://uc.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/Internal+Medicine+J-Club+Workshop+On+2026+NIH+Biosketch/1_az89j9n3

Please note that the NIH delayed the mandatory implementation of these forms till May 2026 but encourages researchers to use them as soon as they can to become familiar with them. Doing it sooner will allow troubleshooting problems.

New NIH Salary Cap for Executive Level II is 228,000 effective January 11, 2026.

Talk to your Pre-Award Grants Manager or Post-Award Financial Accountant to learn how this may affect your budgets.

Thanks to Faiza Khondokar, PhD Candidate, Immunology Graduate Program, for contributing to this issue.



SPOTLIGHT ON PILOT AWARDS

In support of its mission to improve health through innovative and multidisciplinary research, the Department of Internal Medicine offers a variety of internal funding opportunities for faculty and trainee investigators. In this issue of our Newsletter, we are very delighted to highlight the research of Fall 2025 Intramural Research Award recipients, including some fun facts that shape who they are today. Congratulations!

Kevin Haworth, PhD
Cardiovascular Health and Disease

Senior Faculty Pilot Award



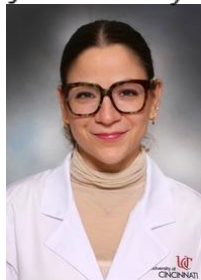
Ultrasound-mediated Controlled Hypoxemic and Acidotic Reperfusion for Inhibition of Reperfusion Injury. Reperfusion injury is an additional damage to heart tissues that is caused by the sudden restoration of blood to the heart after a blockage is removed. Dr. Haworth's project explores a new way to reduce that damage using a combination of low oxygen and mild acidity during the early stages of restoring blood flow. His team has developed a method using ultrasound to lower oxygen levels in the blood to help protect heart tissue in lab models. Currently they are aiming to create

a catheter-based system that delivers this treatment to the heart using nano-sized droplets. This research could lead to new treatments that reduce heart damage after a heart attack, improving recovery and long-term health for patients. What is your most memorable professional moment? Seeing students graduate is always a highlight for me! If you did not become a researcher and scientist, what type of career might you have chosen? As a kid I always dreamt of being an astronaut, I'd still love to travel to the Moon! Who do you consider the two most important people in your life that helped shape your career outside of your family?

My 12th grade English teacher really was someone who took the time to teach me that I could be a good writer. Writing is now a huge part of what I do. Another person would be the recently retired Prof. Anil Menon. I have always had a passion for teaching. My career moved progressively away from that as I focused on research. Prof. Menon helped me find a way back to teaching through the Medical Sciences baccalaureate program that I now direct.

Caterina Bartolacci, PhD
Hematology & Oncology

Junior Faculty Pilot Award



Dietary Fatty Acids and Ferroptotic Vulnerabilities in KRAS-Mutant Lung Cancer. Cancers driven by mutations in the KRAS gene are among the most common and

hardest to treat. KRAS-mutant cancers depend on making their own fats to build cell membranes and protect themselves from a type of cell death called ferroptosis. Ferroptosis happens when dietary fats called polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs) get damaged inside cells. PUFAs come from diet, raising the possibility that what patients eat could influence how tumors respond to therapy. Dr. Bartolacci's group has demonstrated that blocking fat-making enzymes cause tumors to become much more sensitive to dietary PUFAs, which then trigger ferroptosis and kill the cancer cells. Her team is now testing how different types of dietary fats influence cancer growth, and whether these effects extend beyond lung cancer to pancreatic and colorectal cancers. The long-term goal of this project is to design safe, diet-based strategies that make KRAS-driven cancers more vulnerable to treatment. What is your most memorable professional moment? The first time I looked at a mass spectrum! Discovering lipids as a research focus has been the most defining and memorable moment of my career so far. If you did not become a researcher and scientist, what type of career might you have chosen? I would probably have pursued a career as an artist, perhaps restoring or reinterpreting old paintings in Rome. Who do you consider the two most important people in your life that helped shape your career outside of your family? My first

mentor, Dr. Augusto Amici, who taught me the importance of thinking outside the box—and of good experimental controls—and Dr. Scaglioni, who assigned me the project that led me to discover my passion for lipids.

Ameet Chimote, MBBS, PhD
Nephrology and Hypertension
Junior Faculty Pilot Award



INVESTIGATING ION CHANNEL-MEDIATED T CELL DYSFUNCTION IN TYPE 2 DIABETIC. Type 2 diabetic nephropathy (T2DN) is a common complication of diabetes that can lead to kidney failure. Inflammation, driven by T cells plays a key role in kidney damage in T2DN. T cells have ion channels on their surface, called Kv1.3 and KCa3.1, which control signals that help them move, release inflammatory molecules, and attack tissues, including the kidneys. Using advanced techniques such as flow cytometry, electrophysiology, and single-cell spatial transcriptomics, Dr. Chimote plans to study the changes in T cell behavior and distribution in blood and kidney tissue samples from T2DN patients. This project aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these ion channels contribute to kidney inflammation in T2DN which could lead to potential development of innovative therapies. What is your most memorable professional moment?

When I walked during my commencement ceremony to receive my PhD degree. It was a moment of accomplishment after overcoming many challenges and the beginning of a new journey for me. If you did not become a researcher and scientist, what type of career might you have chosen?

I would have pursued an MBA or a master's in public health. (But I wouldn't trade my degree and my pursuit of science for anything in real life). Who are the two most important people who helped shape your career outside of your family? The first person who comes to mind is my PhD Advisor, Dr. Peter Lauf. His passion for science, his life story has always been a source of inspiration for me. My current mentor, Dr. Laura Conforti, has been a steadfast friend, philosopher and guide for me for the last 15 years. She has been an advocate for me, and I have learned the nuances of scientific research, time management and effective writing from her.

Madhuravasal K. Janani, PhD
Gastroenterology and Hepatology
Trainee Research Award



Investigating the effect of fentanyl on HBV replication and host antiviral gene expression. HBV continues to pose a significant health challenge although effective vaccines and treatments exist. The ongoing opioid crisis has increased the

risk of HBV. Recent research suggests that opioids like fentanyl can directly alter how viruses replicate and how the immune system responds. Dr. Madhuravasal's early findings show that fentanyl can enhance viral replication and weaken the body's antiviral defenses. She is planning to study how fentanyl changes viral activity and immune gene expression. By uncovering the biological links between opioid use and HBV persistence, this research aims to identify new biomarkers and inform strategies to improve care for people living with both HBV infection and opioid use disorder. What is your most memorable professional moment? There isn't one single defining moment, but earning a gold medal during my graduate studies remains very special to me, especially since I never imagined pursuing a career in science during my high school years. If you did not become a researcher and scientist, what type of career might you have chosen? If I had not become a researcher, I would always dream of pursuing music as a career, along with visual arts and design. Who are the two most important people who helped shape your career outside of your family? Dr. H. N. Madhavan, my previous mentor at Sankara Nethralaya, played a crucial role early in my career by instilling strong principles of research ethics, discipline, and scientific curiosity. Dr. Jason Blackard has been a tremendous influence—his hard work, mentorship, and genuine kindness as a human being have shaped both my scientific growth and professional values.

Clinical Trial Highlight



Zulfa Omer, MD

Title: A Phase 2 Study of Epcoritamab as a Consolidation Therapy for 2nd Generation BTKi +/- Obinutuzumab in Chronic Lymphocytic leukemia/ small

lymphocytic lymphoma (CLL/SLL) Patients or Variants of This.

ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT07108998

<https://clinicaltrials.gov/study/NCT07108998?tab=results&a=2>

What do you hope to learn?

Whether adding epcoritamab, a bispecific antibody that redirects T cells to leukemia cells, can drive deeper remissions and convert patients to undetectable MRD (uMRD). Achieving uMRD can support safe treatment discontinuation (time off therapy) and durable treatment-free remission, moving toward outcomes that may be functionally curative for some patients.

Study Population:

Adults with CLL/SLL receiving continuous frontline CLL therapy with BTKi for ≥12 months, with partial response or better but detectable disease.

Favorite pop artist? Beyonce

Favorite ice cream flavor? Chocolate

Fun fact: I pack a week before I travel. I'm also bilingual—so if you hear me switch languages mid-sentence, it's either because I'm tired... or mentally packing.

Selected recent publications from the DOIM (random picks A-F)

[Click article link to learn more...](#)

[Safety of Kidney Transplantation from Donors with HIV.](#)

Durand CM, Massie A, Florman S, Liang T, Rana MM, Friedman-Moraco R, Gilbert A, Stock P, Mehta SA, Mehta S, Stosor V, Pereira MR, Morris MI, Hand J, Aslam S, Malinis M, Haidar G, Small CB, Santos CAQ, Schaenman J, Baddley J, Wojciechowski D, Blumberg EA, Ranganna K, Adebisi O, Elias N, Castillo-Lugo JA, Giorgakis E, Apewokin S, Brown D, Ostrander D, Eby Y, Desai N, Naqvi F, Bagnasco S, Watson N, Brittain E, Odum J, Redd AD, Tobian AAR, Segev DL; HOPE in Action Investigators. *N Engl J Med.* 2024;391(15):1390-1401. doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa2403733.

[Friend or Foe? Safety and Efficacy of Hepatitis B Viremic Solid Organ Allograft into Seronegative Recipients.](#)

Pratt CG, Noriega N, Delman AM, Moore AN, Bari K, Luckett K, Kaiser TE, Quillin RC 3rd, Cuffy MC, Shah SA. *J Am Coll Surg.* 2025 Apr 1;240(4):449-459. doi: 10.1097/XCS.0000000000001288. Epub 2025 Mar 17.

[Sustained Effectiveness, Tolerability, and Safety of Long-Term Prophylaxis with Lanadelumab in Hereditary Angioedema: The Prospective, Phase 4, Noninterventional EMPOWER Real-World Study.](#)

Bernstein JA, Betschel SD, Busse PJ, Banerji A, Wedner HJ, Manning M, Zaragoza-Urdaz RH, Anderson J, Gagnon R, Baptist AP, Soteres D, Lumry WR, Craig T, Petroni D, Hsu FI, Nova Estepan D, Juethner S, Watt M, Khutoryansky N, Zuraw BL; EMPOWER Investigators. *Adv Ther.* 2025 Jun 12. doi: 10.1007/s12325-025-03226-3. Online ahead of print.

[The synthetic opioid fentanyl increases HIV replication in macrophages.](#)

Madhuravasal Krishnan J, Kong L, Meeds HL, Roskin KM, Medvedovic M, Sherman KE, Blackard JT. *PLoS One.* 2025 Feb 27;20(2):e0298341. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0298341. eCollection 2025.

[Heart Rate Variability as a Marker of Disease Severity in Pulmonary Arterial Hypertension: A Prospective Cohort Study.](#)

Jose A, Moseley AD, Das M, O'Donnell RE, Elwing JM. *Pulm Circ.* 2025 Mar 31;15(2):e70064. doi: 10.1002/pul2.70064. eCollection 2025 Apr.

[Auto-correction Boluses Contribute to Hypoglycemia Following Temporary Target Cessation During Hyperglycemia.](#)

Welch A, Zulfiqar R, Black E, Falciglia M. *J Diabetes Sci Technol.* 2025 Apr 24:19322968251336187. doi: 10.1177/19322968251336187. Online ahead of print.

[Effects of antiretrovirals on major adverse cardiovascular events in the REPRIEVE trial: a longitudinal cohort analysis.](#)

Fichtenbaum CJ, Malvestutto CD, Watanabe MG, Davies Smith E, Ribaud HJ, McCallum S, Fitch KV, Currier JS, Diggs MR, Chu SM, Aberg JA, Lu MT, Valencia J, Gómez-Ayerbe C, Brar I, Valdez Madruga J, Bloomfield GS, Douglas PS, Zanni MV, Grinspoon SK; REPRIEVE Investigators. *Lancet HIV.* 2025 Jul;12(7):e496-e505. doi: 10.1016/S2352-3018(25)00043-8. Epub 2025 Jun 4.