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UC San Diego Selected to Lead International HIV/AIDS Clinical Trials Unit

University of California San Diego Collaborative Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) has been selected by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to lead and administer an international seven-year, \$28-million grant for science-driven clinical trials that deliver innovative, efficient results needed to turn the corner on the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Every seven years, NIH competitively renews its funding of the HIV clinical trials networks operating in the United States and internationally. During the current application process, UC San Diego AntiViral Research Center, University of Colorado Hospital, Houston AIDS Research Team and Durban International clinical research sites were chosen to work collaboratively on research priorities for the NIH/National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases HIV/AIDS Adult Therapeutics Clinical Trials Network. Chennai Antiviral Research and Treatment center, University of Southern California and University of Miami clinical research sites were also chosen to join the CTU to serve as qualified reserve or protocol-specific sites as needed for future clinical trials.

“UC San Diego has helped shape HIV/AIDS research and treatment through innovative research since the inception of the adult and pediatric therapeutic clinical trials networks in 1986,” said principal investigator Constance A. Benson, MD, director of the UC San Diego Antiviral Research Center. “Together, the seven clinical research sites selected by the NIH for the HIV therapeutic clinical trials network bring together a wealth of scientific expertise, experience and the high quality performance required to conduct complex clinical trials.”

Approximately 38 million people are living with HIV/AIDS globally with 1.7 million acquiring HIV in 2019 alone. In the United States, 1.2 million are living with this virus.

The UC San Diego-led CTU spans several regions in the United States burdened by chronic and new HIV infections as well as global regions impacted by both HIV and tuberculosis (TB). Collaboratively, the unit is able to expand its scientific reach and diversity, bringing new ideas, perspectives and capabilities into the networks to address high priority HIV research. It also provides an opportunity to recruit, enroll and retain a broad diversity of research trial participants in network studies.

The CTU will investigate therapeutic strategies aimed at cure and functional cure of HIV. It will evaluate viral persistence and latent reservoirs, broadly neutralizing antibody approaches to treatment and prevention, and pathogenesis and treatment of inflammation and its impact on HIV comorbidities.

In addition, investigators will study new antiretroviral drugs including long-acting drug formulations for HIV treatment and prevention, HIV-related coinfections and comorbidities, including metabolic and end organ complications and hepatitis B cure, as well as the treatment and prevention of tuberculosis (TB), including TB preventive vaccines, in persons with mono- and HIV-coinfection.

“We are honored to lead a talented pool of investigators in a common goal of advancing research that clinically benefits people living with HIV,” said Benson.

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