

UC San Diego Receives Major Clinical and Translational Science Award

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With \$37.2 million grant, Institute will speed medical progress, from concept to completion

The University of California, San Diego Health Sciences and its expanding Clinical and Translational Research Institute (CTRI) have received a five-year, \$37.2 million Clinical and Translational Science Award from the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR), part of the National Institutes of Health.

UC San Diego joins an elite consortium of institutions in a national network dedicated to improving biomedical research by accelerating the application of laboratory discoveries into effective treatments for patients, more actively engaging communities in clinical research, and by training future generations of varied types of clinical and translational researchers.

“Medical science is evolving and growing exponentially. The need and demand for creative research projects, programs and people who can translate this basic research into real, beneficial therapies and treatments will only increase,” said David Brenner, MD, vice chancellor for health sciences and dean of the School of Medicine at UC San Diego.

“UC San Diego has a long, proven track record in translational science. From the Moores Cancer Center and the many research institutes on campus to our deep involvement in major clinical trials and status as one of the nation’s top teaching hospitals, the university has established itself as a vital hub for this kind of inspired work. This grant allows us, with the CTRI leading the way, to push ahead in new and even more imaginative ways, to advance medical research further, faster.”

Launched in 2006, the NCRR’s Clinical and Translational Science Awards program emphasizes interdisciplinary collaboration among scientists and innovative approaches that resolve difficult medical challenges.

About the CTRI

The mission of UC San Diego’s Clinical and Translational Research Institute is ambitious, yet also grounded in real-world needs and expectations, said Gary S. Firestein, MD, professor of medicine,

dean of translational medicine at UC San Diego's School of Medicine and director of CTRI.

"The institute will produce not just outstanding science, but also translate the discoveries into improved health care, enhanced well-being and prevention," said Firestein who is also the principle investigator of the CTSA grant. "We are bringing together the best people possible, from diverse disciplines and institutions, to work in an open, flexible and dynamic environment that allows them to fully bring their talents and strengths to bear upon the health care needs and problems of the day."

The institute emphasizes five primary goals:

- Establish and refine a multidisciplinary educational pipeline that trains and supports clinical and translational scientists in a fast-changing field
- Develop a robust – and integrated – clinical research infrastructure that includes research tools and cores like statistics and informatics to produce and analyze data
- Create novel technologies that improve research and push science forward, in particular focusing on new imaging techniques and biomarker analysis to improve efficiency of testing innovative therapies
- Form innovative translational research alliances with other institutes and with industry
- Establish partnerships with community physicians and the public to translate scientific discoveries into best practices, improve research into health care disparities, and engage and educate citizens in biomedical science.

Success will come with plenty of help. CTRI involves four professional schools of health sciences spanning two universities: the School of Medicine and the Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences at UC San Diego and the School of Nursing and School of Public Health at San Diego State University (SDSU).

Other partners include the UC San Diego Medical Center, the UC San Diego Rady School of Management, the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, the Sanford/Burnham Institute for Medical Research, the J. Craig Venter Institute; the La Jolla Institute for Allergy & Immunology; the Rady Children's Hospital Research Center, the Veterans Administration Medical Center in La Jolla and Palomar Pomerado Health System.

The institute also draws upon three powerful computing resources: the San Diego Supercomputer Center, the California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Cal IT2) and the UC San Diego division of biomedical informatics.

Education is a major element of CTRI. There are local as well as distance learning programs at various levels. The CTRI will be a coordinating center for PhD degree programs in bioinformatics, clinical psychology, public health (including epidemiology, health behavior and global health),

audiology and hearing sciences, pharmaceutical sciences, biostatistics, and language and communicative disorders. Many of these are dual programs with SDSU.

“We will reach out and involve diverse and disparate disciplines and experts, in academia, industry and the general public. The CTRI will reinvent clinical and translational science education by providing guidance and programs for high school students through post-doctoral fellows and faculty,” said Dilip Jeste, MD, CTRI director of education, training and career programs, director of the Stein Institute for Research on Aging and a professor of psychiatry and neurosciences in the UC San Diego School of Medicine.

Also involved will be the Jacobs School of Engineering, including the new Institute of Engineering in Medicine and the von Liebig Center for Entrepreneurism and Technology Advancement, as well as numerous other institutes and centers on campus that support translational research.

“The CTRI will transform clinical research by providing guidance and support at every stage of research and development, from the initial idea to creating novel technologies to conducting clinical trials and moving these new treatments to the community,” said Michael G. Ziegler, MD, director of the CTRI’s Concept to Completion Program, former director of the General Clinical Research Center and a professor of medicine in the School of Medicine.

Ziegler said assistance, guidance and support will be given to researchers at all stages of their careers. “We want to help young scientists and established researchers across the region who have good ideas but insufficient resources. They will be able to get important training and access to sophisticated laboratories, tools and people who can help them pursue projects to fruition.”

Plans call for the full vision of CTRI to take more tangible form with a new 292,000-square-foot building erected adjacent to the planned Jacobs Medical Center, a 10-story, 490,000-square-foot facility, scheduled to open on UC San Diego’s east campus in La Jolla in 2016. The proposed CTRI structure would include a connecting skyway – a physical link from basic science to real-world medicine.

For additional information about the CTRI, visit <http://ctri.ucsd.edu/> .

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