



A collaboration between
Northwest Kidney Centers and UW Medicine



A Message from the Director

Ian de Boer, MD

The KRI is making remarkable progress in its mission to conduct research that improves the lives of people with kidney disease. This progress is attributable to the dedication, skill, and hard work of the people who make the KRI thrive – its supporters, advisors, study participants, staff, trainees, and investigators.

In this newsletter, you'll read about some of these incredible people. We highlight the KRI Scientific Advisory Committee, which has provided invaluable strategic direction since the KRI's inception and reconvened in person for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. We pay tribute to Sam Pederson, a founding member of the KRI Patient Advisory Committee and consummate advocate for patients living with kidney disease. We spotlight some of the people who facilitate KRI research at Northwest Kidney Centers, including Dr. Matthew Rivara, a KRI Investigator who has taken on the role of Chief Medical Officer at Northwest Kidney Centers and will play a key role collaboratively building new resources for dialysis research. And we discuss the KRI registry, a group of patients with kidney disease who have volunteered themselves for kidney research. Led by new Principal Investigator Dr. Leila Zelnick, the KRI registry is a key vehicle to accomplish our vision that every available patient with kidney disease will be informed about, participate in, and benefit from research.

As always, this newsletter also contains updates on the exciting research coming out of the KRI. Since our last newsletter, many innovative research projects have been completed. We spotlight Dr. Chris Blosser's work on CAR T-cell therapy care for post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder as one of these accomplishments. In addition, the KRI passed a major milestone, with more than 2000 manuscripts now published in peer-reviewed journals.

Thank you for your role in supporting the KRI.
Together we are making a difference.

ON THE HORIZON

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Scientific Advisory Committee reconvenes at the KRI

The KRI's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) has provided invaluable strategic direction since the KRI's inception. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, annual SAC meetings were held virtually starting in 2020. But the SAC reconvened in person in Seattle for its fall, 2023 installation.

The KRI is fortunate to have an incredibly distinguished group of accomplished researchers serve on the SAC. Returning this year were Joseph Bonventre, MD, PhD (Chief of the Renal Division, Brigham and Women's Hospital), Carla Greenbaum, MD (Director of the Benaroya Research Institute Center for Interventional Immunology), Adeera Levin, MD (Head of the Division of Nephrology, University of British Columbia), Neil Powe, MD, MPH, MBA (Chief of Medicine at the Zuckerberg San Francisco General

Hospital), and Bonnie Ramsey, MD (Vice Chair for Research, Seattle Children's Hospital), with continuing member Glenn Chertow, MD, MPH (Chief of the Division of Nephrology, Stanford) planning to attend in 2024. In addition, Morgan Grams, MD, PhD (Director of the Division of Precision Medicine at New York University) joined as a new member. The KRI acknowledges with great appreciation the contributions of two members who rotated off of the SAC this year: Thomas Coffman, MD (Dean of Duke-National University of Singapore Medical School) and Russel Tracy, PhD (University of Vermont Distinguished Professor and Division Chief, Division of Molecular Epidemiology, Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine).

The SAC heard updates from KRI leadership and scientific presentations

from 8 KRI investigators and trainees, which covered the spectrum of topics and methods addressed by KRI research.

Overall, the SAC was impressed with the depth, breadth, and continued success of the KRI, citing outstanding investigators and presentations, a consistent high level of grant funding from an increasingly diverse group of federal sources, impactful scientific impact with more than 2000 manuscripts now published in peer-reviewed journals, success in training the next set of kidney researchers, ongoing commitment to diversity throughout the research process, and an amazing list of national and international accolades for KRI members. The SAC offered strategic advice for enhancing KRI's strengths and plans to reconvene fall, 2024.

Sam M. Pederson A Humble Kidney Warrior



July 26, 1943 -
June 20, 2023

With heavy hearts, we announce the passing of Sam Pederson.

With poise and grace, Sam was a lifelong advocate for people living with kidney diseases.

He was one of the inaugural members of the KRI's Patient Advisory Board founded in 2016. A kidney transplant recipient and former peritoneal dialysis patient, Sam was one of two patient representatives, (along with Celeste Lee), to serve on the inaugural Kidney Health Initiative (KHI) Board of Directors from 2013 to 2015. Together, they founded the KHI Patient and Family Partnership Council.

Following a joint Capitol Hill Day event with American Society of Nephrology, while servicing as president of the

American Association of Kidney Patients, Sam spoke about the impact of patient advocacy. "Collaborating to raise congressional awareness about kidney disease and ask lawmakers to take the steps our organizations believe would help patients with kidney disease was a great success," he said.

While Sam demonstrated strong leadership in terms of patient-engagement, he also enjoyed a stellar career as an executive in the high technology industry and in government contract acquisition and performance. Semi-retired at the time of his passing, Sam served on myriad non-profit Boards and spent more than 14 years as an executive coach for CEOs of small to mid-size companies. Always willing to share his experience, he co-authored a book on software project management.

Sam was loved by us all.
We will miss him.

A Tribute to Denise Cobb and Mary McHugh



Denise Cobb



Mary McHugh

This past year we lost two amazing women from our Northwest Kidney Centers community. Mary and Denise were both longtime NKC employees who were pillars of the organization. They each took ownership of fostering the collaboration between NKC and the Kidney Research Institute from the very beginning, by facilitating and advocating for the importance of research for patients with kidney disease. We wish to acknowledge the tremendous contribution they each provided to the mission and purpose of the KRI.

Exciting New Method of Treating Cancer in Solid Organ Transplant Recipients



Dr. Christopher Blosser

Solid organ transplant is the most effective method of treating end-stage organ failure, but it requires life-long immunosuppression (IS)¹. And, because of the IS, more solid organ transplant recipients develop cancer and are dying from it. This is because IS lessens the control of cancer-causing viruses and cancer

itself. Post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder (PTLD), a type of blood cancer, is a leading cause of cancer death in transplant recipients.

The standard treatment for PTLD works for ~80% of patients, but the other 20% who are resistant to therapy have a high rate of death and require novel treatment. An exciting new method of treating PTLD is Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell therapy, where doctors remove the patient's T-cells, modify them to attack a protein on the cancer cells, and then return them to the patient. These modified cells activate an immune response in the patient that fights the cancer.

CAR T-cell therapy is rapidly progressing, and there are new ways of using it for other blood cancers and solid tumors as well as to establish tolerance to an organ transplant. The Center for Innovations in Cancer & Transplant (CICT) and colleagues at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center (FHCC) are helping to lead this effort. Dr. Christopher Blosser leads the Cancer and Organ Transplant Clinic at FHCC and successfully treated the 17th patient in the world with CAR-T therapy for PTLD. "Until recently, the use of CAR T-cell therapy for PTLD had been largely unknown," says Christopher Blosser. Learn more about this work through these links, CAR-T therapy, FHCC blog and CICT.

Dr. Blosser and Dr. Andrew Portuguese, Assistant Professor, FHCC and UW Division of Hematology, and colleagues just received a Kuni Foundation Imagination Grant to continue their research focused on PTLD tumor markers that may predict whether a patient will respond to standard therapy or CAR T cell therapy at time of diagnosis.

1. Portuguese AJ, Gauthier1 J, Tykodi SS, Hall ET, Hirayama AV, Yeung CC, Blosser CD. CD19 CAR-T therapy in solid organ transplant recipients: case report and systematic review. *Bone Marrow Transplantation* 2023;58:353–359.

In the news

- **Dr. Jonathan Himmelfarb** and other KRI investigators in the Kidney Precision Medicine Project published seminal papers in *Nature* and *Nature Communications* that present an "atlas" of healthy and injured kidney cells for use by the scientific community at large.
- **Dr. Raj Mehrotra** is the lead author of "Effectiveness of Existing Insomnia Therapies for Patients Undergoing Hemodialysis: A Randomized Clinical Trial," published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*.
- **Dr. Bessie Young** co-authored "Genome-wide study investigating effector genes and polygenic prediction for kidney function in persons with ancestry from Africa and the Americas" in *Cell Genomics*.
- **Dr. Simon Hsu** published a comprehensive study of bone fracture risks for people with chronic kidney diseases in the *American Journal of Kidney Diseases*. KRI co-authors include Drs. Christine Limonte, Leila Zelnick, Bryan Kestenbaum, and Ian de Boer.
- **Dr. Matthew Rivara** was appointed Chief Medical Officer of Northwest Kidney Centers.
- **Dr. Raj Mehrotra** is the new Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of the American Society of Nephrology (JASN)* and Senior Editor-in-Chief for the *ASN Journal Portfolio* (2024 – 2029).
- **Dr. Susan Wong** was selected as a Fulbright Distinguished Professor to the United Kingdom for the 2024-2025 academic year.
- **Dr. Pavan Bhatraju** was honored with the 2024 Western Association of Physicians and Western Society for Clinical Investigation Outstanding Investigator Award.
- **Glenda Roberts** received the Celeste Lee Award, the highest honor given by the National Kidney Foundation for patient activism.
- Four KRI investigators received prestigious American Society of Nephrology awards at Kidney Week: **Dr. Beno Freedman** the Donald W. Seldin Young Investigator Award, **Dr. Kathy Tuttle** the John P. Peters Award, **Dr. Ann O'Hare** the Distinguished Mentor Award, and **Dr. Ian de Boer** the Distinguished Researcher Award.
- Congratulations to 2024 KRI "graduates!" These research coordinators will continue their education at the University of Washington: **Julia Hallowell (UW medical school)**, **Kaeleb Laszlo, (UW physician's assistant school)**, **Caitlin Gard** and **Sydney Johnson (UW registered nursing school)**.
- **Drs. Bryan Kestenbaum, Leila Zelnick and David Prince** launched the UW Clinical Research Methods Course, geared toward fellows in medicine and pediatrics.



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Join KRI's Research Study Registry

The Kidney Research Institute (KRI) at the University of Washington (UW) has created a research study registry aimed at all areas of kidney research from chronic kidney disease to patients on dialysis. We want to give everyone who would like to take part in a KRI-sponsored study information about new studies for which they may be eligible. Many of you are already taking part in the Registry or a KRI-sponsored study or both!

We would like to introduce the new Principal Investigator for the Registry, Dr. Leila Zelnick. Dr. Zelnick leads our statistics program here at the KRI. She has many skills to bring to the oversight of the Registry. Welcome Dr. Zelnick!

The goal of this registry is to improve outreach to patients like you, who may be interested in participating in a research study. If we have a study that we think you may be eligible for, we'll contact you. Taking part in a study is voluntary and you are not obligated to take part. In any case, it's a wonderful way to give back to the community and to learn more about the latest directions in kidney research.

Currently, over 2000 patients from the UW have participated. If you are currently a part of the Registry, we thank you. If you're not yet a part of the Registry, we invite you to join us in this important project.

If you are interested in learning more, please submit to our participant registry for future studies at:

<https://redcap.iths.org/surveys/>
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