



(Clockwise from left) Northwest Kidney Center CEO Emeritus Joyce Jackson at her goodbye reception. The 2019 Kidney Research Institute Patient Advisory Committee with KRI Director Jonathan Himmelfarb. From L to R: Glenda V. Roberts, Tami Sadusky, Jonathan Himmelfarb, Bobbi Wagner, Sam Pedersen, Molly Boll, Marla Levy, Mat Risher, Kevin Fowler. PAC member Marla Levy speaks on her personal experience with kidney disease.

## Continued Growth, Changes and the Road Ahead

A message from the director

### DR. JONATHAN HIMMELFARB

The Kidney Research Institute has had a productive and fulfilling 2019. In May and September we held our annual Patient Advisory Committee and Scientific Advisory Committee meetings, both of which have become cornerstones for KRI oversight and research dissemination.

The KRI continues to expand the breadth of its research, with many new studies launching focused on kidney disease research and its interaction with other diseases. In June, investigator Nisha Bansal launched the ATRIA-CKD study, a multi-site study which will look at atrial fibrillation therapies in chronic kidney disease patients. Investigator Raj Mehrotra recently received funding through the NIH HEAL initiative to study interventions to reduce prescription opioid use for patients with kidney failure. Over 150 articles by Kidney Research Institute investigators were published in scientific journals in 2019. Investigator Ian de Boer recently published the results from vitamin D research in the Journal of the American Medical Association, and also presented the results at Kidney Week in Washington, D.C. Many other KRI investigators presented at this year's Kidney Week as well.

This fall, the KRI wished a fond farewell to Northwest Kidney Center's CEO Emeritus Joyce Jackson, who retired after leading NKC for over 20 years. I was privileged to help unveil the newly renamed research space in her honor. We are grateful to Joyce for her years of support.

**TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH  
INNOVATION AND DISCOVERY**

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## KRI Investigator Raj Mehrotra receives NIH funding to study as part of HEAL Initiative

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has launched a widespread initiative to help people with opioid addiction.

The “Helping to End Addiction Long-term” (HEAL) Initiative has established a set of research priorities that may help provide solutions to the national opioid public health crisis. The HEAL Initiative is funding \$945 million in 375 funding awards to researchers across 41 states.

The initiative has funded a multi-center project, Hemodialysis Opioid Prescription Effort (HOPE), to test interventions to manage pain and reduce prescription opioid use for patients with kidney failure; the Kidney Research Institute will serve as a Clinical Center led by Raj Mehrotra to enroll patients into the study. The research will focus on patients undergoing long-term dialysis who have chronic pain needing opioids. Patients undergoing long-term hemodialysis are more likely to use prescription opioids in comparison to the general population. Interested patients will be enrolled in a clinical trial at the University of Washington, where multiple strategies will be used to see if they can help patients discontinue prescription opioid use. The strategies that will be used include cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) or CBT supplemented with another medical alternative.

“We have long recognized that many patients undergoing long-term hemodialysis suffer from chronic pain; the HOPE initiative will be the first large scale assessment of opioid reducing and sparing strategies for managing pain for this patient population”, according to Dr. Raj Mehrotra.

Dr. Mehrotra will serve as principal investigator for this study, along with two co-investigators. The research team is partnering with five nonprofit dialysis providers in the Seattle, Albuquerque and New York metropolitan areas to allow for more diverse enrollment.

The Kidney Research Institute commends Dr. Mehrotra and his research team for their crucial work to improve the quality of life for patients undergoing long-term dialysis.



*Dr. Raj Mehrotra*

## Kidney Research Institute investigator Nisha Bansal launches study on atrial fibrillation in chronic kidney disease (CKD) patients



*Dr. Nisha Bansal*

In June, Dr. Nisha Bansal kicked off the “Optimizing Atrial Fibrillation Management in CKD” (ATRIA-CKD) study.

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a type of heart arrhythmia that affects many Americans. Rates of AF are three times higher in chronic kidney disease patients compared to the general population. Despite these high-rates, the influence of AF therapies has not been well-studied in CKD.

The ATRIA-CKD study will look at data from over 650,000 people to evaluate the risk and benefits of types of atrial fibrillation therapies in patients who have chronic kidney disease. Dr. Bansal will serve as principal investigator for this multi-site study that includes sites in both the US and Canada. KRI research coordinator and project manager Linda Manahan will provide oversight and coordination for the study. “CKD patients who have AF are at higher risk of developing other types of cardiovascular disease as well as losing kidney function. We hope this study will provide insight on how best to use clinically available AF therapies to improve outcomes in patients with CKD” notes Dr. Bansal.

The data from this study will be used to inform future clinical trials on AF and CKD, and may provide clinical guidance on AF management for people living with CKD.

## Research Suite Named In Honor of Joyce F. Jackson, Northwest Kidney Centers (NKC) CEO Emeritus



CEO Emeritus Joyce Jackson with Drs. Jonathan Himmelfarb and Suzanne Watnick at the dedication of the Joyce F. Jackson Research Suite.

It was great to see so many familiar faces at the farewell reception for Northwest Kidney Centers' CEO Emeritus Joyce Jackson. At the ceremony, Dr. Jonathan Himmelfarb, director of the Kidney Research Institute, and Dr. Suzanne Watnick, NKC's chief medical officer, helped unveil the Joyce F. Jackson Research Suite. The newly named suite is located in the Haviland Pavilion, 700 Broadway in Seattle, Washington.

After leading NKC for more than 21 years, Joyce retired on November 1. "It has been an honor and privilege to serve as CEO of the world's first dialysis program and one of the few nonprofit providers in our field," Jackson said. "We have a proud history but, more importantly, we are evolving and changing with the times to be strong and relevant for the future."

"Research has fueled our work since the very beginning. From developing the world's first home dialysis program to introducing revolutionary new treatments, our progress is rooted in the pioneering work of doctors and scientists," Jackson continues. Since she joined in 1998, NKC expanded its mission statement to include "research." Joyce played a pivotal role in the founding of the Kidney Research Institute (KRI), a collaboration between Northwest Kidney Centers and UW Medicine, and she spurred NKC to provide a grant that launched the Center for Dialysis Innovation, also a collaboration between Northwest Kidney Centers and UW Medicine.

Honoring her contributions, Jackson has been recognized with local, state and national awards, including the American Association of Kidney Patients' 2018 Samuel J. Orenstein Award for service and contributions to the kidney community; the 2017 Distinguished Alumni Award from the University of Washington Graduate Program in Health Services Administration; and the 2014 Seattle Business Magazine Healthcare Executive of the Year. The KRI will be forever grateful to Joyce for her leadership and her extensive knowledge of kidney disease research and treatment, dialysis, and transplantation that she brought to our formation. We wish her well in her future endeavors.

## 📰 Also in the news

- Rajnish Mehrotra is the recipient of the **2019 American Nephrologists of Indian Origin Award of Academic Excellence**.
- Nisha Bansal is the inaugural recipient of the **Arthur Stach Family Endowed Professorship**, which recognizes excellence in research and teaching.
- Glenda Roberts received the 2019 American Association of Kidney Patient's **National Patient Engagement & Advocacy "National Voice Award"**
- Glenda Roberts was recently nominated to serve on the **Kidney Health Initiative Patient & Family Partnership Council** beginning January, 2020.
- KRI Scientific Advisory Meeting was held on September 9-10 in Seattle
- Rajnish Mehrotra was selected for the **2019 AAKP National Journalism Award**



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**FEATURED SPOTLIGHT**

## Results on Vitamin D research by Kidney Research Institute Investigator Ian de Boer published in JAMA

Results from the Vitamin D and Omega-3 Trial to Prevent and Treat Diabetic Kidney Disease (VITAL-DKD), led by KRI Associate Director Dr. Ian de Boer, were published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) this November.

The study looked at adults with type 2 diabetes to study whether vitamin D or omega-3 fatty acid supplements help prevent development or progression of kidney disease. Chronic kidney disease is a common complication of type 2 diabetes, and there are few treatments to help prevent CKD. 1,312 participants with type 2 diabetes were enrolled in this clinical trial. The supplements (or matching placebos) were taken for 5 years, and blood and urine samples were collected repeatedly over time to examine changes in estimated glomerular filtration rate and urine albumin excretion. KRI Laboratory Manager John Ruzinski made all of the study measurements in the KRI lab, and KRI Biostatistician and Investigator Leila Zelnick led the data analysis.

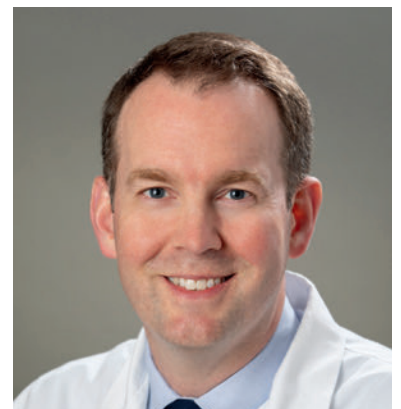
The study found that neither vitamin D nor omega-3 fatty acid supplements slowed loss of glomerular filtration rate, and there were also no benefits on urine albumin excretion. Dr. de Boer remarked that "We were hopeful that one or both of these supplements would give patients an easily obtained, inexpensive,

and safe option to help prevent diabetic kidney disease. Experimental data and observational studies supported that hypothesis.

But the study showed clearly that neither supplement helps prevent kidney disease in type 2 diabetes. The definitive result is helpful because it tells us to focus our research efforts and clinical resources elsewhere."

The results were presented at the Late-Breaking Clinical Trials Session of ASN Kidney Week and have been featured in articles from various medical news outlets, including Healio and Medscape.

This clinical trial was funded by the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI).



*Dr. Ian de Boer*