



The Kidney Research Institute at our 15-year retreat

KRI Celebrates 15 Years of World-Class Research

Ian de Boer, MD

As the KRI turns 15, it continues to excel in its mission to improve the lives of people living with kidney disease through transformative research. KRI investigators, trainees, and staff congregated on May 8 to celebrate 15 years of accomplishments and think ahead to the next 15 years of innovation. It was a heartening day of community, affirming core values, and planning for a robust future of discovery.

In this issue of the KRI newsletter, you'll read about some of the many new accomplishments of the people who make the KRI such an innovative and impactful place. These include high-impact scientific publications from investigators across the KRI and a feature on Susan Wong's blossoming research program on optimizing patient-centered kidney care that leads the way nationally.

Collaboration and community are key to the success of the KRI. Since our last newsletter, new projects have been initiated spanning pathology and laboratory medicine, pharmaceuticals, cancer care, cardiology, critical care medicine, endocrinology, public health, and more. This newsletter spotlights a collaborative study in which KRI research coordinators worked closely with nurses at Northwest Kidney Centers to pilot new technology to facilitate home dialysis. The KRI Patient Advisory Committee (PAC) is a vibrant link to patients, and we honor Mat Risher of the KRI PAC, who passed away this year after making many contributions to our community.

The KRI is committed to enhancing diversity in kidney research. This newsletter contains a spotlight on two new KRI research coordinators who speak fluent Spanish. Evelin Jones and Luisa Rios Avila have already enrolled many Spanish-speaking kidney patients who would not otherwise have been able to participate in KRI studies, helping deliver on our vision to ensure that every patient with kidney disease will be informed about, participate in, and benefit from research. I am grateful for your continued support of the KRI and hope you enjoy this edition of the KRI newsletter.

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Enhancing Diversity in Kidney Research

Kidney diseases affect people from all walks of life. To ensure that everyone with kidney disease benefits from research, it's essential to include diverse populations in research studies. This ensures that research findings are applicable to more patients and allows more people to benefit from the research process.

Language is a common barrier to research participation. Most clinical studies require a thorough informed consent process and several questionnaires, which can be daunting even through a translator.

Evelin Jones, BS, and Luisa Rios Avila, PhD, recently joined the KRI as research coordinators, bringing substantial experience in healthcare and native

Spanish language skills to our team. Evelin worked in clinical care at Swedish Hospital prior to joining the KRI, a move she made from her desire to improve care for patients everywhere, particularly those who are underserved. She splits her time working on the Blood Sugar Sensing On Maintenance Dialysis (BLOSSOM) study of continuous glucose monitoring for dialysis patients and CGM LATINX study based at the University of Washington Diabetes Institute examining behaviors of blood glucose control for Spanish-speaking patients. Luisa Rios Avila worked as a nutrition scientist in academia and as a consultant for the NIH Office of Dietary Supplements, and came to the KRI to focus on patient-oriented research, with an interest in working with the Hispanic population. She joined the Home and Online Management and Evaluation of Blood Pressure (HOME-BP) trial team, which examines optimal blood pressure targets for patients treated with hemodialysis.

Evelin and Luisa have already had a marked impact on research at the KRI. They have recruited over 40 Spanish-speaking patients into KRI studies, most of whom may not have participated without the skills and advocacy that Evelin and Luisa bring. The KRI is thrilled to welcome Evelin and Luisa to our team and excited about the opportunities they bring to enhance kidney research.



Evelin Jones, BS, and Luisa Rios Avila, PhD

A Tribute to Mat Risher

In August 2022, KRI Patient Advisory Committee (PAC) member Mathew ("Mat") David Risher passed away. Mat is remembered as a valued and thoughtful member of the PAC for four years and will be missed by the Kidney Research Institute.

At 16, Mat was diagnosed with lupus. A decade later his kidneys failed. Like many people, Mat found dialysis took both a physical and emotional toll. He wished "there were a treatment option that did not 'slow down' his life." Dialysis devastated his social life. He longed for visitors during his treatments. He said he understood that seeing the dialysis machine made people feel uncomfortable.

Mat was a passionate advocate for improvements in dialysis treatments and therapies that aligned with patient

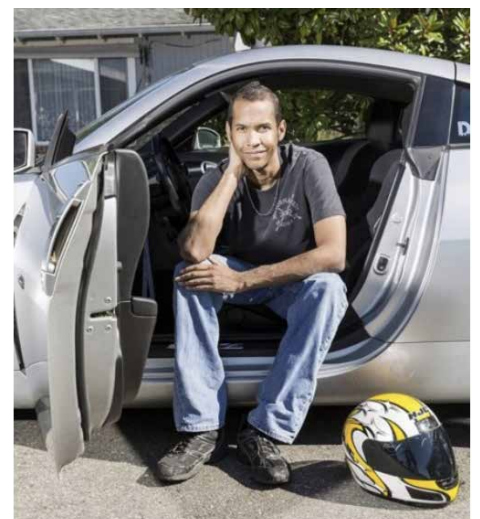
priorities. He looked forward to the day that his dialysis treatment did not get in the way of the things he really wanted to do - to travel and see the world. To that end, he actively contributed to the research discussions at every KRI PAC meeting, and he joined the Patient Advisory Board for the Center for Dialysis Innovation, that is developing a wearable dialysis machine.

Mat refused to let kidney disease define him. Even when he had to sell his beloved car to cover his living expenses because dialysis made it difficult for him to work, Mat continued to hope that his "life would be transformed and once again, speed up to 100 miles per hour."

Around the Puget Sound, Mat was known as "the voice of Pacific Northwest drifting" for events at Evergreen Speedway and PGP Motorsports Park. Mat proclaimed, "I am the energetic essence that grabs the attention of spectators; the Master of Ceremonies that has led crowds in the

thousands through opening and closing processions."

We will miss Mat's energetic essence. Paul T. Conway, a member of the KRI PAC, reflects our shared sentiments, "The kidney community, his friends and his family have lost a bright and engaging force for good in a world that needs more heroes like Mat."



Mat Risher

New Technology Collaboration with Northwest Kidney Centers

With the support of Northwest Kidney Centers (NKC), the Kidney Research Institute is collaborating with Quanta Dialysis Technologies (Quanta) on the HOME RUN SC+ study. HOME RUN is a multi-location study that is designed to validate the safety and efficacy of a new dialysis machine, the SC+, designed for home use. The goal of this study is to receive Food and Drug Administration (FDA) clearance of the SC+ machine, bring it to the US market, and thereby offer more home hemodialysis machine options to patients.

The NKC-KRI collaboration is one of 14 participating centers around the country enrolling patients in this research program. According to Quanta, individuals taking part will visit their local participating center to receive hemodialysis treatment over a four to-eight-week period, followed by a home transition week and a course of home hemodialysis treatments for eight more weeks. Individuals will then be given the option to continue with the SC+ System in the home setting for a period not to exceed one and a half years or until FDA clearance is granted for home use.

Dr. Suzanne Watnick is the study principal investigator and oversees all study activities. She ensures that this and all studies conform to our high standards for research safety. Implementation of this study is made possible with the support of two outstanding Northwest Kidney Centers Home Program Nurse Managers, Teresa Graham, RN and Marcy Valencia, RN.

KRI would like to thank Dr. Watnick for her leadership. We are especially grateful to Teresa and Marcy for their leadership and nursing skills in training the patients who participate in this study, on the SC+ machine. The outcome of this research effort is expected to produce high quality results that drive the uptake of the right dialysis modality for the right patients.



Marcy Valencia, RN and Teresa Graham, RN

In the news

- **Dr. Christine Limonte**, recently appointed Assistant Professor, was awarded a K23 career development award to study autophagy in diabetic kidney disease.
- **Courtney Vishy** successfully defended her PhD dissertation, “Leveraging cellular models of polycystic kidney disease for mechanistic discovery and therapeutic development,” on March 3, 2023.
- **Dr. Beno Freedman** authored “Glucose Absorption Drives Cystogenesis in a Human Organoid-on-chip Model of Polycystic Kidney Disease” in *Nature Communications*.
- **Dr. Stuart Shankland** authored “Loss of Epigenetic Information as a Cause of Mammalian Aging” in *Cell*.
- **Drs. Susan Wong, Kate Butler, Yoshio Hall, and Ann O’Hare** co-authored “Values Around Life Prolongation: A Prospective Study of Patients Treated with Maintenance Dialysis” in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.
- **Dr. Charlie E. Alpers**, professor, received the International Society of Nephrology Roscoe R. Robinson Award, which acknowledges outstanding achievements in the field of education in nephrology and medicine.
- **Dr. Jonathan Himmelfarb and Glenda V. Roberts** were recognized by President Joseph R. Biden with U.S. Presidential Volunteer Service Awards gold medals.
- **Dr. Susan Wong**, associate professor (Nephrology) is quoted in “Comfort Favored Over Life Prolongation in Dialysis Population” in *Renal and Urology News*.
- **Dr. Leo Morales**, professor (General Internal Medicine) is quoted in “Latinos in Washington Likely Suffering Silently from Long COVID” in the *South Seattle Herald*.
- **Dr. Katherine Tuttle** authored “Post hoc analysis of SUSTAIN 6 and PIONEER 6 trials suggests that people with type 2 diabetes at high cardiovascular risk treated with semaglutide experience more stable kidney function compared with placebo” in *Kidney International*.
- **Glenda V. Roberts** is quoted in “Dialysis Was Hell to Me” in *Kidney News Online*.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Director's Message
PAGE 1

Enhancing Diversity

A Tribute to Mat Risher
PAGE 2

Quanta Study

In the News
PAGE 3

Patient-Centered Care at KRI
PAGE 4

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Patient-Centered Care moves forward at KRI

Dr. Susan Wong, MD MS, has completed a national survey study of nephrology providers (nephrologists and advanced practice providers) about their experiences with caring for patients who do not want or are unable to receive kidney replacement therapy, and their capacity to provide conservative kidney management (CKM) to these patients. CKM is a planned, holistic, and person-centered approach to care that focuses predominantly on promoting quality of life through intensive symptom management, advance care planning, and psychosocial and caregiver support. Preliminary findings show that many providers reported limited experience with providing CKM and were not equipped to provide its whole-person approach to care. "Understanding the challenges that providers face is a necessary first step to creating solutions to improve provider training and care services for patients with kidney disease," says Dr. Wong. Towards this end, Dr. Wong was recently awarded a 4-year \$1.5 million grant from the Veterans Affairs to launch a home-based multidisciplinary care program for patients with advanced kidney disease who have chosen CKM.

The national survey study on CKM was spearheaded by Julie Chotivatanapong, BS. Ms. Chotivatanapong dove into kidney disease research as a KRI summer intern in 2018 after learning that close family members were affected by kidney disease. After graduating from Tufts University, she returned to the KRI and joined Dr. Wong's research team. "Julie represents the future of nephrology. We are lucky to have her on our team. She brings passion and invaluable perspective to our work." Ms. Chotivatanapong presented the findings of the survey study at the April 2023 National Kidney Foundation Spring Clinical Meeting.



Dr. Susan Wong, MD MS



Julie Chotivatanapong, BS