



UCSF Department of Medicine ZUCKERBERG SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL

NEW LEADERS AT THE FRONTIER OF MEDICINE

Three amazing faculty members assumed leadership roles in the ZSFG Department of Medicine in the last several months. Four remarkable Department of Medicine staff were honored for their outstanding service. We share their background and their passion for being part of the ZSFG and UCSF community.

Humans vs. Pathogens

The Division of Experimental Medicine was founded in 2006 to tackle chronic infectious diseases, including tuberculosis (TB), HIV and malaria. Professor



Dr. Joel Ernst

of Medicine Joel Ernst, MD, was recently appointed as division chief to lead the next chapter of discoveries.

“The biggest similarity among these diseases is that they are massive killers of humanity,” said Dr. Ernst. “While the pathogens are quite different,

we focus on the host immune response as a unifying theme. That gives [our researchers] a common language to speak with each other, and allows us to share resources, such as the Core Immunology Laboratory, which is equipped with cutting-edge instrumentation.”

Dr. Ernst first came to UCSF as an internal medicine resident in 1978, and began his fellowship in infectious diseases just as AIDS was emerging. He completed additional fellowships at UCSF in hematology-oncology and white blood cell biology, then joined the UCSF faculty before leading the division of infectious diseases at New York University School of Medicine.

His own research has focused on TB. “We want to know why the immune system doesn’t do a better job at controlling the infection, and how we can tilt the balance so the patient wins rather than the bacteria,” said Dr. Ernst. He is currently focused on helping develop an effective TB vaccine.

As chief of the Division of Experimental Medicine, Dr. Ernst hopes to build upon its highly collaborative and multidisciplinary approach, and to expand partnerships. The division collaborates with investigators across UCSF, as well as in Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America.

He is also interested in learning from colleagues in related fields such as cancer. “Tumor immunology has some similarities with the beasts that we’re trying to fight, and we can learn from paying attention to advances in that field,” said Dr. Ernst. “There are also systems biology approaches that are emerging, and not surprisingly, UCSF is a leader in them.”

The opportunity to work with other outstanding TB researchers at ZSFG, as well as the uniquely collaborative environment, were big factors in his decision to return to San Francisco. “There are so many incredible people at ZSFG,” said Dr. Ernst. “They have lots of options, and they choose to be here. I’m thrilled to be part of that culture again, and hopefully I can contribute to making this place even stronger.”

Bringing Cancer Treatments to Patients

Immunotherapy and precision medicine have revolutionized cancer treatments. Associate Professor of

Clinical Medicine Terence Friedlander, MD, the new chief of the ZSFG Division of Hematology-Oncology, is excited to bring these cutting-edge therapies to vulnerable populations.

“We’re a mile away from an NCI [National Cancer Institute]-designated cancer center, but we have just a handful of [cancer] clinical trials here,” said Dr. Friedlander, who is also Associate Director for ZSFG of the UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center. “It’s a shame, because the patients don’t get access to the latest therapies. I want to bridge that divide.”



Dr. Terence Friedlander

He plans to hire research coordinators who speak Spanish or Cantonese, and to expand partnerships with ZSFG’s patient navigator program – in which staff provide extra support, such as accompanying patients to appointments and helping them understand their medications. Dr. Friedlander will also collaborate with UCSF investigators to improve enrollment among underserved populations, such as African-American men with prostate cancer.

“Some people may think you can’t accrue patients to clinical trials at the County, but the Positive Health Program is one of the top accruers to HIV studies across the country,” he said. “Right now we can refer patients out for clinical trials, but I think it’s better to bring therapies to them. They benefit from the support at ZSFG – our social workers, patient navigators and staff are amazing.”

Because most cancer studies have between 60 and 80 percent Caucasian enrollment, ZSFG’s patients could also help researchers learn more about whether the genetics and drivers of cancer vary based on race



and ethnicity.

Dr. Friedlander is enthusiastic about his division's ongoing research efforts, including work led by Associate Professor Niharika Dixit, MD, optimizing the transition from oncology to primary care after a patient completes cancer treatment, investigations about challenges facing sickle cell anemia patients, and pioneering studies led by Assistant Professor Jackie Wang, MD, and Professor of Clinical Dermatology Toby Maurer, MD, injecting immunotherapy directly into Kaposi sarcoma, a skin cancer associated with immune deficiencies like HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Friedlander completed his internal medicine residency as well as fellowships in hematology-oncology and urologic oncology at UCSF, and joined the UCSF faculty in 2011. He has conducted research in prostate and bladder cancer, and is fluent in Spanish.

"You can judge a society by how it treats its least well-off members, and as an institution, ZSFG is one of the best in the country in this respect," said Dr. Friedlander. "Especially for cancer patients, that's huge."

From Statistics to Solutions

"The vision of the Center for Vulnerable Populations is to conduct research that we can act on to achieve health equity," said Margot Kushel, MD, the center's new director and a Professor of Medicine in the ZSFG Division of General Internal Medicine.

The center focuses on preventing and treating chronic diseases among disadvantaged populations. Its faculty and staff study issues including homelessness, food insecurity, health information technology and communication, immigrant health, cardiovascular disease prevention, and intersections of physical and psychiatric health care. Many projects have resulted in policies and legislation.

The center grew out of the ZSFG Division of General Internal Medicine and now includes researchers from other disciplines and UCSF campuses. Dr. Kushel would like to expand the center even further,

Follow us on:



@Neil_R_Powe



/ZSFGDOM



Dr. Margot Kushel

hunger from policymakers and the public to do the right thing," she said. "We can provide data to help design better health systems, create healthier communities and achieve health equity."

Dr. Kushel came to ZSFG in 1995 as an internal medicine resident in the San Francisco General Primary Care Track, stayed as a chief resident and primary care fellow, then joined the faculty. As a trainee, she was struck by the sheer number of patients experiencing homelessness, and has spent much of her career working on this issue. "Without housing [for patients], I was just putting Band-Aids on the problem," she said. "Housing in the best medicine."

More recently, Dr. Kushel and her colleagues have been studying homelessness among older adults in Oakland. Elders with personal experience of homelessness are integral partners in this investigation.

"My patients are amazing people with incredible life stories, and they honor us by letting us work with them," said Dr. Kushel. "I also love my colleagues in nursing, pharmacy and other fields. It's really inspiring to work at a place where people believe in building a better world. Some people say that San Francisco is a bubble, but I say it's a beacon: we try to show how things can be done."

Elizabeth Chur

Annual ZSFG Department of Medicine Staff Awards

We celebrate the 2018 recipients of the ZSFG Department of Medicine Staff Awards. The awards were presented at the ZSFG Department of Medicine annual staff appreciation luncheon on August 22, 2018:

The ZSFG Department of Medicine Patient Care Staff Award recognizes a staff member who demonstrates excellence working and communicating with patients. This staff member exhibits concern and care for patients, while at the same time working efficient-

ly to assist them with their needs.

The recipient was Raymond Yi, Patient Care Dialysis Technician in the Division of Nephrology. Raymond consistently finds ways to help his co-workers and is warmhearted towards his patients. He always exhibits his willingness to take on extra work or change his schedule to accommodate the needs of our patient care schedule. Raymond is an exemplary employee and a huge asset to the ZSFG Renal Center.

The ZSFG Department of Medicine Administrative Support Staff Award honors a staff member who contributes to our mission through their exceptional dedication, initiative, motivation, positive attitude, customer service and passion about their work. Two recipients were honored:

The first is Eva Lo, Health Education Professional in the Division of General Internal Medicine. Eva goes above and beyond to make the ZSFG Internal Medicine Primary Care Program run incredibly smoothly and does it so humbly. We would not be who we are without her. Eva is incredibly organized and responsive— she is the operational guru who makes our division hum!

The second is Vanessa York, Lab Research Supervisor in the Division of Experimental Medicine. Vanessa is one of those essential people in the organization that constantly looks for ways to help others around her and the larger research community to thrive. She is hard working, professional, selfless, and always has a wonderfully positive attitude. Her institutional knowledge and willingness to share is unprecedented. Her compassion and influence have touched every member of the division.

The ZSFG Department of Medicine Staff Excellence in Leadership recognizes a supervisor who – through outstanding leadership – enhances staff morale, builds an enriching work environment, and supports the career development of their staff.

The award was presented to Mary Ellen Kelly, Division Manager for Hematology & Oncology. Mary Ellen is a fantastic division manager, working tirelessly to coordinate research, education, and clinical activities. She is dedicated, compassionate, honest, and has integrity, and her consistent positive attitude is infectious.

Editors: Neil Powe, Laurae Pearson

