



UCSF Department of Medicine ZUCKERBERG SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF CURE

In 1736 when fire endangered the city of Philadelphia, Benjamin Franklin coined the phrase, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” for fire awareness and prevention, something we are now all too familiar with in California. We have many “fires” due to illnesses that threaten the health of our patients here in San Francisco, as well as across the U.S. and the world. We feature two leaders at ZSFG Medicine who are working upstream to “nip in the bud” diseases that cut human lives short and diminish quality of life.

Getting to Zero: Ending the HIV Epidemic

ZSFG has been at the forefront of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, developing innovative care models for some of the first patients diagnosed with what was a mysterious disease in the 1980s, and pioneering new treatments that have converted HIV from a death sentence to a chronic illness.

Now ZSFG is helping to lead efforts to eliminate HIV through Getting to Zero San Francisco (GTZ-SF). “It’s one of the most exciting times of the epidemic,” said Diane Havlir, MD, Professor of Medicine and Chief of the ZSFG Division of HIV, Infectious Diseases and Global Medicine. “We really think we can work towards our goals of zero new HIV infections, zero HIV-related deaths and zero stigma.”



Diane Havlir, MD, with Director of SF Public Health Grant Colfax, MD, and Hyman Scott, MD, MPH, is commended by San Francisco Mayor London Breed

Dr. Havlir and Susan Buchbinder, MD, director of HIV Prevention Research in the San Francisco Department of Public Health and Professor of Medicine, Epidemiology and Biostatistics, co-founded GTZ-SF in 2013. The city-wide coalition uses a collective impact model to bring people together from many sectors, identify a common goal and strategy, and get everyone to pursue that goal from within their organizations. “It’s a way to take highly opinionated, passionate people and get us all rowing in the same direction,” said Dr.

Havlir. “It’s a very inclusive approach that works extremely well.”

The consortium has hundreds of volunteer members, and its steering committee includes people living with HIV, heads of non-governmental organizations, researchers, public health officials and political staff people. Various committees focus on the main pillars of GTZ-SF, including increasing the use of

PrEP – a daily pill that can prevent HIV transmission; coordinating RAPID, which makes treatment immediately available to those newly diagnosed with HIV; and re-engaging people who have fallen out of HIV care.

There is a consortium-wide meeting three times a year on topics such as the intersection of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). “For example, we recently had a panelist who worked in the porn industry, and a constituent who said that it was hard to get STI screening with his insurance,” said Dr. Havlir. “There’s respect for everyone’s expertise, and people get different perspectives, which is incredibly important for information sharing.”

GTZ-SF is a free-standing coalition with minimal administrative structure, and does not compete with other organizations for funding. “We try to ensure that funding goes to groups with the expertise to do what needs to be done,” said Dr. Havlir.



Getting To Zero San Francisco is working towards achieving the UNAIDS vision of zero new HIV infections, zero HIV deaths, and zero HIV stigma by 2020 in San Francisco.

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So far, GTZ-SF has made remarkable progress. New HIV diagnoses declined to 197 in 2018 – the lowest number of new diagnoses since the epidemic started.



Diane Havlir, MD

Between 2013 and 2017, median time from the first care visit to starting antiretroviral therapy (ART) dropped from 27 days to 0 days, and median time from diagnosis to viral suppression decreased

from 135 days to 62 days.

“Getting to Zero had a direct effect on the reduction of new infections in San Francisco, people starting ART faster, and people getting more engaged in care,” said Dr. Havlir. “We’re really happy about that, but we still have an intense HIV epidemic in San Francisco. We’re not going to get to zero without addressing housing.” For example, viral suppression rates were 74 percent among all HIV patients, but only 33 percent among homeless individuals. Housing instability also helps drive HIV transmission. “When people couch surf, one of the ‘payments’ in order to stay can be sex,” she said.

GTZ-SF is advocating that people with HIV be among the groups prioritized for housing. ZSFG’s Ward 86 recently launched its POP-UP (Positive-health Onsite Program for Unstably-housed Populations) program, which enables homeless patients who are not virally suppressed to access care without appointments. GTZ-SF also advocates for other strategies to address health disparities among other groups disproportionately affected by HIV, including African Americans, Latinxs, and people who inject drugs.

In addition, GTZ-SF has developed an outstanding data system to measure outcomes, and publishes an annual HIV Surveillance Report. It shares lessons learned widely, posting protocols on their website (gettingtozerosf.org) and leading trainings

for cities from around the world. “The HIV community has used a collective impact approach to achieve results,” said Dr. Havlir. “Whether a city is facing challenges in health, education, or the environment, I’d argue that collective impact is an underutilized strategy that could be used to tackle any big problem.”

Poetry and Partnerships: Curbing the Diabetes Epidemic

“ZSFG has been at the epicenter of social epidemics for 150 years,” said Dean Schillinger, MD, Professor of Medicine and Chief of the ZSFG Division of General Internal Medicine. A trailblazer in treating diseases like HIV and tuberculosis, ZSFG is now a leader in tackling another epidemic affecting people: type 2 diabetes.

When Dr. Schillinger started his training in 1991, one in 15 of his patients had diabetes. Now roughly half do, and most of the rest are prediabetic. Worse still, the disease increasingly affects younger patients, especially those from communities of color: nearly half of African American and Latinx youth are predicted to develop the condition.

To change that devastating trajectory, Dr. Schillinger launched The Bigger Picture campaign (biggerpictureproject.org), a partnership between the Center for Vulnerable Populations’ (CVP) UCSF Health Communications Research Program, which he directs, and nonprofit Youth Speaks. “The conversation about diabetes typically blames individuals for not exercising and eating right,” he said. “We’re changing that conversation, calling out social and systemic factors that lead communities to get diabetes.”

Teams of spoken word artists, physicians, and health communication experts facilitated discussions with youth poets about how food deserts, predatory marketing and poverty drive the epidemic. The young poets wrote and performed videos with themes such as how soda marketing

campaigns target their communities, and the importance of protecting friends and family.

In one video, “Empty Plate,” 20-year-old Anthony “Joker” Orosco describes how his relatives in Stockton toil in the fields, harvesting produce they can’t afford themselves:

“Today it’s practically multiple choice, Being murdered or choosing death by diet...”

The videos have garnered 1.5 million views on YouTube, and poets have performed for audiences ranging from the San Francisco Board of Supervisors during the soda tax debate to the National Academy of Medicine. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation is supporting a two-year immersion at three San Francisco public high schools, testing whether The Bigger Picture can create a culture of health. “We’re trying to find different ways to communicate science that aren’t just about facts, but also resonate emotionally,” said Dr. Schillinger. “The sugary beverage and junk food industries falsely sell ‘happiness.’ Our counter-marketing strategy is ‘Youth telling the truth.’”



Dean Schillinger, MD

With National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding, Dr. Schillinger and his colleague are evaluating health impacts of soda taxes. In Berkeley, they reported a 50 percent reduction in sugar-sweetened beverage consumption over the first three years of the tax. They are acquiring market research sales

data to study consumption patterns for soda and other sugary items, and are investigating whether bundling soda taxes with positive incentives like EatSF vouchers for vegetables and fruits – a CVP program led by Hilary Seligman, MD, MAS, Associate Professor in the ZSFG Division of General Internal Medicine – creates healthy synergy.

Dr. Schillinger served as an expert witness when the American Beverage Association sued the City and County of San Francisco for its ordinance requiring soda billboard warnings. While preparing his report, he found that half the studies cast doubt on connections between soda consumption and ill health – and that all 26 of these studies were funded by the beverage industry. “In the process of doing work for local policy, we discovered something much bigger, which was the manipulation of science,” he said.

From 2008 to 2013 Dr. Schillinger served as Chief of the California Department of Public Health Diabetes Prevention and Control Program. He currently chairs the prevention subcommittee of the Congressional National Clinical Care Commission, which makes recommendations to leverage federal agencies to better prevent and control diabetes. The commission asks questions including what the NIH should study, how the Department of Labor could make workplaces less sedentary,

and how the Environmental Protection Agency could promote clean drinking water in regions like Navajo Nation. “Type 2 diabetes has been managed as a siloed medical problem,” he said. “This potentially represents a major sea change, addressing the epidemic via social policy solutions and interagency collaboration.”

Dr. Schillinger also partners with the Mexico City Ministry of Health, investigating scalable, low-cost diabetes prevention strategies. They are testing the real-world effectiveness of metformin, a drug shown in a 2002 study to reduce new cases of diabetes by 31 percent.

Curbing the diabetes epidemic is difficult, but Dr. Schillinger has hope. “We’re well poised at ZSFG to create a national model, applying lessons from ‘Getting to Zero’ to type 2 diabetes,” he said. “That



Anthony "Joker" Orosco performs his poem "Empty Plate" from The Bigger Picture campaign, filmed by Jamie DeWolf

includes outstanding science and discovery, excellent clinical care, partnering with public health, deeply engaging with affected communities, and advocating for better policy. All that is coming together on this campus – a testament to the power of this institution to tackle complex social epidemics.”

Elizabeth Chur

Editors: Neil Powe, Laurae Pearson

SPOTLIGHT



Faculty honored as Local Co-chair of International AIDS Conference 2020

Congratulations to **Monica Gandhi, MD, Division of HIV-Infectious Diseases-Global Medicine**, in her role as local co-chair of the International AIDS Conference to be hosted in San Francisco and Oakland in July 2020. At the October launch event for AIDS 2020, Dr. Gandhi was joined by Mayor London Breed, local and state politicians, and Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, who has provided unwavering support for the AIDS community.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING! ZSFG DOM is grateful for our entire community in this season of care.

ZSFG Staff Honored with Spirit of DOM Award

Congratulations to **Kathryn Fontwit**, Physician Assistant for **Division of Nephrology**, as recipient of the UCSF 2019 Spirit of DOM Staff Award. Fontwit is noted as "an exemplary employee and a huge asset" by her nominator and is recognized for her strong support and mentoring of colleagues. Over her 22 years with ZSFG Renal Center, Fontwit's responsibilities have evolved, most recently to include becoming the point person for kidney transplant referrals and follow-ups, a multi-faceted and detail-oriented project.

Cancer Research Symposium Launches in January

The **Division of Hematology and Oncology** will be hosting its first Cancer Research Symposium on Thursday, January 30, 10 AM - 5 PM, on the 7th Floor of ZSFG, Building 25. The symposium will highlight work being done by researchers on our campus and across UCSF focusing on Disparities in Cancer Care, Cancer Control Efforts, Sickle Cell Disease, and Virally Mediated Cancers research. Lunch will be provided and there will be a rooftop reception afterwards. A save-the-date and flyer will be sent out in the coming weeks. For more information, please contact Gloria Fisher, gloria.fisher@ucsf.edu.