



UCSF Department of Medicine ZUCKERBERG SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL

MAKING CHANGE IN THE WORLD

Building a Roadmap to Health for Homelessness

Homelessness is one of the nation's most vexing problems, and the UCSF Center for Vulnerable Populations (CVP), based in the ZSFG Department of Medicine, has launched the UCSF Benioff Homelessness and Housing Initiative to help address this epidemic.

The initiative, funded by a generous gift from Lynne and Marc Benioff, will support new research on how to best end homelessness, help policymakers make informed decisions by closing the evidence-to-policy gap, and train the next generation of researchers.



Dr. Margot Kushel

“Marc and Lynne Benioff are huge supporters of UCSF and have been passionately interested in the issue of homelessness, and we are incredibly lucky to have them as partners,” said Margot Kushel, MD, Professor of Medicine in the ZSFG Division of General Internal Medicine, and director of the new initiative and the CVP. Joshua Bamberger, MD, MPH, Professor of Family and Community Medicine, will serve as the initiative's associate director.

Marc Benioff, CEO of Salesforce, was a strong supporter of San Francisco's Proposition C, approved by voters in 2018, which will earmark up to \$300 million in new tax revenues to address homelessness in the city. Lynne and Marc Benioff also

donated \$6.1 million to San Francisco's Tenderloin Housing Clinic to help establish new short-term housing for homeless individuals.

An Untenable Situation

Dr. Kushel first became interested in how homelessness affects health and health care when she was an intern in the ZSFG Primary Care Track of the UCSF Internal Medicine Residency Program.

“I was so struck by how many of our patients were experiencing homelessness, how bad their health outcomes were, and how nonsensical the system of care was,” she said. “We spent all these resources to take care of people, and then we would be forced to return them to homelessness. Both the human toll and the policy failures were really striking”

Dr. Kushel has spent her career researching the root causes of homelessness, how it impacts health and health care, and better ways to care for these extremely vulnerable patients. She currently leads the HOPE HOME study, which works with a cohort of 350 homeless people aged 50 and older.

There are many reasons that homeless people are vulnerable to poor health, including difficulty accessing healthy foods, lack of sleep, exposure to the elements, and physical and emotional trauma from calamities they experience on the streets.

“Homelessness also really interferes with people's ability to engage with health care,” said Dr. Kushel. “It's difficult to schedule clinic visits and come in for appointments. It's hard to pay for medicines and hold on to them, because they get lost or stolen. When you take the terrible physical and emotional environment of homelessness and combine that with all the ways it interacts with health care, you wind up with a really devastating situation.”

Creating Evidence and Translating Into Practice

Part of the new initiative will support research to better address this enormous burden. For example, are there ways to predict who will become homeless, and to use this information to target scarce financial resources towards those most at risk? Are there better ways to help people with chronic alcohol use disorder stay housed? The initiative will provide seed money for novel investigations, and help provide timely answers that officials need to make effective policy.

In other cases there is already robust evidence, but these findings may not be translated from academic journals into policy or the public sphere. “We can take chronically homeless people with severe behavioral conditions, and for the vast majority, we can successfully house them through permanent supportive housing,” said Dr. Kushel. “You lead with the housing, with no preconditions – people don't have to demonstrate sobriety or willingness to engage in mental health treatment. You keep offering an array of completely voluntary services, and you make it really easy to say yes – but you don't require them.”

“We've known for 20 years from really high-quality evidence that this works, but when I'm talking with elected officials, I still sometimes hear, ‘You can't just house people when they have severe substance use problems,’” said Dr. Kushel. “We put so much effort into generating evidence, but we haven't always been as good at closing the evidence-to-policy gap.” To help remedy this, the initiative will develop a digital library of curated evidence that is clear and easy to understand, and work to ensure that policymakers, program leaders and the general public have access to the information they need to bring about change.



"If you are a reporter, elected official, or concerned citizen, we want to have publicly available materials with links to scholarly documents as well as more easily digestible data, like charts and graphs," said Dr. Kushel. "It's really important that we be seen as neutral, trustworthy experts who can vet the data honestly."

She also hopes to offer a consulting service. "For example, if you're in Topeka, Kansas and are considering devoting money towards a certain option, we want to provide you with data that shows you what you can expect to get, and why you should consider a certain path or not," said Dr. Kushel. "Our main focus will be the Bay Area, but what we learn will hopefully allow us to have a national presence."

The initiative also seeks to train a cadre of researchers at all levels, from undergraduates through postdoctoral scholars. In addition, it plans to train people with lived experience of homelessness gain the skills to join research teams, and create champions who can share their stories in effective ways.

"The CVP's focus has been providing actionable research to achieve health equity, and the Benioff recognize that you cannot separate homelessness from health disparities, food insecurity, and all the other things we study at the CVP," said Dr. Kushel. "We are so grateful for this gift, which will allow us to bring what we do to a larger scale, and to make UCSF a thought leader in this space. We want to turn homelessness from something that the community feels hopeless about into feeling like there's a roadmap to a solution."

Transforming Health Systems in Mali to Save Lives

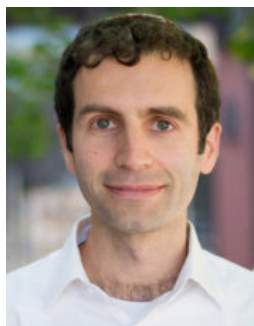
More than five million children worldwide die each year of treatable diseases such as malaria and pneumonia – but Ari Johnson, MD, and his colleagues are working to change that.

"Time matters," said Dr. Johnson, Assistant Professor in the ZSFG Division of Hospital Medicine and co-founder of Muso, a nonprofit whose mission is to eliminate preventable deaths rooted in poverty. "These illnesses are curable, but they progress and kill rapidly. Our work is based on a very simple

hypothesis: can we reimagine health care delivery to reach every patient in the first moments that they need care?"

For more than 12 years, he and his partners in the West African nation of Mali – including government officials, medical professionals, and community members – have worked to reduce that country's maternal and child mortality rates, which are among the world's highest. They recently published a study showing that offering timely, free access to care through community health workers and clinics reduced the death rate among children under five by 95 percent.

"We began this work by asking the experts – the patients," said Dr. Johnson. He and his collaborators conducted detailed interviews about patients' roadblocks to care, using this information to pilot



Dr. Ari Johnson

an approach called proactive community case management. They eliminated out-of-pocket fees and recruited, hired, and trained community health workers. This cadre of paid professionals, mostly women from local communities, go door-to-door searching for babies who have just developed a fever or diarrhea, and women with pregnancy or postpartum complications. They provide basic diagnostics, therapeutics, and contraceptives free of charge in patients' homes, and evacuate patients needing more care to enhanced primary care facilities.

The success of this proactive approach has been so stunning that in February 2019, Mali's president announced a sweeping reform of the health care system that aims to scale up this model to the entire country over the next four years. Muso will provide technical assistance to support this national health care reboot, while continuing to deliver health care to 350,000 patients and conduct research studies in partnership with the Malian Ministry of Health to answer key policy questions.

SPOTLIGHT

Payam Nahid, MD, Professor in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Medicine kicked off the UCSF World Tuberculosis Symposium on March 23 bringing together researchers and professionals from UCSF, San Francisco, California, London and Hanoi. He will lead a new UCSF Center for Tuberculosis. The vision for this center is to discover, develop, and facilitate implementation of 21st century tools and approaches for combating TB in the world.

Emily Silverman, MD, Assistant Professor in the Division of Hospital Medicine is thrilled to announce the launch of Season 2 of her nationally recognized medical storytelling podcast, *The Nocturnists*. You may learn more by visiting the *Nocturnists* website at: <http://thenocturnists.com/>

The UCSF Gallup Staff Engagement Survey went live on April 30th! "Engagement is something we all own and impact – the first step in that process is providing your honest feedback during the yearly survey. School of Medicine participation was 68% in the 2018 survey.

This year, we are striving for 100% participation to ensure that we capture everyone's voice. Survey responses are completely anonymous - Gallup does not disclose names to UCSF leadership, only responses, so I encourage you to be candid," said, Dean **Talmadge King, Jr., MD**. Please do not hesitate to reach out to your Division Manager or your division's Gallup Survey Ambassador with questions.

UCSF is building a new research and academic building at the Priscilla Chan and Mark Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center Campus (ZSFG) that is expected to house and consolidate some of the university's research and teaching activity at ZSFG. Learn more about this exciting project at: <https://space.ucsf.edu/future-occupants-rab-zsfg>

"UCSF has been an incredible academic home," said Dr. Johnson. "I have been mentored from trailblazers in the field who have reshaped policy globally, and colleagues who show through their daily practice how medicine can be an implement of justice. Most of all, I love getting to care for patients at the General. Patients are my professors, because no one understands the brokenness of the health care system and how it can be fixed as well as patients do.

"Powerful things happen when we listen to patients, and when communities lead," he continued. "Mali achieved dramatic drops in child death rates during a time when they also experienced a coup d'état, an Ebola outbreak, and a refugee crisis. Long-term commitment and partnership with government can drive change, even in the most difficult or unlikely of circumstances."

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