



# UCSF Department of Medicine

## ZUCKERBERG SAN FRANCISCO GENERAL

### EXPANDING ON DOM'S RESEARCH SUCCESS

Research is a vital activity at Zuckerberg San Francisco General and fundamental to the mission of the Department of Medicine. It has fueled the past excellence of the hospital and it represents tremendous possibilities for the future.

As a top earner in National Institutes of Health funding, the Department of Medicine at ZSFG will see future investment from the city and University of California, San Francisco with the building of a new \$200 million research facility, which breaks ground sometime next year. The building, at a time when NIH funding has reached an all-time high at the ZSFG Department of Medicine, will embolden discovery - an institutional building block - to find new ways to treat and care for patients, especially those that come from underserved populations.

"Science to advance human health is a cornerstone for us. We stand tall in our scientific quest to prevent disease, save lives and improve well-being," says Neil R. Powe, MD, Chief of the ZSFG Department of Medicine.

UCSF Department of Medicine Chair Bob Wachter appointed ZSFG researchers Diane Havlir and David Erle as the new Associate



**Dr. David Erle**

Chair for Clinical Research and Associate Chair of Biomedical Research, respectively. The positions will be key in supporting researchers throughout the DOM, including at ZSFG.

In a statement Wachter wrote: "Despite our successes, Diane and David have plenty to do: charting our strategy in precision medicine, helping to guide the continued growth at Mission Bay and the rejuvenation of Parnassus,

**stand up for SCIENCE**

**STAND UP FOR SCIENCE**

- April 22 | Genetech Hall, Byers Auditorium  
600 16th St. San Francisco, CA
- Teach-In | 8 a.m. to 10 a.m.  
Moderated by Mike McCune
- Rally | 10 a.m. to 10:45 a.m.

planning the use of new research space (and the more efficient allocation of existing space) on all our campuses, promoting diversity in our research enterprise, nurturing our pipeline of junior researchers, integrating our growing informatics enterprise into our research operations, and dealing with the uncertainties of NIH funding, to name just a few. It's an



**Dr. Diane Havlir**

ambitious agenda, and I can't think of better people to help lead it." It's an opportunity that excites both Dr. Erle, who is from the ZSFG Lung Biology Group, and Dr. Havlir, from the ZSFG HIV, ID and Global Medicine Division.

"UCSF is an extraordinary medical enterprise, with research that benefits the patients here and around the world," Dr. Havlir said. "The Department of Medicine at UCSF is ranked No. 1, and to help realize the potential we have here at UCSF - and to be on the cutting edge of research - is such an honor."

It's research that's important not just to the San Francisco area, but the world, Havlir said. "The portfolio is really quite extensive," she said.

"There is basic science and discovery all the way to population health, which addresses and meets the needs of vulnerable populations ... It is influencing policy, and one doesn't have to go far to see how that is put into place every day."

For Erle, the type of research at ZSFG is unique for a public safety-net institution, he said.

"It's a credit to the people at UCSF and San Francisco, that doing this type of research is valuable both in terms of what it yields in research and in what it yields for the type of place we want it to be," Erle said.

That dedication to research leaves an ever-lasting impression on the hospital, Erle said. The Department of Medicine at ZSFG's emphasis on research allows it to bring in an "incredible range of talents and people that are passionate about the work that they do."

"If you think of other public hospitals, it's not going to be the same," Erle said.

Accomplishing that type of success, though, goes beyond funds and technology, Havlir said. The success of the hospital - and UCSF's - research begins with the scientist.

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The San Francisco Board of Supervisors were presented this early rendering of the new research building at ZSFG in February

“It starts with the people - and the people include the scientist - which are passionate in their mission to make a difference and improving health,” Havlir said. “That is absolutely critical to the research of this enterprise. The researchers do not work in a vacuum ... it’s the teams. They ... are going to make the next breakthrough. That being said, the partnerships that UCSF has with the Department of Public Health, with the new Biohub and the global partnerships that we have all over the world is also part of the success.”

UCSF and ZSFG possess everything needed to create world-class research.

“To do good research you need three things: Good ideas, good people and good will,” Havlir said. “Those are the ingredients that you need to conduct good research. And the leadership we have at UCSF is very committed to research and we have schools of students – in all disciplines – who are also very excited about research and participating in research. Those are the key ingredients that make up the institution. We don’t give up and we are energized to be able to answer questions.”

Erle and Havlir will start by listening and determining what’s needed, Erle said. “I’m going to be focusing on some things across all sites,” Erle said. “There are also some site specific issues, and right now at San Francisco General it is the new research building and how it’s going to be used to house better facilities for people that are already in the department. Also to bring in new faculty. It’s a great opportunity and I’m looking forward to see how I can play a useful role there.”

“I’ll be doing a lot of listening and trying to meet with people to understand ...” Erle said. “And San Francisco General is certainly a place where I want to do some listening.”

### ZSFG DOM RESEARCH FUNDING



## SPOTLIGHT

### NEETA THAKUR, MD

Assistant Professor, Lung Biology Group and Pulmonary & Critical Care Medicine

Dr. Neeta Thakur is on the frontline examining how social and environmental stresses exacerbate asthma in vulnerable populations. Environment-created stress can change the biology for generations to come, she said.



“Even moms that are stressed during pregnancies have kids more susceptible to the disease by age 6,” Thakur said. “That has been a big influence how we think of asthma and how we, as medical providers, can provide stress relief in our patients ... But, right now, our current system is not built for that.”

To help aide patients, Thakur and her research team focus on creating and studying a home environment that is better suited for patients.

“We are trying to be more holistic in our approach instead of what we do traditionally,” she said. “We are trying to bring in the social environment”

### BRYAN GREENHOUSE, MD

Associate Professor, HIV, ID and Global Medicine

Dr. Bryan Greenhouse is trying to understand the interactions between malaria parasites and human hosts by applying laboratory and analytical methods to field studies. He studies the development of naturally acquired immunity and creates tools to measure malaria exposure and immune protection. He also uses population genetics and spatial data to investigate parasite transmission and evolution.



Dr. Greenhouse is one of the 15 UCSF researchers appointed to the Chan Zuckerberg Biohub, a three-university (UCSF, UC Berkeley, Stanford) collaborative research and development organization funded by Mark Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan. The hope is the Biohub will create new and interesting research from investigators from different disciplines and institutions in Northern California.

That collaboration – along with the opportunity – has Greenhouse excited.

“If we have new ideas that we come up with we don’t have to wait a year to write up a grant,” Greenhouse said. “It allows us to have ideas and be able to pursue them ... just by the virtue of having funds available for five years to think big and do things.”

“But the biggest advantage for my research is the whole community,” he said. “It’s not just open to the investigators, it’s open to the whole community. We are going to be able to work together to find new areas of collaboration.”