

2020 - 22 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

WELCOME TO OUR NEWSLETTER!

The University of California has long been a driving force for biomedical discovery in the state, nation, and world. For more than a decade, the five UC academic medical centers—Davis, Irvine, Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco—have collaborated as the UC BRAID consortium, working to accelerate clinical and translational research across the UC system by combining, leveraging and expanding the resources of its member institutions to improve health throughout California, and beyond. In 2021-22, we led the nation in deploying our collaborative network in a systemwide response to the COVID public health emergency.

This newsletter provides an overview of some of UC BRAID's recent activities and accomplishments. We look forward to supporting new partnerships and initiatives to improve the reach and impact of UC's clinical and translational research. We hope you will reach out to us with your comments, ideas, and questions.

Elizabeth Boyd, PhD
Director, UC BRAID
Elizabeth.Boyd@ucbraid.org



TRANSITIONS



Dr. Elizabeth Boyd, PhD, joined UC BRAID in September 2022 as the program's Director. Most recently, Dr. Boyd served as the Vice President for Research Administration and Faculty Affairs at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center; she previously held leadership roles at UCSF, UC Riverside, and UC's Office of the President. She is trained as a medical sociologist and held a postdoctoral fellowship at the UCSF Phillip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies.



Laurie Herraiz led UC BRAID from 2019 to 2021 as the Director after 20 years of experience in clinical research and research administration at UCSF. Herraiz is now serving as Senior Program Manager in the Regulatory Knowledge and Support Program and the San Francisco Bay Research Infrastructure Network (RIN) in UCSF's Clinical and Translational Science Institute. Herraiz led UC BRAID during the COVID pandemic; her contributions to UC BRAID were immeasurable, and we are thankful for her leadership.



The UC BRAID Executive Committee welcomed Dr. Eric Vilain, MD, PhD as its newest member from University of California Irvine. Dr. Vilain succeeds Dr. Dan Cooper as Associate Vice Chancellor for Clinical and Translational Research and Director of the UC Irvine Institute for Clinical and Translational Sciences. Dr. Vilain joined UC BRAID with over 20 years of experience overseeing large collaborative research and innovation projects, leading a clinical division, chairing a medical school department, spearheading global healthcare initiatives and demonstrating a passion for data-driven transformative research.



Dr. Dan Cooper, MD, one of the original founding members of the UC BRAID consortium, has assumed the role of Special Research Adviser to the Dean of the UC Irvine School of Medicine. He remains a PI and Associate Director of the UC Irvine Institute for Clinical and Translational Science and will serve as the Interim Executive Director of UC Irvine's Institute for Precision Health. We thank Dr. Cooper for his vision, passion, and years of leadership at UC BRAID.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS – COVID, UC CURES, RESOURCES, & MORE



UC BRAID grants support work toward better health equity in COVID-19 translational research

- As the novel coronavirus began to spread, teams across University of California knew that the need to translate scientific discovery into therapies and vaccines to fight COVID-19 would be urgent. At the same time, the growing pandemic highlighted widespread inequalities in health and the urgency of achieving greater health equity.
- UC's five CTSA teams were already positioned to address needs at the intersection of COVID-19 and health equity, but the process of securing funding for research and community outreach programs often can be slow. UC BRAID) took action to support immediate projects by creating a grant program to enable UC CSA to quickly respond to the need for COVID-19 related clinical trials and vaccination efforts that are inclusive and benefit vulnerable communities.

UC BRAID led transfer of UC COVID-19 patient information to federal database

- In June, the National COVID Cohort Collaborative, known as N3C, launched an analytics platform for electronic health records so that researchers could more easily investigate coronaviruses. Its Data Enclave has collected records from more than 1 million patients.
- UC health centers also collected a large amount of data from COVID-19 patients. A \$500,000 grant from NIH allowed [UC Health's] team to incorporate it into the N3C Data Enclave, making case records available on a national scale.
- "Rather than going to each of our campuses, we fashioned an agreement where we would share our [joint UC] database," Cooper said. The UCs will securely contribute such patient information as age, sex, weight, medications, and conditions such as high blood pressure or diabetes – with identifying details removed.
- "The huge value of this large database is identifying the risk factors," Cooper said. "There may be medications that are being given out that actually improve the condition."



MORE COVID PROJECTS

UC COVID Research Data Set (UC CORDS)

- **Need:** Timely access to comparable COVID-19 patient clinical data
- **Solution:** With UC Health, created a centralized, secure, research dataset from 5 CTSA campuses accessible to UC investigators
- **Benefits:**
 - Access to broader, richer data
 - Further understand the disease and its manifestations
 - Develop and improve treatment models

COVID Virtual Biospecimen Network (CVBN)

- **Need:** Efficient access to high-quality, well-characterized, clinically acquired biospecimens
- **Solution:** Centralized, secure, biospecimen inventory database
- **Benefits:**
 - Index of all COVID biorepositories for:
 - Diagnostic test validation and development
 - Vaccine development and treatment

UC Convalescent Blood Plasma Working Group

- **Need:** Problem-solving on collection & processing of CP and information sharing around CP trial opportunities
- **Solution:** Coordinated working group of key COVID clinical researchers, blood bank directors and leaders
- **Benefits:**
 - Provided forum for discussion of best practices, shared needs, and coordinated solutions
 - Explored a streamlined method for CP transfer between campuses

Healthy Schools Restart

- **Need:** CA School Districts needed medical advice on keeping schools open in the time of COVID
- **Solution:** Gathered PIs from around the state who coordinated with school districts
- **Benefits:**
 - The group helped to share regional experiences in supporting students' return-to-school

ACCOMPLISHMENTS CONT'D



UC Cures Alzheimer's

- The goal of the \$4 million initiative was to move research for potential treatments into early proof-of-concept clinical trials. Proposals were sought from researchers and laboratories throughout the UC system. Two projects (from UC Irvine and UC San Francisco) were selected by an independent review committee comprised of experts both within and outside UC.
- Both campuses received \$1 million annually for two years from the Office of the President.
- Study outcome will be coming soon!

Contracting Rationales Library

- The 5 UC Academic Medical Centers and UCOP have created a document that, on a term-by-term basis, provides background, policies, legal requirements, resources, and negotiation recommendations to expedite clinical trial negotiations with industry.
- The Library's goal is to reduce negotiation time for new and intermediate negotiators and improve consistency system-wide.
- The Library has been completed and is now available to UC contracting officers at the UC Systemwide Clinical Trials SharePoint site. [Contact David Grady](#) for more information.

Multisite Participant Recruitment using EHR-Derived Cohorts: Guidelines and Best Practices for Researchers

- Multisite participant recruitment using EHR-derived cohorts (hereafter referred to as "EHR recruitment") requires special planning and consideration due to complexities around patient privacy, data limitations and security, and variance in local administrative practices.
- These guidelines and best practices are intended to aid researchers in creating a multisite EHR recruitment plan that is respectful to patients, minimizes the risk of loss of patient confidentiality, and helps researchers anticipate and prepare for patient feedback. The Guidelines are currently [available here](#), and soon at all 5 UC CTSA IRB sites.

Volkow Fireside Chat

- [Fireside Chat with Dr. Nora Volkow](#), MD, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) at the National Institutes of Health. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug use and addiction. Dr. Volkow engaged the University of California in a lively and dynamic discussion.
- *Session 1*: Dr. Volkow discussed NIDA's strategic priorities for research in the COVID-19 era.
- *Session 2*: Representatives from each UC Academic Medical Center discussed NIDA research priorities, strategies, and challenges.



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2023

Before the COVID pandemic, UC BRAID completed its Strategic Plan for the next 5-7 years. As we slowly resume our activities, we look forward to sharing our 2023-24 workplan with our campus communities. This year, UC BRAID's newest initiatives include showcasing the brilliant work of our KL2 Scholars around the system and launching a major effort to bring comprehensive training and career placement programs to new and existing clinical research staff. Look for more information about these, and all our activities, on our website: www.ucbraid.org.