

Letter from the Chief



Faculty and Fellows not available at the time of the divisional photo: Kamal Ahmed, Dianne McKay, Scott Mullaney, Nouredin Nourbakhsh, Robert Parmer, Robert Steiner, Danuta Trzebinska, Andres Caero Romero, Alison Potok, and Mark Sievert

Inside this issue:

Letter from the Chief	1
Research Spotlight	2
Clinical Highlights	3
Education Update	4
Meet Our New Fellows	4
Fellowship Scholarly Activity	5
Conferences	7
Vision Statement	8

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is a pleasure to share the latest UC San Diego Division of Nephrology-Hypertension newsletter. You will find updates on a number of recent activities within the Division.

Since our last newsletter in July, we have opened the new Jacobs Medical Center in La Jolla. This 245 in-patient bed facility has expanded our services, and has provided our Division with additional complex and interesting patients and new state-of-the-art facilities to care for their needs.

Roland Blantz was recently announced as the 2017 recipient of the American Physiologic Society's Robert W. Berliner Award. This prestigious award celebrates lifetime achievement in renal physiology and recognizes pre-eminent investigators who have made major contributions to research, teaching, and training throughout their careers.

Interest in nephrology careers remains low; this year only 60% of available nephrology fellowship spots were filled nationally. Despite this, under Dr. Cindy Miracle's leadership, the Division had another successful match, filling our offered 4 spots, and recruiting an outstanding class of fellows who will join us in July 2017.

The Division faculty is changing as well. After many years of service and leadership in the Acute Kidney Disease program, Ravindra Mehta retired from UC San Diego in June 2016. After a brief separation, he has returned to the Division on a part-time basis to continue his work in acute kidney injury research. Timo Rieg joined our faculty in 2009, and has developed into an internationally recognized expert in renal physiology, investigating novel mechanisms of phosphate homeostasis. Dr. Rieg was recruited to the University of South Florida, and will be leaving the Division in February 2017. He will be sorely missed.

Looking ahead, the 2017 "Nephrology for the Consultant" and "Essentials and Advances in Apheresis Therapies" conferences are upcoming. We find these conferences a wonderful venue to re-connect with past trainees and colleagues in the community, and hope you'll consider attending.

All the best to you and your families in 2017!

Joachim H. Ix, MD
Professor of Medicine
Chief, Division of Nephrology-Hypertension



Research Spotlight

Dena Rifkin, MD, MS

Associate Adjunct Professor of Medicine
Division of Nephrology-Hypertension & Division of Preventive Medicine
Associate Program Director for Research, Nephrology Fellowship Program
Director of Dialysis Services, VA San Diego Healthcare System



Dr. Dena Rifkin is an epidemiologist and clinical investigator focusing on hypertension, chronic kidney disease, and health outcomes in the older population. She completed her master's degree in clinical science at Tufts University in 2008 and joined the faculty at Tufts as an instructor, where she designed and led a study of medication use and priorities and preferences among CKD and dialysis patients. She joined the UC San Diego faculty in 2009 and in the following year was awarded a K23 Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Award to study ambulatory blood pressure patterns and physical, cognitive, and kidney function outcomes in older adults in San Diego. Her work found strong relationships between 24-hour blood pressure patterns and cognitive dysfunction in older adults. This led to an NIH R21 award to examine similar questions within the SPRINT study population, work that is now ongoing. Following her interest in blood pressure and medication management, Dr. Rifkin was recently awarded a VA Merit award to investigate whether hypertensive veteran patients can self-manage their blood pressure using home blood pressure machines and pre-specified medication titration plans compared to usual care. Since 2009, Dr. Rifkin's work, in collaboration with multiple research groups both here at UC San Diego and at the national and international level, has resulted in over 70 peer-reviewed publications.

In addition to her research, Dr. Rifkin also has written extensively for the lay public regarding issues in medicine and society for publications such as the New York Times, Discover Magazine, Health Affairs and New England Journal of Medicine. She founded and leads the reflective essay section of the American Journal of Kidney Disease, "In Our Own Words." At the UC San Diego School of Medicine, she is a faculty advisor for the First Lecture Committee, which selects a book for all medical students to read each year. She leads a section of the Practice of Medicine course for the medical students and will assume leadership of the renal pathophysiology course for second-year students in 2017. At the national level, she is the chair of the 2017 program committee for the National Kidney Foundation annual meeting. She is a new member of the ABIM Nephrology Board Exam Committee and an editorial board member of CJASN.

Dr. Rifkin also plays an important role as the Associate Program Director for research activities within the Division. In this role, she meets regularly with fellows to discuss their interests, facilitating matching trainees with potential mentors and unique projects, monitors their progress, and facilitates their productivity. She has extended these activities to include mentorship of residents and medical students interested in research experiences. This has frequently translated into first authored publications by these junior trainees. In her role as chair of the 2017 National Kidney Foundation meeting, she has facilitated activities where senior investigators/leaders will be matched with medical residents and students attending the meeting, so that they can attend poster sessions together, meet the poster authors, and have a chance to understand what is exciting and current in nephrology research. Dr. Rifkin's successful program is exemplary of the Division's research mission. It not only focuses on research topics directly related to patient care, but also facilitates training and teaching of the next generation of physician investigators.

Clinical Highlights

Danuta Trzebinska, MD

Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine
Division of Nephrology-Hypertension
Medical Director, UC San Diego Chronic Dialysis Unit
Medical Director, Chronic Kidney Disease Program



The UC San Diego Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) Program, in the Division of Nephrology-Hypertension, provides evidence-based multidisciplinary care to patients with CKD stages 2-5. Dr. Danuta Trzebinska, Medical Director, and Dr. Linda Awdishu, program administrator, founded the program in 2007 which went on to become the first program in the United States to earn The Joint Commission CKD Certification for excellence in CKD care. The program has been consistently recertified ever since.

The CKD Program mission is to slow the progression of CKD, streamline the transition to dialysis or transplantation, increase awareness of CKD in the community and increase scientific research in the area of CKD. The multidisciplinary team including faculty physicians, pharmacists, nurses, medical assistants, licensed clinical social workers, registered dietitians, and patient education coordinators utilize guidelines developed by the team, which encompass a summary of national and international guidelines on the treatment of CKD and its numerous complications. UC San Diego CKD guidelines are updated on a yearly basis and approved by the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee.

The scope of services provided by the team includes guideline-based care, cardiovascular risk assessment and counseling on management of risk factors, medication reconciliation, assessment of medication adherence, medication dose adjustments for kidney function, vaccinations, nutrition counseling, psychosocial assessment and support services (i.e. assistance with transportation, transition to dialysis). To improve vascular access prevalence at the time of dialysis initiation, a joint CKD-Vascular Surgery clinic was established where patients see a vascular surgeon during their visit with the CKD multidisciplinary team. All patients in the CKD Program are encouraged to be active participants in their health. They are engaged in home blood pressure and blood glucose monitoring. To improve the rate of home blood pressure monitoring, the team created "CKD Cares", a grateful patient fund, to provide blood pressure monitors for patients requiring financial assistance. Approximately 115 blood pressure monitors have been purchased and donated to CKD patients, based on financial need. Based on clinic readings, the CKD program is 80% at goal for blood pressure control. Patient education is a fundamental aspect of our mission. As leaders in CKD care, the multidisciplinary team developed a series of 15 online videos accessible on the UC San Diego Health YouTube channel. These videos have quickly gained popularity with thousands of views.

Since its inception, the CKD Program has collected information on the quality of care provided to patients. Data are submitted monthly to the Joint Commission and the entire team participates in quality assurance, performance improvement projects. The team has studied clinical indicators such as blood pressure control, proteinuria, hemoglobin A1c control as well as process indicators such as placement of permanent access. In 2015, a CKD registry was developed to fully realize the power of the electronic health record in data reporting and population health management. The registry has enabled the team to identify gaps in care, implement interventions to address those gaps and evaluate outcomes of these interventions.

Chronic kidney disease requires a holistic, patient-centered approach to achieve optimal outcomes. UC San Diego CKD Program strives to be at the forefront of team-based, patient-centered care. Additional information is available on our website: <https://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/nephrology/Pages/chronic-kidney-disease.aspx>.

Education Updates

Cynthia M. Miracle, MD

Associate Clinical Professor of Medicine
Division of Nephrology-Hypertension
Fellowship Training Program Director
Director of the Renal Clinic, VA San Diego Health Care System

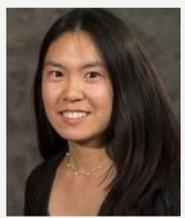


The UC San Diego Nephrology Fellowship Training Program is going strong. As many know, the number of applicants and new physicians entering careers in Nephrology continued to be low in 2016; nationally only 60% of nephrology fellowship slots were filled. This makes recruitment of outstanding nephrology applicants extremely competitive with most of the top academic programs competing for the same applicants. However, we had an outstanding group of applicants to our fellowship program this year, and we are very proud of our stellar incoming class. Drs. Hong, Kashi, and Jabbour will be joining our two-year clinical track, and Dr. Kumar will be joining our three-year T32 funded research track. We look forward to them joining our UC San Diego family. Our existing fellows continue their outstanding work in multiple domains. With the recent opening of the Jacobs Medical Center, the in-patient consult services at UC San Diego have been busy, and provide a large number of interesting and complex cases to our clinical trainees. Despite our busy clinical services, the fellows have made scholarly contributions and been active in educating UC San Diego medical students. In research, several fellows have received prestigious research grants, first-authored manuscripts, and presented at the ASN Kidney Week national meeting over the past several months. Dr. Charles Ginsberg received funding through the competitive NIH Loan Repayment Program and will focus his research on vitamin D catabolism and bone and vascular disease in CKD patients. Dr. Alex Bullen was chosen as a finalist in the ASN Innovations in Kidney Education Contest with his “Choose your own adventure” style teaching tool focusing on social and cultural determinants of blood pressure. Further examples of recent research projects by the current fellows are summarized in the Fellowship Scholarly Activity section of this newsletter.

Over the past few years we have introduced some innovative teaching programs to meet the needs of our fellows. The most exciting of these is the Nephrology Business Leadership University (NBLUniv.com) which is a joint venture with UC San Diego, Dallas Renal Group and US Renal Care. It was created to help educate our fellows on the business aspects of nephrology, an area not usually covered in medical education. This last August our senior fellows spent a week in Dallas with UC San Diego alum, Samir Nangia, and his nephrology group learning about Transitioning from Fellowship to Practice, Practice Management, Marketing your Practice, Coding and Billing, Dialysis Medical Directorship, Managing an Access Center and Contract Negotiations to name just a few of the topics covered. The program was a success with wonderful feedback from our fellows. Due to requests from other training programs, in 2017 we will be inviting a limited number of fellows from across the country to attend.

Overall, despite a challenging environment with fewer individuals interested in pursuing nephrology careers, the Division’s mission to “train future national and international leaders in nephrology” is thriving.

Meet Our New Fellows



Annie Hong, MD
Residency: Cedars-Sinai Medical Center
Medical School: Loma Linda University



Kioumars (Kew) Blourian Kashi, MD
Residency: Lincoln Medical & Mental Health
Medical School: Fasa University of Medical Science



Moussa Jabbour, MD
Residency: NYU
Medical School: University of Tishreen



Ujjala Kumar, MBBS
Residency: William Beaumont Hospital
Medical School: Dow Medical College

Fellowship Scholarly Activity



Alexander Bullen, MD (Mentor: Prabhleen Singh, MD)

Alexander Bullen, Mita M. Shah. De Novo Post-Streptococcal Glomerulonephritis as the Cause of Transplant Acute Kidney Injury. ASN Kidney Week Poster: SA-PO004 Presented November 19, 2016, Chicago, IL

“Choose-your-own-adventure”

An update on “Choose-your-own-adventure” **Dr. Bullen** and Dr. Rifkin created a game where the user is a nephrologist who has just been appointed as the new Health Commissioner of a city in Louisiana. The Health Commissioner's main duty is to achieve better control of hypertension in this stroke-belt city by implementing different nonpharmacological interventions such as management of obesity, decreasing sodium intake, adding pharmacists to the care of patients, among others. You'll have fun while being while being challenged with a limited budget and constant pressure from the unmerciful media and the Governor of Louisiana.

You can learn more by watching our video at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2nkIFIE5IM>

The game can be downloaded from:

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BwiHIyLyzrkScGJIWk1IUXNfZFE>

Charles Ginsberg, MD (Mentor: Joachim Ix, MD)

Ginsberg C, Ix JH. Nicotinamide and phosphate homeostasis in chronic kidney disease. *Curr Opin Nephrol Hypertens*. 2016 Jul;25(4):285-91. PMID: 27219041

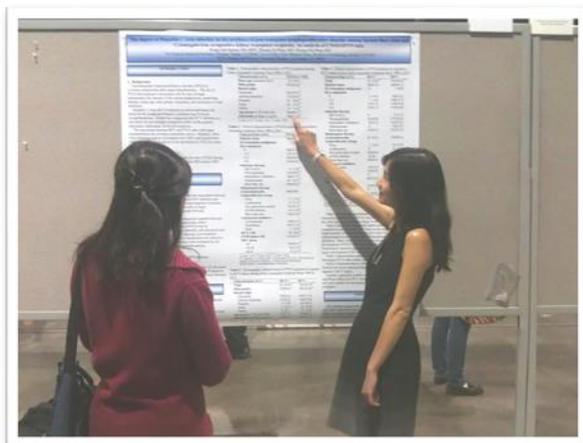
Mark Hepokoski, MD (Mentor: Prabhleen Singh, MD)

Mark Hepokoski, Joshua A. Englert, Rebecca M. Baron, Laura E. Crotty Alexander, Mark M. Fuster, Jeremy R. Beitler, Atul Malhotra, Prabhleen Singh. Ventilator Induced Lung Injury Increases Expression of Endothelial Inflammatory Mediators in the Kidney. *American Journal of Physiology - Renal Physiology* ePublished 9 November 2016

Mark Hepokoski, Laura E. Crotty Alexander, Prabhleen Singh. Pulmonary CD40 Levels Are Increased 24 Hours after Ischemia-Reperfusion Kidney Injury ASN Kidney Week Poster: TH-PO083. Presented November 17, 2016, Chicago, IL

Mark Hepokoski, Elanore Hall, Hai Pham, Ying Li, Prabhleen Singh. Mitochondrial Function during Injury and Recovery from AKI. ASN Kidney Week Poster: SA-PO150. Presented November 19, 2016, Chicago, IL

Fellowship Scholarly Activity cont'd



Hoang Anh Nguyen, MD (Mentor: Dena Rifkin, MD)

Nguyen HA, Miracle CM, Anderson CAM, Rifkin DE. The association of depression and perceived health status among individuals with chronic kidney disease: an analysis of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2011-2012. Nephrology for the Consultant Conference Oral Presentation January 27, 2016, San Diego, CA.

Nguyen HA, Rifkin DE. Cliff dive or slippery slope: Trajectories of kidney function decline and implications for survival after hemodialysis initiation. *Am J Kid Dis* 2016 Aug;68(2):173-5. PMID: 27477356.

Anderson CAM, **Nguyen HA**, Rifkin DE. Nutrition interventions in chronic kidney disease. *Med Clin North Am* 2016 Nov;100(6):1265-83. PMID: 27745594.

Nguyen HA, Miracle CM, Anderson CAM, Rifkin DE. The association of depression, perceived health status, and quality of life among individuals with chronic kidney disease: an analysis of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2011-2012. ASN Kidney Week Poster: SA-PO953. Presented November 19, 2016, Chicago, IL

Aleksandra Novikov, MD (Mentor: Volker Vallon, MD)

Aleksandra Novikov, Yiling Fu, Akira Onishi, Panai Song, Winnie Huang, Volker Vallon. Fractional Uric Acid Excretion Is Increased in Mice Lacking SGLT2 ASN Kidney Week Poster: FR-P0365. Presented November 18, 2016, Chicago, IL.

Gina Woods, MD (Mentor: Deborah Kado, MD)

Rutledge T, Skoyen JA, Wiese JA, Ober KM, **Woods GN**. A comparison of MOVE! versus TeleMOVE programs for weight loss in Veterans with obesity. *Obes Res Clin Pract*. 2016 Dec 5. pii: S1871-403X(16)30420-3. PMID: 27931766

Woods GN, Huang MH, Cawthon PM, Laughlin GA, Schousboe JT, McDaniels-Davidson C, Cauley JA, Orwoll E, Barrett-Connor E, Kado DM; SHBG, Sex Steroids, and Kyphosis in Older Men: The MrOS Study. Osteoporotic Fractures in Men (MrOS) Study Research Group *J Bone Miner Res*. 2016 Dec;31(12):2123-2128. PMID: 27355438

Woods GN, Saitman A, Gao H, Clarke NJ, Fitzgerald RL, Chi NW. A Young Woman With Recurrent Gestational Hypercalcemia and Acute Pancreatitis Caused by CYP24A1 Deficiency. *J Bone Miner Res*. 2016 Oct;31(10):1841-1844. PMID: 27105398



Our Fellows, Charles, Sasha, Anh and Alex enjoying the sights of Chicago while at ASN this year.

Conferences



The UC San Diego School of Medicine, Division of Nephrology-Hypertension, would like to invite you to attend the **36th Annual Advanced Nephrology: Nephrology for the Consultant** conference to be held January 26-28, 2017 at the San Diego Marriott in La Jolla, California. This course has been designed with the practicing nephrologist in mind and should prove valuable in the day to day practices of nephrology.

The **14th Annual Nephrology Young Investigators Forum (YIF)** will be held on Wednesday, January 25, 2017, and will feature research presentations by nephrology fellows training in the Western United States. We encourage attendees of the *Nephrology for the Consultant* conference to attend this free, accredited, bonus session and get a glimpse into the research of these energetic future nephrologists.



The **5th Annual UC San Diego Essentials and Advances in Apheresis** will build on the great success of the first four conferences. The 2½-day multidisciplinary program is designed to appeal to first time attendees and to returning participants. Expert reviews of the essentials will be augmented with selected new topics and discussions of advances and innovations.

Vision Statement



Vision Statement:

Patient Care:

To be recognized as an international center of excellence in nephrology, hypertension, and kidney transplantation clinical care.

Research:

Through collaboration and innovation, to advance basic scientific discovery and translational medicine, resulting in the delivery of cutting-edge treatment for our patients and for others around the world.

Education:

To train future national and international leaders in nephrology through providing outstanding, comprehensive training in all aspects of Nephrology, Hypertension, and Transplantation.

Public Policy:

To develop regional, national, and international leaders in shaping public policy to advance health, professionalism, and investigative policy in nephrology and hypertension.

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UC San Diego Nephrology Clinic Referral

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