



The Georgetown-Howard Universities Center for Clinical & Translational Science Mentored Career Development Core

Announces:

2021 KL2 Scholars

After our 11th highly competitive application cycle, unfortunately delayed due to COVID-related research closures, the Georgetown-Howard Universities Center for Clinical and Translational Science (GHUCCTS) is pleased to announce the appointment of **Dr. Maurice Fluitt and Dr. Roxanne Mirabal-Beltran** as **KL2 Scholars**. These new awardees, their research projects, and training plans are emblematic of our program objectives in that they pair a highly-promising scholar-trainee with a mentor team that includes senior colleagues from across disciplines, departments, campuses, and institutions to pursue research that depends upon collaborations and methods from outside the scholars' discipline, local research environment, or past experiences.

The GHUCCTS KL2 program is analogous both to the original National Institutes of Health "roadmap" K12 Clinical and Translational Research Scholars program and to individual K-series awards, by providing up to three years of protected time and research support, focused on developing early-career faculty investigators through a multidisciplinary-mentored research experience to enable their success as independent, extramurally-funded investigators, preferably in programs of multidisciplinary, collaborative translational team science.

Maurice B. Fluitt, PhD is Assistant Professor at the Howard University College of Medicine in the Division of Endocrinology and Metabolism. He will investigate the role "*MicroRNAs as Early Markers and Mediators of Diabetic Kidney Disease*". Dr. Fluitt is investigating the use of microRNAs as early predictive biomarkers and mediators of autophagic response in diabetic kidney disease. Dr. Fluitt previously completed his PhD at Howard and a GHUCCTS TL1-supported postdoctoral fellowship at Georgetown. He is only our second TL1 scholar to progress to a KL2 award. His multidisciplinary and multiinstitutional mentoring team is led by Dr. Ben Afzali (Immunoregulation Section, Kidney Disease Branch, NIDDK), and includes Drs. Gail Nunlee-Bland and Hassan Ashktorab (Howard University), Dr. Carolyn Ecelbarger (Georgetown), and Dr. Alison Kriegel (Department of Physiology, Medical College of Wisconsin).

Roxanne Mirabal-Beltran, PhD, RN, is Assistant Professor in the Department of Professional Nursing Practice at the Georgetown University School of Nursing & Health Studies. Her community-based, participatory research primarily focuses on the "*Impact of a Fertility and Pregnancy Educational Intervention in an Urban Setting on Women's Knowledge Level of Fertility, Pregnancy, and Health-Seeking Behaviors to Build a Culture of Health*". She is investigating the effect of an educational intervention on maternal healthcare knowledge level of women living in DC's Ward 5 and the feasibility

of delivering this intervention in community laundromats. Her mentoring team is led by Drs. Laura Linnan (Department of Health Behavior, Gillings School of Global Public Health, University of North Carolina) and Linda Gallo (Department of Psychology, San Diego State University where she co-leads the Hispanic Community Health Study/Study of Latinos). Her mentoring team includes Drs. Jane Fall-Dickson (Department of Professional Nursing Practice, School of Nursing and Health Studies) and Alejandra Hurtado de Mendoza Casaus (Cancer Prevention and Control Program, Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center, and a former KL2 scholar), both at Georgetown.

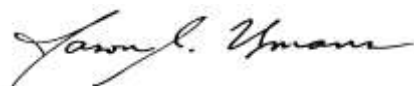
Drs. Fluitt and Mirabal-Beltran will join our continuing KL2 Scholars including:

Haiyan He, PhD, Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology at Georgetown University will work on “*A novel protein-degradation-based mechanism for fast homeostatic plasticity and its implication in neurodegenerative diseases.*” Dr. He is investigating the *in vivo* function of a newly discovered neuronal membrane-associated proteasome as a fast-homeostatic mechanism and its potential link to neurodegenerative diseases. She is mentored by Dr. Seth Margolis from the Departments of Biological Chemistry and Neuroscience at Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine with co-mentorship by Drs. Dan Pak, Brent Harris, and Kathy Maguire-Zeiss, at Georgetown University Medical Center.

Annie J. Kruger, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Division of Gastroenterology at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital continues her research on “*Mechanisms of chemokine antagonism in generating reparative macrophages and inhibiting hepatic stellate cell activity.*” With mentorship from Georgetown University Medical Center, she is evaluating the effects of chemokine receptor 2 and 5 antagonists in decreasing the pro-inflammatory and pro-fibrotic activity of macrophages and stellate cells, respectively, in non-alcoholic steatohepatitis, one of most prevalent liver diseases in the world today.

Katherine G. Michel, PhD, MPH, Instructor of Medicine at Georgetown University continues her work on “*Quantifying immune functionality and crosstalk with the cervicovaginal microbiome among women who naturally control HIV infection*”. With mentorship from Georgetown University, the NIH, and the University of Maryland, she seeks to understand the complex relationship between mucosal microbiota and the immune system among women living with HIV, to refine HIV therapeutics and prevention as well as improve women’s health.

Please join us in congratulating our new and continuing KL2 scholars.



Jason G. Umans, MD, PhD
Associate Professor and KL2
Program Director



Charles D. Howell, MD
Professor and Associate Program
Director



Kathryn Sandberg, PhD
Professor and Associate Program
Director