

THE TRIBUNE

APRIL 2023

Translational Triumphs Research Day 2023 Showcases Success, Inspires Investigators



Nakita Lovelady, Ph.D. (right), shares a laugh with Melissa Zielinski, Ph.D., during the Research Day poster session.

As a junior faculty researcher, Nakita Lovelady, Ph.D., discovered that TRI Research Day 2023 was an inspiring experience, starting with breakfast.

Lovelady and about a dozen of her peers met the morning of April 4 at Heifer International headquarters with Duane A. Mitchell M.D., Ph.D., an esteemed clinical researcher from the University of Florida (UF), and the Research Day keynote speaker.

“Dr. Mitchell had some great career advice for us as junior faculty who are trying to grow and become independent researchers,”

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Dear Colleagues,

Our mission at TRI is to help facilitate game-changing research that addresses Arkansas' most challenging health issues. Thanks to talented researchers such as yourselves, we had a lot to celebrate at TRI Research Day 2023.

About 150 of you took a break from your important work to either participate in or simply enjoy the day's oral presentations, poster session and networking at Heifer International headquarters in Little Rock.

Eight TRI-supported faculty and post-doctoral trainees gave brief oral presentations of their findings, and there were 33 posters. The audience included researchers from UAMS, including the Northwest Regional Campus, Arkansas Children's Research Institute, and Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System. These exemplars of our programs demonstrated that they are successfully leveraging TRI support to meet the state's health challenges and further their research goals.

We were also fortunate to have Duane A. Mitchell, M.D., Ph.D., a venerated translational research leader from the University of Florida, as our keynote speaker. His story of navigating a productive early career and his groundbreaking development of brain tumor immunotherapies was an inspiration to new and veteran faculty alike.

Evaluations from attendees have been overwhelmingly positive, with many requests for more activities. We have taken the recommendations to heart with plans to expand the event to two days. Please mark your calendar for March 26 and 27, 2024!
Sincerely,

Laura James, M.D.
Director, TRI
Associate Vice Chancellor for Clinical
and Translational Research, UAMS

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Duane A. Mitchell, M.D., Ph.D., from the University of Florida, provided the event's keynote presentation.

Translational Science Institute, included similar advice in his keynote presentation and discussed his work developing novel brain tumor immunotherapies that have been translated into first-in-human clinical trials and multi-center phase-two studies. The Phyllis Kottler Friedman Professor in the Department of Neurosurgery has been recognized nationally for his achievements, including this year's inaugural Louis W. Sullivan, M.D. Award from the American Society for Clinical Investigation.

said Lovelady, a KL2 Mentored Research Career Development Award Program scholar and assistant professor in the Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health.

The second annual Research Day drew about 150 research faculty and staff and featured TRI-supported projects with eight oral presentations and a best poster competition involving 33 posters.

Lovelady said Mitchell, a pioneer in brain tumor immunotherapies, told the group about the importance of focusing, developing good mentoring relationships, and figuring out what to prioritize in their careers so they can reach the necessary benchmarks.

"Hearing his stories about starting out as a researcher was also very inspiring and helpful," she said.

Mitchell, director of the UF Clinical and



Duane A. Mitchell,
M.D., Ph.D.

In Their Own Words

Research Day was an opportunity for researchers to network, gather ideas and feed off the enthusiasm of their UAMS peers – many they saw in person for the first time.

Here is what some had to say:



"As a junior faculty, taking part in TRI Research Day is almost like exposure therapy—being exposed to multiple researchers' projects, wins and barriers always gets my creative juices flowing with future health services research ideas." — **Leah Tobey, PT, D.P.T., MBA**, an instructor and academic detailer at the Center for Health Services Research, UAMS College of Medicine Department of Psychiatry, and a clinician at the UAMS Chronic Pain Clinic

"Research Day was extremely interesting, and it was quite useful for me hearing about the discoveries that were presented and having the opportunity to meet new people, including potential new collaborators." — **Oleg Karaduta, M.D.**, director of research and assistant professor, College of Health Professions Department of Physician Assistant Studies



"The presentations were really good. It shows how much TRI funding has been helping so many young researchers, and even established researchers, to extend their research. It's exciting to see all of the wonderful work that researchers have done at UAMS." — **Chenghui Li, Ph.D.**, associate professor, College of Pharmacy

"It's really nice to see how enthusiastic everyone is about translational research. Last year I was here, but totally fresh and green having just graduated from the Department of Biomedical Informatics. This year I'm excited to be here to network, learn and present on behalf of the College of Pharmacy." — **Adrian Williams, M.S.**, research program manager, College of Pharmacy



"Today is a great way to see what kind of research initiatives are happening around the institution that I would never have known about otherwise." — **Kristen Alexander, MPH, M.P.S.**, Brain Injury Program, Institute for Digital Health & Innovation



"I enjoy attending TRI Research Day because it promotes idea generation for future research projects and potential collaborations. Hearing about the ongoing and completed projects provides great role models for clinical researchers to understand various ways they can get involved and utilize the different TRI opportunities." — **Meghan Breckling, Pharm.D., BCACP**, academic detailing pharmacist, and clinical pharmacy specialist, ambulatory care

"I enjoyed seeing everyone and learning about all the different research projects that are supported by TRI. Being a KL2 scholar, it was great seeing all of the other scholars in person and to hear everyone talk about their research." — **Nakita Lovelady, Ph.D.**, assistant professor, Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health.

Research Day 2023 Poster Contest Winners



TRI Director Laura James, M.D., presents the Overall Impact poster award to Eva Woodward, Ph.D., and Irenia Ball.

Poster awards were presented in five categories, judged by five faculty leaders. The winners, prizes and posters titles are:

Overall Content, **Cody Ashby, Ph.D.**, assistant professor, College of Medicine Department of Biomedical Informatics; prize – paid manuscript submission fee

Investigating the Landscape of Alternative Splicing in Multiple Myeloma

Overall Visual, **Jennifer Rumpel, M.D.**, assistant professor, College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics; prize – free statistical consultation for study planning

ADVANCE: Advancing Care of Neonates with Acute Kidney Injury Utilizing the Children's Hospitals Neonatal Consortium Database

Overall Discussion, **Akilah Jefferson, M.D.**, assistant professor, College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics; prize – paid manuscript submission fee

Relationships Between Geospatial Factors and Adverse Outcomes in Medicaid-enrolled Children with Asthma

Overall Impact, **Eva Woodward, Ph.D.**, assistant professor, College of Medicine Department of Psychiatry; prize – manuscript submission

Adapting Suicide Safety Planning Intervention for Veterans to be Delivered Outside Healthcare Settings in Rural Areas

People's Choice, **Samjhana Shakya, Ph.D.** candidate, Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health; prize – \$25 gift card, UAMS Nutritional Services

A Virtual De-Implementation Approach in Engaging ECEs to Reduce Negative Feeding Practices during the Covid-19 Era: A Mixed-Methods Study

TRI Study of the Month

UAMS Principal Investigator: Clare Nesmith, M.D., associate professor, College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics

Summary: A multi-site blinded trial comparing a rapid-wean intervention to a slow-wean intervention for newborns with neonatal opioid withdrawal syndrome (NOWS). Treatment is with either morphine or methadone. The rapid-wean cohort receives 15% reductions in either morphine or methadone, and the slow-wean cohort receives 10% reductions.

Significance: If the fast weaning proves to be safe and effective, it would reduce an infant's time in the neonatal intensive care unit by several days.

TRI Services: Medicare coverage analysis, study budget development, administration of Clinical Trial Management System, clinical research coordinator support, and post-award financial management

Sponsor: Advancing Clinical Trials in Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal (ACT NOW) Program with Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD).



Principal Investigator Clare Nesmith, M.D. (center front), and Co-Investigator Tara Venable, M.D. (back center), with members of TRI's research coordinator team, including the study's lead coordinator, Allyson Cheatham, B.S.N., RN (front left). Other coordinators are (l-r), Shellah Rogers, B.S.N., RN, Diana Gregory, RN, and Vallon Williams, D.N.P., APRN.

Oral Presentations Highlight Work in TRI-Supported Programs

Research Day 2023 included oral presentations from eight researchers in four TRI-supported programs, listed below with their presentation titles:

KL2 Mentored Research Career Development Scholars

Akilah Jefferson, M.D., assistant professor, College of Medicine Department of Pediatrics, Division of Allergy and Immunology
Assessing Risk, Outcomes, and Disparities in Pediatric Asthma

Cody Ashby, Ph.D., assistant professor, College of Medicine Department of Biomedical Informatics
The Impact of Race and Location on Multiple Myeloma Outcomes in Arkansas

TL1 Health Sciences Innovation and Entrepreneurship Trainees

Tiffany Miles, Ph.D., postdoctoral fellow, College of Medicine Department of Neurobiology & Developmental Sciences
A HSIE Scholar's Pursuit Toward Translational Research

Julia Tobacyk, Ph.D., postdoctoral fellow, College of Medicine Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology
Treatment Strategies for Opioid Use Disorder in Pregnant Women

Pilot Awardees

Nick Zaller, Ph.D., professor, Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health Department of Health Behavior & Health Education
Proposed Development of the Criminal Justice Translation and Clinical Science (CJ-TRACS) Network

Eva Woodward, Ph.D., assistant professor, College of Medicine Department of Psychiatry; clinical psychologist and investigator, Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System
Adapting Safety Planning Intervention for Veterans to Be Delivered Peer-to-Peer Outside Healthcare Settings in Rural Areas

Implementation Science Scholars

Johnathan Goree, M.D., associate professor and director, Division of Chronic Pain, College of Medicine Department of Anesthesiology
Implementation of Safe Opioid Prescribing

Elizabeth Riley, DNP, APRN, CPNP-AC, PED-BC, RNC-NIC-CNE, ANEF, clinical associate professor, College of Nursing, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit
Bedside Interprofessional Rounding (IPR) in the NICU



Cody Ashby, Ph.D., was among the Research Day presenters.