directors’ perspective

Sometimes people wonder just what the CTSC does. This is probably because, for the most part, except for the exciting pilot grants we fund, the CTSC does not directly conduct research. Rather, we facilitate the performance of clinical and translational research.

In past issues of this newsletter (available on our website), we’ve given some examples of this facilitation. We’re especially proud of our role in training clinical and translational scientists, as in our K12 program and our T32. We make available important research tools such as proteomics, genomics, fluorescence activated cell sorting, and access to induced pluripotent stem cells. Some of these are located on the Case campus, some at the CCF, but all are available to the members of the CTSC. Clinical research units located at MetroHealth, University Hospitals, and the Cleveland Clinic offer inpatient and outpatient support to our investigators. The CTSC helps maintain the core facilities and subsidizes the fees that are charged for these services. In addition, we try to make research easier. For example, one of the achievements of this past year is the creation of inter-institutional agreements among the IRBs at Metro, UH, Case, and the Cleveland Clinic to facilitate approval of multisite trials.

In this issue, you can learn about the functioning of one core that does provide direct support to research - the Pilot program (see “Featured Core”). We also report in our newsletter (under the column header “Building Collaborations”) successful clinical and translational research that the CTSC touched through the infrastructure and facilitation we provide – and on the ways in which our clinical research units support NIH-funded research projects awarded at our partner institutions.

We’ve been able not only to tap into the existing resources of northeast Ohio’s strong research and academic facilities, but also to create entirely new resources. Our goal is to provide clinical and translational researchers with the same sort of institutionalized, systematic consultation, support, and resources that have, for many decades, helped researchers in the basic sciences. To facilitate access to our services for researchers, we’ve recently added staff to our Research Concierge office (email ctsc-research-concierge@case.edu), the initial point of contact between investigators and the CTSC. We encourage you to take advantage of this remarkable service.

Pamela B. Davis, M.D., PhD
Principal Investigator
Dean, Case School of Medicine and
Vice President for Medical Affairs

Richard Rudick, M.D.
Co-Principal Investigator
Vice Chair of the Neurological Institute at the Cleveland Clinic

core resources

A wide variety of professionals who hold primary positions in the School of Medicine, The Cleveland Clinic, MetroHealth and University Hospitals, devote a portion of their time to the CTSC. Organized into twelve groups by their area of expertise or interest, these people are at the heart of the initiative. They:
- help design research studies and research tools
- facilitate clinical-investigator interfaces
- facilitate community outreach
- educate everyone involved
- administer and track all CTSC activities.

Featured Core: Pilot Grant Program

To stimulate new translational research, new researchers, and additional funding, our funding mechanism is built primarily around pilot or seed-money funding. Since September 2007, the CTSC has awarded over $2 million in pilot funding.

Each year we offer a variety of pilot grants which are supported by national CTSA funds; our affiliated institutions of Case School of Medicine, Cleveland Clinic, MetroHealth and University Hospitals, as well as from Case Schools of Dental Medicine and of Nursing; or through partnership grants with the Case Coulter Translational Research Partnership and others. Our Practice-Based Research Network Core offers an accessible Micro Pilot Grant which seeks to catalyze research studies led by PBRN members, leaders, and/or community partners.

This Core Resource is co-directed by Jeffrey L. Duerk, MD and Charis Eng, MD, PhD. Both Carolyn Apperson-Hansen, Research Concierge and Ginny Petrie, Executive Director assume active roles in administering the program. The selection process is guided by a Scientific Review Committee Co-Chaired by Kingman Strohl, MD of University Hospitals and Roy Silverstein, MD of The Cleveland Clinic, and a well-defined set of criteria for success.

To learn more about these funding opportunities, explore pages on our website at both casemed.case.edu/ctsc/cores/pilotgrant.cfm and casemed.case.edu/ctsc/researchers/internal_funding.cfm.

Visit our website casemed.case.edu/ctsc/ for more information about the Clinical and Translational Science Collaborative of northeast Ohio.
building collaborations
A significant reason we are called the Clinical and Translational Science Collaborative is to recognize the important role others play in the advancement of community based clinical research in northeast Ohio and to extend our reach into the community of health care providers and citizens. In the past year, we have added partnerships with more than 20 outside agencies, some based on individual or agency relationships, some by connecting clinical practices through our Practice Based Research Network, and some through the receipt of a Regional Extension Center Grant from the State of Ohio to enhance deployment of health information technology in a five county area.

Clinical research opportunities have expanded considerably over the years of our Award. The Practice Based Research Network has grown their network to include fourteen practices which are currently implementing or developing twenty-six research studies. The Clinical Research Units, both inpatient and outpatient, are looking to expand beyond their hospital bases to establish community-based CRUs. Project REECH, a program administered through the Community Research Partnership Core Resource, has partnered with community organizations to jointly conduct research that addresses community-identified health concerns; they are beginning with studies in the Detroit-Shoreway and Hough neighborhoods on the impact foreclosure has on health; other studies are planned as is an active participant recruitment effort in Cleveland neighborhoods.

Close association with many important regional health organizations and 1,765 health care providers throughout Lorain, Cuyahoga, Lake, Geauga and Ashtabula counties has come through the recently awarded Regional Extension Center Grant to advance the use of health information technology/electronic health records. The design and early implementation of the REC grant will lead to more rapid implementation of research projects based on electronic health record data, and the collaborations will likely have numerous implications for other clinical research.

The CTSC played a significant role in rescuing the NetWellness public health information website from state funding cuts, assuring both its continuance and its noncommercial character; we expect it to become the chief source of information about patient based research on the web. We actively collaborate on health education programs in the public schools, in community health centers, and with such organizations as the Great Lakes Science Center and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation/Black Health Empowerment Project. When the Community Research Partnership Core Resource organized a first cultural competency tour in collaboration with several neighborhood health clinics it was a sell out to the researcher community.

Our networking along these paths will continue to grow and we welcome suggestions for new collaborations that help educate, that expand and improve clinical research, or that improve participant recruitment and perceptions.

ac-ro-nyms /ˌækroʊnɪm/ pronounced [ak-ruh-nim]
–noun 1. a word formed from the initial letters or groups of letters of words in a set phrase or series of words/ Love them or hate them, we use a lot of them. How well are they understood? Test yourself here.

1. PI 2. IRB 3. DSMB/DSMP (answers to the right)

frequently asked questions
Q: Is someone else working on my research question?
A: Locally, our Research Concierge office (see their pages on our website at casemed.case.edu/ctsc/concierge/) may know and be able to share information with you. Nationally, visit the CTSA’s new ShareCenter at ctsasharecenter.org where you can learn what others are doing to solve problems you may face or you might post a solution you’ve found helpful so that others can benefit from your innovations. Materials are organized into categories intended to help researchers find resources and people relevant to their work and areas of interest. You’ll find templates and surveys, job descriptions and communication products, K12 review criteria and training materials, product assessments and much more. Requires log in.

Q: How can I learn more about the National Science Foundation proposal and merit review process?
A: Attend an NSF workshop at the University of Toledo, September 21, 2010 for an overview of the Foundation, its mission, priorities, and budget as well as the proposal process. Representatives from the seven NSF directorates and the Office of International Science and Engineering and the Office of Cyberinfrastructure will make presentations on their programs and will also be available informally and in breakout sessions for discussions of potential research proposals. Registration of $25.00 is required; space is limited. Call 703-292-7733 or 419-530-2729 for additional information.

Q: What is “comparative effectiveness research”? Why is it important?
A: Comparative effectiveness research is concerned with evaluating the relative merits of drugs or treatment options developed through clinical research. There is broad interest in CER by researchers and others; the federal government has recently taken a strong interest in CER that ties effectiveness to cost and outcomes. Our CTSC is building infrastructure to support CER initiatives for all institutional investigators by establishing a core resource under the direction of Dr. Jackson Wright, and serving as a study site for a Clinical Research Unit-based multi-center comparative effectiveness trial. Dr. Wright, Professor of Medicine and Program Director of the University Hospitals Case Medical Center Clinical Research Center is currently developing a network of people from all CTSC institutions who are interested in CER and connecting our activities to the national initiative.

Q: How can I learn more about the CTSC?
A: Explore our recently revised website at casemed.case.edu/ctsc/. If you are a researcher who has not yet connected to the broad array of services available to you through the CTSC, please read and/or download our Researcher’s Welcome Packet (linked from the homepage). It will give you a very specific overview of how to connect to the CTSC. Or, try our online Research Concierge Chatline, a recent website enhancement.