

Spring 2026



NIDDK grant P30 DK120515

In this issue:

- Updates from SDDRC Cores
- New Center Members
- Center News
- SDDRC P&F Grants
- Upcoming Center Events
- Recent Center Publications



Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share the latest edition of the SDDRC Newsletter.

In this issue, you will find updates on our Core services and Center events, highlights of the 2025–26 Pilot and Feasibility grant awardees, and recent accomplishments of our members, including a summary of their latest publications. We are also excited to announce the continued availability of Proteomics services through the Preclinical Models Core, further enhancing the resources and support offered to our Center community.

Thank you for your ongoing engagement and support. We hope this newsletter provides valuable information, fosters connection, and highlights the impactful work of our members.

Best wishes and much research success,

Bernd Schnabl and Lars Eckmann

SDDRC Co-Directors





NIDDK grant P30 DK120515

Core Services and Updates

Human Translational Core

- Access to well-characterized human biospecimens for patients with Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) and Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD).
- Access to archival clinical GI/liver tissue samples (stained or unstained slides) from the Pathology Department. This service can be obtained by submitting the sample request form located on the Center website, or via email to the Center.
- Consultation in pathology, biostatistics, protocol design, and training, contact: sddrc@health.ucsd.edu.
- Weekly Biostatistical office hour of our Center biostatistician Dr. Xinlian Zhang via Zoom, every Tuesday from 9:00 am - 10:00 am, location: [Weekly Office Hour](#)

Preclinical Models Core

- Services in histology and microscopy including tissue preparation, help in establishing proper fixation, routine and specialized staining, slide scanning, multiplex immunofluorescence, state-of-the-art microscopy, second harmonic generation collagen imaging, intravital imaging, and image analysis. The SDDRC members are eligible for a subsidy which will be applied via cost transfer to your paid invoices to LJI. Contact sddrc@health.ucsd.edu.
- Access to germ-free and gnotobiotic mice as models of liver and gastrointestinal disease. SDDRC members are eligible for a subsidy for using this service.
- Access to Human Liver Resource services, including isolated liver cells and tissue samples.
- SDDRC histopathology office hours by our veterinary pathologist Dr. Kenneth Kim, DACVP, 3rd Thursday of the month, 12:00-1:00pm, location: [Google Meet](#)
- Histology office hours - Zbigniew Mikulski, PhD, 2nd Tuesday of each month, 1:00 –2:00 pm, location: <https://meet.google.com/xrn-jzzg-ggu>
- Proteomics services through the Collaborative Center for Proteomics led by Dr. David Gonzalez.

Microbiomics and Functional Genomics Core

- Sample processing
 - ◊ DNA/RNA extraction for microbiomics (stool, tissues)
 - ◊ DNA/RNA extraction for functional genomics (tissues)
- Sequencing-based assays (with IGM), Microbiome sequencing (16S, ITS, shotgun), RNA-seq, Single-cell sequencing (RNA, ATAC, Multiome) and other sequencing-based assays (e.g. miRNA-Seq, ChIP-Seq)
- Bioinformatics support
 - ◊ Microbiomics (e.g. OTU, α/β diversity, shotgun metagenomics, archiving)
 - ◊ Functional genomics (e.g. transcript quantitation, systems biology interpretation)
- Consultation and training in specific experimental and analytical techniques related to microbiomics and functional genomics, contact sddrc@health.ucsd.edu .
- SDDRC members are eligible for a subsidy for using the Core services
- Spatial Transcriptomics services

Spring 2026



NIDDK grant P30 DK120515

New SDDRC Members



M. Raj Rajasekaran, PhD

Professor of Urology

UC San Diego School of Medicine

Research Pharmacologist, VA San Diego Healthcare System

Email: c6hsu@health.ucsd.edu

Research Interests: Dr. Rajasekaran's research focuses on preventing injury and age-related anal sphincter dysfunction by targeting key fibrogenic signaling pathways. His program uses rigorous preclinical models to uncover mechanisms driving muscle degeneration and fibrosis, and to evaluate therapies aimed at restoring sphincter structure and function, with particular attention to childbirth-related injury in women. His work bridges mechanistic discovery with translational intervention, addressing a major and often under-recognized source of disability in aging and postpartum populations.



Miguel Reina-Campos, PhD

Assistant Professor, Pharmacology Department,

La Jolla Institute for Immunology

Email: miguel@lji.org

Research Interests: Dr. Reina-Campos investigates the functional architecture of CD8⁺ T cell tissue immunity to understand how these cells provide long-lasting protection against infection and cancer. Using in vivo genetics, metabolomics, and spatial transcriptomics in mouse and human systems, his team defines the metabolic and spatial organization of tissue-resident memory CD8⁺ T cells.

Spring 2026



NIDDK grant P30 DK120515

New SDDRC Members



Fabian Rivera-Chávez, PhD

Assistant Professor, Departments of Pediatrics and Molecular Biology,
UC San Diego

Email: fcrivera@health.ucsd.edu

Research Interests: Dr. Rivera-Chávez studies how bacterial toxins disrupt intestinal metabolism, immune responses, and the gut microbiota, with the goal of identifying host pathways that can be targeted to prevent or treat diarrheal diseases. His work also examines how toxin-producing bacteria and early-life antibiotic exposure alter beneficial microbes and protective immunity, and how these effects can be reversed with gut-directed therapies.



Wei Ying, PhD

Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine, Division of Endocrinology
and Metabolism, UC San Diego

Email: weying@health.ucsd.edu

Research Interests: Dr. Ying's laboratory primarily focuses on cell-cell communication and its role in the pathogenesis of metabolic diseases, including insulin resistance, impaired insulin secretion, gastrointestinal dysfunction, and hepatic steatosis/fibrosis.

Spring 2026



NIDDK grant P30 DK120515

2025 Clarivate Highly Cited Researchers

Clarivate provides research analytics and identifies “researchers who have demonstrated significant influence in their chosen field or fields through the publication of multiple highly cited papers during the last decade.”

In 2025, Clarivate recognized 7,131 Highly Cited Researchers worldwide who rank in the top 1% by citations for their field and publication year in the Web of Science™ citation index. These rankings are regarded as a distinguished recognition of exceptional research influence and leadership. Congratulations to the following Center members featured in the prestigious 2025 Clarivate listing!



Center News

Congratulations to SDDRC members on the following achievements and recognitions:



Seema S. Aceves, MD, PhD

Received an American Partnership for Eosinophilic Disorders (APFED) grant.
Elected to the Association of American Physicians for her work in EoE.



John Carethers, MD

Awarded Judith L. Swain, MD and Edward W. Holmes, MD
Chancellor's Endowed Chair appointment, received a Gift from
the Yosemite Group for research proposal "Mitigating loss-of-
function of MSH3 in colorectal cancers" for \$400,000



Jack Gilbert, PhD

Received the Live Long & Prosper Award from the Nimoy-Knight
Foundation



Mitchell Kronenberg, PhD

Elected to be a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology



D. Brent Polk, MD, AGAF

Received a Senior Research Award from the Crohn's & Colitis
Foundation for "Deciphering therapeutic non-response in
IBD with depletion of TNF signaling" grant



Alan R. Saltiel, PhD

Elected to the National Academy of Inventors, 2025
Elected as a fellow of the American Society of Biochemistry
and Molecular Biology, 2026



Rena H. Yadlapati, MD MSHS AGAF FACP FAFS

Received a multi-center NIH U01 research Initiative aimed at
advancing precision medicine approaches for achalasia
& esophageal motility disorders

Spring 2026



NIDDK grant P30 DK120515

SDDRC 2025-26 Pilot & Feasibility Grants

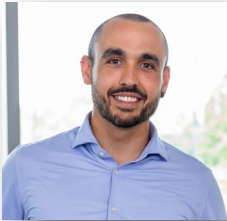
The SDDRC has awarded Pilot & Feasibility grants to the following investigators with promising research projects in digestive diseases:

Innovation Awards



Fabian Rivera-Chávez, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Department of Molecular Biology, University, UC San Diego

Project Title: Mechanisms of Immune–Metabolic Disruption by Bacterial Toxins in the Neonatal Gut



Miguel Reina-Campos, PhD, Assistant Professor Pharmacology Department, La Jolla Institute for Immunology

Project Title: Understanding T Cell Adaptations to a Two-Front Nutrient Supply Environment

Jon I. Isenberg Fellowship



Guillaume Urtecho, PhD, Assistant Professor, Division of Gastroenterology, Department of Medicine UC San Diego

Project Title: Exploring the Microbial Determinants of Region-Specific Inflammation in Crohn's Disease

The next round of Pilot & Feasibility grants will be announced in the summer/fall of 2026



NIDDK grant P30 DK120515

Upcoming Center Events

2026 Upcoming SDDRC Seminar Series

The Center invites nationally and internationally renowned speakers to facilitate and promote interactions among investigators in the San Diego area interested in digestive diseases research.

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
04/27/26	Leichtag- 107	12:00 - 1:00 PM	Samar H. Ibrahim, M.B.Ch.B, NASPGHAN-F, AASLD-F	Mayo Clinic
05/18/26	Leichtag- 107	12:00 - 1:00 PM	Declan F. McCole, Ph.D., AGAF	University of California, Riverside
06/29/26	Leichtag- 107	12:00 - 1:00 PM	M. Maya Kaelberer, Ph.D.	University of Arizona
07/27/26	Leichtag- 107	12:00 - 1:00 PM	TBD	TBD
08/26/26	TBD	7:30 - 8:30 AM	Marina Serper, MD	University of Pennsylvania
09/28/26	Leichtag- 107	12:00 - 1:00 PM	TBD	TBD
10/26/26	Leichtag- 107	12:00 - 1:00 PM	Takeshi Saito, MD, PhD	USC
11/30/26	Leichtag- 107	12:00 - 1:00 PM	Lee A. Denson, MD	Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center
12/14/26	Leichtag- 107	12:00 - 1:00 PM	Stephen A. Duncan, DPhil	Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC)

R-Support Workshop:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
04/24/26	BRF2 -5A03	10:30 AM—12:30 PM	Stephanie Labou	UC San Diego

2026 Upcoming Science at Lunchtime seminars:

<i>Date</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Speaker</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>
04/13/26	BRF2 -5A03	12:15 - 1:15 PM	Rena H. Yadlapati, MD	UC San Diego
05/11/26	BRF2 -5A03	12:15 - 1:15 PM	Marygorret Obonyo, PhD	UC San Diego
06/06/26	BRF2 -5A03	12:15 - 1:15 PM	Phillipp Hartmann, MD	UC San Diego
07/13/26	BRF2 -5A03	12:15 - 1:15 PM	TBD	TBD
08/10/26	BRF2 -5A03	12:15 - 1:15 PM	TBD	TBD
09/14/26	BRF2 -5A03	12:15 - 1:15 PM	TBD	TBD
10/12/26	BRF2 -5A03	12:15 - 1:15 PM	Jin Lee, PhD	UC San Diego
11/09/26	BRF2 -5A03	12:15 - 1:15 PM	Kathleen (Kit) Curtius, PhD	UC San Diego



NIDDK grant P30 DK120515

Recent Publications by Center Members acknowledging Center support

To recognize the excellence and breadth of research done by our members, we highlight a number of representative papers (**members are shown in bold**). Reprints of these papers can be provided upon request.

1. Díaz LA, Alazawi W, Agrawal S, Arab JP, Arrese M, Idalsoaga F, Barreyro FJ, Gadano A, Marciano S, Martínez Morales J, Villela-Nogueira C, Leite N, Couto CA, Theodoro R, Monteiro MJSD, Oliveira CP, Pessoa MG, Alvares-da-Silva MR, Madamba E, Bettencourt R, Richards LM, Majithia AR, Khera AV, **Loomba R, Ajmera V**. High inherited risk predicts age-associated increases in fibrosis in patients with MASLD. *J Hepatol*. 2025 Oct; 83:849-859. PMID: PMC12453583.
2. Hsu P, Choi EJ, Wong WH, Lin YH, Vandenberg SA, Liu YC, Yao P, Indralingam CS, Yeo GW, Zuniga EI, Goldrath AW, Wang W, **Chang JT**. Foxo1 regulates intestinal tissue-resident memory CD8 T cell biology in an anatomic compartment- and context-specific manner. *Sci Immunol*. 2025 Apr 11;10(106):eadn1894. PMID: PMC12955362.
3. Rohm TV, Dos Reis FCG, Cunha E Rocha K, Isaac R, Strayer S, Murphy C, Bandyopadhyay G, Gao H, Ganguly S, Nguyen T, Wang J, Youhanna JE, Pack D, Liu X, Kim HY, Jeelani I, **Dhar D, Kisseleva T, Ying W, Olefsky JM**. Adipose Tissue Macrophages in Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatohepatitis Secrete Extracellular Vesicles That Activate Liver Fibrosis in Obese Male Mice. *Gastroenterology*. 2025 Sep;169(4):691-704.e9. doi: 10.1053/j.gastro.2025.03.033. Epub 2025 Apr 9. PMID: 40204101.
4. Cabré N, Fondevila MF, Wei W, Yamazaki T, Tonetti FR, Eguileor A, Garcia-Carbonell R, Meijnikman AS, Miyamoto Y, Mayo S, Wang Y, Zhang X, Trimbuch T, Lehnardt S, **Eckmann L**, Fouts DE, **Llorente C**, Tsukamoto H, Stärkel P, **Schnabl B**. Activation of intestinal endogenous retroviruses by alcohol exacerbates liver disease. *J Clin Invest*. 2025 May; 135:e188541. PMID: PMC12208555.
5. Yang Y, Duan Y, Lang S, Fondevila MF, Schöler D, Harberts A, Cabré N, Chen S, Shao Y, Vervier K, Miyamoto Y, Zhang X, Chu H, Yang L, Tan C, **Eckmann L**, Bosques-Padilla F, Verna EC, Abralde JG, Brown RS Jr, Vargas V, Altamirano J, Caballería J, Shawcross DL, Louvet A, Lucey MR, Mathurin P, Garcia-Tsao G, Battaller R, Stärkel P, Lawley TD, **Schnabl B**. Targeted inhibition of pathobiont virulence factor mitigates alcohol-associated liver disease. *Cell Host Microbe*. 2025 Jun; 33:957-972.e6. PMID: PMC12162233.
6. Yamamoto G, Carvalho-Gontijo Weber R, Lee W, Zhang V, Jang H, Sakane S, Liu X, Kim HY, **Brenner DA, Li N, Kisseleva T**. DHCR7 inhibition ameliorates MetALD and HCC in mice and human 3D liver spheroids. *JHEP Rep*. 2025 Apr; 7(7):101415. PMID: PMC12173064.
7. Torosian K, Delebecque F, Arellano D, Vodkin I, **Ajmera V, Tincopa M**. Association of Clinical, Psychosocial, and Social Determinants of Health Factors and Liver Transplantation and Waitlist Removal for MASH. *Transplant Direct*. 2025 Apr; 11:e1791. PMID: PMC12313088.
8. **Llorente C**, Raya Tonetti F, Bruellman R, Brea R, Pell N, **Hartmann P**, Maccioni L, Han H, Cabré N, Liu J, Eguileor A, Fondevila MF, Meijnikman AS, **Hsu CL**, Alghafri A, Zhou R, Gao B, Duan Y, Zhang P, Febbraio MA, Taniguchi K, Newberry RD, Fouts DE, **Brenner DA**, Stärkel P, **Karin M, Schnabl B**. mAChR4 suppresses liver disease via GAP-induced antimicrobial immunity. *Nature*. 2025 Oct; 646:180-189. PMID: PMC12991828.
9. Johnson B, Bath T, Huang X, Lamm M, Earles A, Eddington H, Dornisch AM; VA Million Veteran Program; Jih LJ, **Gupta S, Shah SC, Curtius K**. Large language models for extracting histopathologic diagnoses of colorectal cancer and dysplasia from electronic health records. *BMJ Open Gastroenterol*. 2025 Sep; 12:e001896. PMID: PMC12458811.
10. Ji Y, Parashar S, Miyamoto Y, Srivastava S, Lewis AL, Varki N, Varki A, **Eckmann L**. Loss of sialic acid side-chain O-acetylation exacerbates colitis. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2025 Aug; 122:e2505249122. PMID: PMC12403103.



NIDDK grant P30 DK120515

Recent Publications by Center Members acknowledging SDDRC Support (cont'd)

To recognize the excellence and breadth of research done by our members, we highlight a number of representative papers (**members are shown in bold**). Reprints of these papers can be provided upon request.

11. Antonucci L, Li N, Duran A, Cobo I, Nicoletti C, Watari K, Nandi SP, Zhu F, Zhao Y, Riahi I, Tsuda M, Shah VM, Morgan T, Waugh T, Caputo L, Liu Y, Rundberg Nilsson A, Xian H, Todoric J, Gu L, Sanchez-Lopez E, Eibl G, Vucic EA, Krawczyk M, Xu Q, Lowy AM, Hatzivassiliou G, Roose-Girma M, Skowronska-Krawczyk D, Scott DA, Bar-Sagi D, Tamayo P, Wu Y, Sears RC, **Glass CK**, Alexandrov LB, Puri PL, Dawson DW, Hu Y, Diaz-Meco MT, Moscat J, **Karin M**. Self-amplifying NRF2-EZH2 epigenetic loop converts KRAS-initiated progenitors to invasive pancreatic cancer. *Nat Cancer*. 2025 Jul; 6:1263-1282. PMID: PMC12331375.
12. Ramos SF, Siguenza N, Zhong W, Mohanty I, Lingaraju A, Richter RA, Karthikeyan S, Lukowski AL, Zhu Q, Nunes WDG, Zemlin J, Xu ZZ, Hasty J, Dorrestein PC, Panda S, Knight R, **Zarrinpar A**. Metatranscriptomics Uncover Diurnal Functional Shifts in Bacterial Transgenes with Profound Metabolic Effects. *Cell Host Microbe*. 2025 Jul; 33:1057-1072. PMID: PMC12327816.
13. Viebahn GK, Khurana A, Freund L, Chilin-Fuentes D, Jepsen K, Rosenthal SB, Chatterjee S, Ellenrieder V, **Hsu CL, Schnabl B, Hartmann P**. Retatrutide improves steatohepatitis in an accelerated mouse model of diet-induced steatohepatitis with a fructose binge. *Am J Physiol Gastrointest Liver Physiol*. 2025 Dec; 329:G680-G695. PMID: PMC12643026.
14. Flores Ramos S, Fogelson KA, Muti VB, Zhong W, Hu J, Hosseini M, **Loomba R, Zarrinpar A**. Time-Restricted Feeding Is Not Effective in Modulating Fibrosis in a Male MASH Model. *J Biol Rhythms*. 2025 Nov; 7487304251383253. PMID: PMC12629601.
15. Tesfai K, Díaz LA, Arab JP, Arrese M, Idalsoaga F, Ayares G, Agrawal S, Barreyro FJ, Gadano A, Marciano S, Morales JM, Villela-Nogueira C, Leite N, Salles G, Cardoso CR, Couto CA, Theodoro R, de Sousa Dias Monteiro MJ, Oliveira CP, Pessoa MG, Alvares-da-Silva MR, Huang DQ, Madamba E, Singh S, Lokanadham S, Bettencourt R, Richards LM, Khera AV, **Loomba R, Ajmera V**. Inherited Genetic Risk of Liver Fibrosis in Lean Versus Nonlean Metabolic Dysfunction-Associated Steatotic Liver Disease (MASLD). *Aliment Pharmacol Ther*. 2025 Oct; 10.1111/apt.70433. PMID: PMC12671836.
16. Carrillo Terrazas M, Oles RE, Loomis LR, **Hsu C-Y**, Vasquez Ayala A, Lee MH, Paulchakrabarti M, **Pride D**, Choudhury B, Nizet V, **Raffatelli M**, Knight R, **Chu H**. Antimicrobial resistance is widespread among intestinal and extra-intestinal *Bacteroides fragilis* strains. *Infect Immun*. 2025 Dec; 93:e0052925. PMID: PMC12707147.
17. Afif CP, Brewster KP, Zhang MP, Reeves J, Hackbarth MT, Cong C, Olvera K, Moya EA, Malhotra A, **Mesarwi OA**. Time Restricted Eating Improves Intermittent Hypoxia-Induced Dysglycemia. *Sleep*. 2025 Nov 25:zsf370. doi: 10.1093/sleep/zsf370. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41288606.
18. Yoshii K, Liu Z, Shimoyama A, Hirayama Y, Iemitsu K, Node E, Hosomi K, **Kiyono H**, Fukase K, Kunisawa J. Alcaligenes lipid A as a sublingual adjuvant to augment protective immune responses in the respiratory and gastrointestinal tracts. *Int Immunol*. 2025 Nov 11:dxaf066. doi: 10.1093/intimm/dxaf066. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41216838.
19. Wu P, Das M, Wang Y, Ji Y, Wu Y, Kumar D, Jih LJ, **Webster NJ**. SRSF3-TRIM28-MDC1 prevents DNA damage caused by R-loops in fatty liver disease in mice. *JCI Insight*. 2026 Jan 9;11(1):e188629. doi: 10.1172/jci.insight.188629. PMID: 41480745; PMID: PMC12890501.

Spring 2026



NIDDK grant P30 DK120515

Letters of Support

The Center can provide you with support for your grant application. If you need a letter of support, please contact us:

sddrc@health.ucsd.edu

Citing the Center

Have you used the services offered by the Center? Please remember to acknowledge the Center grant in your publications:

“The study was supported in part by the NIDDK-funded San Diego Digestive Diseases Research Center (P30 DK120515).”

If space is at a premium, it is sufficient to list the grant number P30 DK120515.

Thank you!

CONTACT US

If you have any questions , please send an email to the Center

(sddrc@health.ucsd.edu) or the Center

Coordinator Victoria Shokrollah

(vshokrollah@health.ucsd.edu)

Center Website: <http://sddrc.ucsd.edu>

Follow us on X: <https://twitter.com/SDDRC>

Thank you for attending the 2026 SDDRC Symposium!

