

UNC Center for AIDS Research Newsletter

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



The mission of the UNC CFAR is to provide a multidisciplinary environment that promotes basic, clinical, behavioral and translational research in the prevention, detection and treatment of HIV infection.

June 2015

UNC & GSK Announce Partnership to Accelerate Search for HIV Cure



Dr. David Margolis, CFAR investigator and professor of medicine at UNC, will lead the university's effort in the new collaboration between UNC and GSK.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and GSK (GlaxoSmithKline), a global research-based pharmaceutical and healthcare company, have joined forces to create an HIV Cure center and a jointly owned company that will focus on discovering a cure for HIV/AIDS. This partnership between the public and private sector is part of a newly developing research model that has great potential to advance the field of HIV cure research.

The HIV Cure center will be located on the UNC-Chapel Hill campus. Qura Therapeutics, the newly formed company, will provide support for the business aspects of the partnership.

"The excitement of this public-private partnership lies in its vast potential," said UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Carol L. Folt. "Carolina has been at the

forefront of HIV/AIDS research for the last 30 years. This first of its kind, joint-ownership model is a novel approach toward finding a cure, and we hope it serves as an invitation to the world's best researchers and scientists. Today, Carolina's best are taking another major step in the global fight against HIV/AIDS."

On May 27, Sen. Thom Tillis (R-NC) toured the home of the future lab space and asked UNC and GSK researchers to keep him informed about how the business model evolves and if Washington can do anything to assist this unique partnership. While on campus, the Senator also met with Chancellor Folt. Click [here for more photos from this visit](#).

The cure center will dedicate efforts to investigating many research approaches to HIV cure. One of the greatest challenges in HIV cure research is the tendency of the virus to hide in a dormant state in certain cells of the body. If a patient stops taking anti-retroviral drugs, these cells can "reawaken". Dr. David Margolis, UNC professor of medicine and leader of the Collaboratory of AIDS Researchers for Eradication

(CARE), will focus on the "shock and kill" method, in which drugs are taken to wake up the virus so the infected cells can be clearly identified by the immune system.

"After 30 years of developing treatments that successfully manage HIV/AIDS without finding a cure, we need both new research approaches to this difficult medical problem and durable alliances of many partners to sustain the effort that will be needed to reach this goal," said Dr. Margolis. "The 'shock and kill' approach has shown significant promise in early translational research on humans and has been the focus of research for the last several years." Building upon the research network started by the UNC Center for AIDS Research (CFAR), this emerging partnership will engage scientists from UNC, GSK, RTP and related communities who are deeply dedicated to solving one of the world's toughest problems – the eradication of HIV/AIDS.

This news was also featured in the New York Times; [read the article here](#).



New CUREiculum Created for Community Engagement and Education

Research into an HIV cure has come alive recently with the infusion of new funding and new relationships such as the UNC-Chapel Hill-GSK partnership as that announced on May 11, 2015. This relationship will launch the formation of a new company, Qura, to develop and take a cure to persons living with HIV.

Several heavily reported cases of possible cure and sustainable HIV remission have also sparked public interest in the field. In 2013, the President of the United States pledged 100 million dollars of funding to the field for the next three years, paving the road for new global research.

The cure field presents new challenges to trial conduct, design, risk, and a host of other issues in the scientific, biological, social, ethical and regulatory fields. There has been an expressed need among members of the community to increase literacy around the growing HIV cure research field in order to adequately participate in and make decisions about HIV cure research. Jessica Handibode, Program Coordinator at **AVAC**, shared that "Empowering lay or non-scientific stakeholders to be independent decision makers is key to ethical research. The HIV cure research field is complex, but moving quickly. There is a lot of interest, and people receive information from the media about the advances in the research without a context or background understanding." In response, members of the Martin Delaney International Community Advisory Board (CAB), the MDC Collaboratories (CARE, DARE and defeatHIV), and international community educators from advocacy organizations (including AVAC, The Advocacy Group, and Project Inform) formed a steering committee with the goal of creating a well-rounded HIV cure research training curriculum. The "CUREiculum", as the group calls it, allows communities the chance to form and voice opinions on the cure research agenda.

Karine Dube, co-chair of the CUREiculum project and Program Manager of **CARE**, explained that "UNC has been an integral partner in developing and implementing the CUREiculum effort. Since the program aims to strengthen community capacity to participate in and make decisions about HIV cure research, we are very excited about the UNC (academic) – AVAC (advocacy) partnership that the CUREiculum represents."

This HIV Cure Research "CUREiculum" seeks to strengthen capacity around HIV cure research by providing basic information on a variety of topic areas. The curriculum will be comprised of seventeen individual modules that can be taught individually or as part of a larger set. Each module, developed by a scientific and community lead, will have PowerPoint slides, pre- and post-assessment quizzes and participatory activities for training sessions. Modules include lessons on informed consent, stem cell transplants, vaccines, the latent HIV reservoir, HIV cure trials, early ARV treatment, and ethics, and pediatric cure research.

The target audience for the curriculum is anyone interested in learning more about HIV cure research. Ms. Handibode shared that "new tools and resources will be created and added to cater to different levels of science literacy in the future." The team hopes that the CUREiculum will be a user-friendly tool to "catalyze the stakeholder engagement effort of HIV cure research" and by independent users to "break down complicated science using interactive methodology." She shared that "there is a lot of misconception and hyperbole that float around about the state of the field because there were few resources that provide overall context." The team hopes that "the materials provide that context and build a solid foundation of knowledge amongst interested groups around the globe who may have only seen stories on newsfeeds."

Currently, there is a real debate happening in the field about accurately describing risks and benefits to participants and examining the vital questions about the goals of cure research. Ms. Handibode explained that "bringing community deeper into this debate is the goal of the CUREiculum". Questions about how to ethically build capacity in resource limited settings and how to manage expectations in pediatric and adult research are essential in the conversation about cure research, and will pave the way for how the field progresses forward. [View the CUREiculum here.](#)

Questions about the CUREiculum? Contact: **Karine Dubé**, Collaboratory of AIDS Researchers for Eradication (CARE) & **Jessica Handibode**, AVAC.



The UNC CFAR Community Advisory Board convenes for their quarterly meeting.

Upcoming Events

International Conference
on HIV Treatment and Prevention
Adherence
June 28-30, 2015; Miami, Florida

2015 Advancing Ethical Research
(AER) Conference
November 12-15, 2015; Boston, MA

2015 National HIV Prevention
Conference (NHPC)
December 6-9, 2015; Atlanta, GA

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<http://www.facebook.com/UNCCFAR>

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