The Cardiovascular Center (CVC) has been awarded $1.6 million for a postdoctoral T32 grant from the National Institutes of Health National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute entitled, “Training in Signature Transdisciplinary Cardiovascular Sciences.”

Ivor Benjamin, MD, professor of medicine and Director of the CVC, and David Guterman, MD, Northwestern Mutual professor of cardiology and senior associate director of the CVC at the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW), are co-principal investigators. Mary Sorci-Thomas, PhD, professor of medicine, is the associate director of the training program. Allison Devan, PhD is the academic program and research consultant of the grant.

This five-year T32 program is one of only six postdoctoral T32 training programs on the Milwaukee Medical Regional Campus. The grant provides up to three years of training for postdoctoral fellows with an MD, PhD, PharmD, or DO degree (two new slots/year). Forty-one basic scientists and translational investigators serve as mentors in a program that is supported by specific research areas of scientific excellence (“Signature Programs”), a highly-integrated collaborative research environment, and access to an extensive research infrastructure. This three-year training commitment emphasizes critical components designed to launch/sustain research careers: 1) individualized development plans (IDPs), 2) personalized multidisciplinary mentoring teams, 3) training in core competencies, and 4) industry/biotechnology or scientific liaison career options for trainees not pursuing a traditional career in academia. Overall, the ultimate goal of this training program is to train the next generation of cardiovascular scientists, including underrepresented minorities, by incorporating broad-based, personalized, supportive, and rigorous training opportunities.

Additional support for trainees is provided by a grant from the A. O. Smith Foundation for the CVC’s A. O. Smith Fellowship Scholars Program. This unique program is designed to support talented cardiovascular researchers and physicians in an innovative educational program that aims to provide mentoring, training, research support, and the necessary resources to overcome the barriers that exist to launching and sustaining a successful research career.

From the Cardiovascular Center Board Chair

As many of you know, 2017 marks the 25th anniversary year of the Medical College of Wisconsin Cardiovascular Center. I am honored to be the chair of the CVC Board during this special year as we celebrate the significance of the CVC’s basic and clinical research discoveries that have expanded scientific knowledge and improved patient care. To celebrate 25 years, the CVC Board is committed to supporting the CVC in planning numerous events and activities surrounding its four pillars – research, education, community outreach and clinical care. This summer and fall, there will be professional training seminars for CVC students and postdoctoral fellows; a community outreach project in conjunction with Froedtert Hospital–performing health screenings in local underserved neighborhoods; and a research symposium on Oct. 11. The Board is also planning an anniversary celebration, which includes a golf and dinner or just dinner event on Aug. 21 honoring former directors of the CVC, Allen W. Cowley, Jr., PhD and David R. Harder, PhD, who have made significant contributions and impact within the CVC in the past 25 years. Please visit www.mcw.edu/cvc25anniversary for more details about this event, and how to register to attend. We look forward to an incredible celebratory year for the CVC!

-Bruce Smith
Biophysics Researchers Identify New Protective Mechanism in Parkinson’s Mouse Model

March 8, 2017 MCW News—Balaraman Kalyanaraman, PhD. MCW chairman and professor of biophysics and Harry R. & Angeline E. Quadracci professor in parkinson’s research, and Jacek Zielonka, PhD, research director for the Free Radical Research Center, co-authored a paper with Anumantha Kanthasamy, MS, MPHIL, PhD, W.E. Lloyd endowed chair in neurotoxicology and distinguished professor and chair of biomedical sciences at Iowa State University, in the journal Antioxidants and Redox Signaling. The paper describes the neuroprotective role of a novel and relatively non-toxic mitochondria-targeted compound (known as mito-apocynin or Mito-Apo) in a genetic mouse model of Parkinson’s disease (PD).

Mitochondrial dysfunction and neuroinflammation have been determined to impact the progressive degeneration of dopaminergic neurons in PD. Mito-Apo was shown to improve the mitochondrial function of neurons in vitro and prevent the neuroinflammation and PD symptoms in the in vivo PD models. The authors have been awarded three patents, including U.S. Patent 8,962,600 — Neuroprotective Compounds and Their Use— for the use of Mito-Apo as a neuroprotective agent in a variety of neurodegenerative conditions including PD.

This project was originally supported by the National Institutes of Health. The MCW Office of Technology Development is actively seeking pharmaceutical company partners to license and develop mito-apocynin as a new treatment for Parkinson’s disease and potentially other neurodegenerative diseases.

Anesthesiology Researcher to Study How a Mitochondrial Protein Determines Cell Fate

April 4, 2017 MCW News—Investigators in MCW’s Department of Anesthesiology have received a $2.8 million, four-year grant to study how a mitochondrial protein determines cell fate. Wai-Meng Kwok, PhD, professor of anesthesiology and pharmacology & toxicology and director of Basic Science Research for Anesthesiology; and Amadou K.S. Camara, PhD, professor of anesthesiology; together with Emad Tajkhorshid, PhD, professor of biochemistry at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign; received the multi-investigator RO1 grant from the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute. The team will investigate the functional and structural transformation of the mitochondrial voltage-dependent anion channel 1 (VDAC1) from a protein that plays a key role in cell survival to one that is lethal to the cell.

Mitochondria are involved in a number of diseases and also play an essential role in programmed cell death and necrosis. VDAC1 is the most abundant protein on the outer mitochondrial membrane (OMM) and acts as the main gateway for the transport of metabolites and ions across the OMM, and, as such, is a major contributor to the fate of the cell with critical roles in both cell survival and cell death.

The molecular mechanism that determines the transformation of VDAZ1 from a protective to a deleterious function is unknown. The goal of the project is to unravel the functional significance and consequences of VDAC1 phosphorylation during oxidative stress.

The extended research team includes MeiYing Yang, PhD, anesthesiology research scientist; Aron Geurts, PhD, associate professor of physiology; and Rebekah Gundry, PhD, associate professor of biochemistry. David Stowe, MD, PhD, professor of anesthesiology, and Jennifer Strande, MD, PhD, associate professor of medicine, will serve as consultants.
Recent Collaborative Member Publications

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Benson, DW; Cohen, MI. Wolff-Parkinson-White Syndrome: Lessons Learnt and Lessons Remaining. CARDIOLOGY IN THE YOUNG, 27 S62-S67; 1 10.1017/CBO9781139050602.004 JAN 2017

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Somberg, LB; Gutterman, DD; Miura, H; Nirula, R; Hatoum, OA. Shock Associated with Endothelial Dysfunction in Omental Microvessels. EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF CLINICAL INVESTIGATION, 47 (1):30-37; 10.1111/eci.12697 JAN 2017

Staruschenko, A. Hypertension and Diabetes Mellitus The Chicken and Egg Problem. HYPERTENSION, 69 (5):787-788; 10.1161/HYPERTENSIONAHA.117.08671 MAY 2017

*CVC faculty members in bold

Want to see your publications here? Email your in-press or published citations to cvc@mcw.edu.
Training

2017 CVC Research Retreat a Great Success!

On April 21, the 2017 CVC Research Retreat was held at the Harley-Davidson Museum with a focus on “Building Team Science Within the MCW Cardiovascular Center”. Investigators from all four Signature Programs presented their work, as well as four trainees. Joanne Lip Zovic, MBA, JD, presented an interactive session titled, “Get Ready to Negotiate!” and keynote speaker, Philipp Scherer, PhD, from UT Southwestern Medical Center, spoke on “The Multifaceted Roles of Adipose Tissue: Therapeutic Targets for Diabetes and Beyond.”

In keeping with the Cardiovascular Center’s mission of training the next generation of cardiovascular scientists, four trainees were able to present their research. A poster session was a lively part of the day, with over 30 posters submitted. The posters were eligible for travel awards made possible by generous philanthropic donors at the CVC’s 2016 Golf Outing. The two Graduate Student award winners were Andy Kadlec (Beyer Lab) and John Bukowy (Cowley Lab) and the two Postdoctoral Fellow award winners were Karima Ait Aissa, PhD (Beyer Lab) and Louise Evans, PhD (Cowley Lab).

It was a successful day filled with research, team science, and networking. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year!

Three CVC Trainees Win “Best Poster Award” at the 3rd Annual Department of Medicine Research Retreat

The 3rd annual DOM Research Retreat was held on Friday, March 10, at the Harley-Davidson Museum in Milwaukee. Kurt Kolander, PhD (mentor: Ivor Benjamin, MD) and Mike Tanner, PhD (mentor: Mike Widlansky, MD) tied for the Best Poster Award in the Postdoctoral Fellow category.

Dawid Chabowski (mentor: David Gutterman, MD) won the Best Poster Award in the Graduate Student category for his poster entitled, “Loss of Lipid Phosphate Phosphatase 3 Contributes to the Loss of NO-mediated Flow-Induced Dilation in Human Resistance Arterioles”. Congratulations to Kurt, Mike, and Dawid!
A. O. Smith Postdoctoral Fellowship in Cardiovascular Sciences

A two-year **A. O. Smith Postdoctoral Fellowship** (with the possibility of a third year of support) is available in the **Medical College of Wisconsin Cardiovascular Center**, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in one of four major areas of research:

- **Atherosclerosis & Thrombosis**
- **Precision Cardiovascular Medicine**
- **Hypertension**
- **Vascular Biology**

The A. O. Smith postdoctoral fellow will receive personalized training within multidisciplinary mentoring teams led by exceptional faculty mentors. Fellows will create and follow an individualized development plan (IDP), conduct research studies, attend required courses/seminars, write grants, publish manuscripts, present oral presentations locally and nationally, and learn other skills necessary for a successful career in cardiovascular research or a closely-related field. Clinical scholars will have protected time for research. Per NIH guidelines, the postdoctoral fellow must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.

Applicants should be highly-motivated, ambitious, productive, and have (or anticipate having) a PhD, PharmD, MD, or DO in a relevant research area such as biology, molecular biology, genetics, immunology, biochemistry, pharmacology, or physiology with a strong track record of, and a keen interest in, at least one of the five research areas. Stipends begin at $50,000 (stipends determined by years of experience).

**Earliest appointment date:** Sept 2017

**TO APPLY:** Interested applicants should apply online through MCW Human Resources ONLY (Requisition ID: 20965; www.mcw.edu/Human-Resources.htm). Submit copies of your:

- curriculum vitae
- 3 letters of reference
- statement of research interests, including preference for 1 of the major research areas
- and mention of where you learned about the fellowship.

For questions specific to the fellowship, contact cvc@mcw.edu. For more info & list of mentors, visit our Facebook page at http://tinyurl.com/CVCpostdoc

The Cardiovascular Center (CVC) is directed by Ivor Benjamin, MD. Last year, members of the CVC published more than 340 scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals, were awarded more than $43.5 million in total funding, with $21.3 million being funded by NHLBI, and mentored more than 50 trainees. The mission of the CVC is to improve cardiovascular health in Southeast Wisconsin and beyond through cutting-edge research, cost-efficient and high-quality healthcare delivery, rigorous training of the next generation of cardiovascular scientists, and engaging the community to eliminate disparities in health outcomes.
MCW scientists can propose ancillary studies to be conducted within HELIOS, a randomized controlled trial under consideration for NIH funding. HELIOS would test the impact of walnut and extra virgin olive oil (EVOO) consumption on the rate of cardiovascular disease events in 9,000 high risk older adults. Intervention participants will consume both walnuts and EVOO daily.

Let Someone Else Recruit 9000 High Risk Adults For You!

Both intervention and control groups will receive the AHA Guideline on Lifestyle Management to Reduce Cardiovascular Risk. Ancillary study proposers can propose studies that would involve additional procedures for some or all participants.

Contact the MCW site investigator, Jeff Whittle, MD, jeffrey.whittle@va.gov, for study details.
CVC Members Named Mentees in the Inaugural Cohort of Community Engaged Scholars

March 8 MCW News—Jackie Kulinski, MD, assistant professor of medicine, and Jessica Olson, PhD, assistant professor in the Institute for Health and Equity, were named mentees in the inaugural cohort of Community Engaged Scholars, a mentoring network launched by the Office of the Senior Associate Dean for Community Engagement (CE) and the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) Community Engagement Core. A recent MCW News story mentions that mentees will "receive mentoring tailored to multiple levels of experience, ensuring each mentee will finish the program with a better understanding of and stronger orientation for CE. Mentees are individuals with an affinity for CE, who have expressed interest in further building their capacity and leadership skills in CEnR."

CVC and CE Core to Offer Community-Engaged Research Seed Grant Program: Cardiovascular Focus

The Cardiovascular Center is anticipating a research funding announcement in June to help further its mission of engaging with the community in Southeast Wisconsin to help eliminate disparities in health outcomes. The CVC and MCW Community Engagement Core will be offering funding for two projects of $50,000 each, funded in part by the Advancing a Healthier Wisconsin Endowment (AHW-REP). The grants will be awarded to an MCW CVC faculty member along with a community-based organization partner and must be cardiovascular-related.

The CVC will be holding a Community Engagement Seminar Series tailored to CVC members involving three Lunch and Learns in June. The informational sessions will be held from 12:00-1:00 pm in the CVC Conference Room, H4950, with the goal of learning more about the basics of community engagement and how basic scientists can partner with the community to improve cardiovascular health.

Dr. John Meurer Honored with 2017 President’s Community Engagement Faculty Award

May 3, 2017 MCW News - John Meurer, MD, MBA, director of the Institute for Health and Equity, received the President’s Award for Faculty. Dr. Meurer has been transforming our community throughout his career at MCW by impacting our community population as well as influencing how medical students and residents develop and enhance their expertise as future physicians.
Dr. Andrew Greene Named 2017 Cullen Healthy Heart Scholar

Andrew S. Greene, PhD, professor and interim vice chair of clinical and research affairs, in the Department of Biomedical Engineering and the Dr. Robert D. and Patricia E. Kern professor of biomedical engineering, has been named the 2017 Steve Cullen Healthy Heart Scholar. This award recognizes a junior or mid-career scientist who is a member of the Cardiovascular Center and conducts promising cardiovascular research at the Medical College of Wisconsin. The award is funded in part by 2017 Steve Cullen Healthy Heart/Walk/Run in partnership with the Clinical and TranslationaL Science Institute.

Dr. Greene received his BS in Biomedical and Electrical Engineering at Syracuse University and graduated with his PhD in Biomedical Engineering from Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. He’s been instrumental in shaping his field of research with 161 publications. His interests have included mechanisms of blood vessel growth and regression, and control of blood flow to tissues in the skeletal muscle and heart, and he has also been very involved in assessing the ability of the cardiovascular microcirculatory network to meet the needs of the tissue.

Dr. Greene’s project is titled, “Developing Technologies for Rapid Production of Individualized Models of Congenital Cardiovascular Diseases to Facilitate Clinical Treatment.” Recently, with the emergence of 3D printing, the opportunity has arisen to produce individualized anatomical models to improve a patient’s surgical outcome. The Department of Biomedical Engineering at MCW has developed the capability of creating high-quality models of an individual patient’s anatomy. This is highly valued by clinicians for pre-surgical planning and for patient communication.

TAP/Smith Family Program for Enhanced Precision Therapeutics

Supported by a generous gift from the Smith Family, the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) Cardiovascular Center and the MCW Therapeutics Accelerator Program have partnered to create “The Smith Family Program for Enhanced Precision Therapeutics” to engage and increase the Cardiovascular Center’s efforts on drug development by spanning the void in which early-stage innovations receive critical regulatory and commercialization expertise leading to new therapies. This collaborative initiative leverages the existing Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology Drug Discovery Center’s Therapeutic Accelerator Program.

Given the impetus for the NIH’s Precision Medicine Initiative and the scarcity of funding to propel potential groundbreaking “disease targets” for improving cardiovascular health either between the laboratory bench to the clinic or the perceived high risk and low return of investment (ROI) to attract private equity, The Smith Family Program for Enhanced Precision Therapeutics will provide basic and translational investigators of the Cardiovascular Center with research grants of $25,000 to $50,000. These will be offered jointly with the Therapeutics Accelerator Program to stimulate innovative, early-stage and cutting-edge drug development projects for the treatment of cardiovascular disease. One page proposals were due May 15th and will be solicited each year for 4 more years.
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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Pengyuan Liu, PhD</td>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>Department of Physiology</td>
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<td>Jun Zhang, PhD</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Dept. of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science UWM</td>
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<td>Sailaja Kamaraju, MD, MS</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Department of Medicine, Division of Hematology, Oncology, Transplantation</td>
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<td>Asim Mohammed, MD</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Department of Medicine, Division of Cardiology</td>
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<td>Hang Nghiem-Rao, MD</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Department of Pediatrics, Division of Neonatology</td>
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<td>Jieqing Zhu, PhD</td>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>Blood Research Institute, Blood Center of Wisconsin</td>
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**Research Interests:**

- **Pengyuan Liu, PhD**: bioinformatics and genomics; developing and applying statistical and computational methods for discovery by using biomedical Big Data
- **Jun Zhang, PhD**: machine learning and signal processing; collaborative research in applying machine learning techniques to cardiovascular health and disease
- **Sailaja Kamaraju, MD, MS**: cardiototoxicity of cancer treatments; biological and social determinants of cardiovascular health disparities
- **Asim Mohammed, MD**: measuring, predicting and improving outcomes, and quality of life and reducing hospital readmissions in heart failure patients; using technology (such as a heart failure mobile application) for remote monitoring of heart failure patients
- **Hang Nghiem-Rao, MD**: investigating lipid metabolism in the developing liver using human induced pluripotent stem cell-derived hepatocytes; determining if lower expression of key lipid metabolizing genes during early development underlies the impaired metabolism of lipids in immature infants
- **Jieqing Zhu, PhD**: exploring the structure and function of cell adhesion molecules involved in thrombosis, the immune response and cancer cell metastasis
CVC Member Receives APS Cardiovascular Section New Investigator Award

Congratulations to Scott Levick, PhD, assistant professor, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, who was awarded the 2017 Cardiovascular Section American Physiological Society’s New Investigator Award. This award recognizes outstanding investigators in the early stage of their career who have made meritorious contributions to the scientific areas represented by the Cardiovascular Section of the APS. Dr. Levick was judged on his abstract, new research development(s), how his new area of investigation relates to the Cardiovascular Section, and evidence of his independence and promise.

Dr. Mingyu Liang Named the APS Physiological Genomics 2017 Distinguished Lectureship Awardee

Congratulations to Mingyu Liang, MB, PhD, co-leader of the Cardiovascular Center’s Signature Program in Hypertension, who has been named the American Physiology Society Physiological Genomics 2017 Distinguished Awardee in Physiological Genomics Research. As the awardee, Dr. Liang delivered the Distinguished Lecture in Physiological Genomics Research at the PG Group Pre-EB 2017 Annual Research Conference and attended the PG Group’s Business/Awards Luncheon in Chicago in April. The CVC congratulates Dr. Liang for receiving this award in recognition of his outstanding contributions to and achievements in physiological genomics research.

Dr. Balaraman Kalyanaraman Co-Chairing International Symposium in Croatia, Summer 2017

April 25, 2017 MCW News - Balaraman Kalyanaraman, PhD, Harry R. & Angeline E. Quadracci professor in parkinson’s research and chairman of biophysics, is co-chairing a scientific symposium in Split, Croatia, in September.

Titled, Second Adriatic Symposium on Biophysical Approaches in Biomedical Studies, the event will be held at the Mediterranean Institute for Life Sciences from Sep. 24-28.

Topics to be covered include:

- Advances in magnetic resonance techniques
- Imaging biomarkers in living systems
- Biophysical photo-techniques
- Redox bioenergetics and metabolism in diseases
- Lateral organization and dynamics of biological membranes
- Lipid and protein modifications: implications in diseases
- Molecular simulations and mathematical modeling
- Free radical detection in vivo and in vitro

Invited speakers from MCW include: Ivor Benjamin, MD, professor of medicine, physiology, pharmacology & toxicology, cell biology, and surgery, and director of the Cardiovascular Center; Zeljko Bosnjak, PhD, professor of anesthesiology; Jimmy Feix, PhD, professor of biophysics; James Hyde, PhD, emeritus professor of biophysics; Dr. Kalyanaraman; Witold (Karol) Subczynski, PhD, professor of biophysics; Jeannette Vasquez Vivar, PhD, professor of biophysics and associate director of the Redox Biology Program; and Jacek Zielonka, PhD, research director of the Free Radical Research Center in Biophysics.

The meeting is co-chaired by Marija Raguz, PhD, a former graduate student in Biophysics, and now assistant professor at the University of Split, Croatia, and visiting associate professor in biophysics, and Tadeusz Sarna, PhD, Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland, and visiting associate professor in biophysics. Jane Thelaner is the meeting coordinator.

The organizers are grateful to Dr. Benjamin and the Cardiovascular Center for generously supporting the symposium.

Additional information is available at http://www.babs-symposium.com.
Cardiovascular Center Seminar Series

June 7
CVC Community Engagement Lunch & Learn:
What is Community Engagement?

June 14
Paul Schumacker, PhD
Northwestern University Medical Center

June 21
CVC Community Engagement Lunch & Learn:
Principles & Local Examples of CEnR

June 28
CVC Community Engagement Lunch & Learn:
How to Engage Communities (from CVC & Community Perspectives)

Cardiovascular Center Events

June 10, 2017
Have a Heart Motorcycle Ride
Suburban Motors Harley Davidson
Thiensville

August 21, 2017
“25 Voices of the Cardiovascular Center”
Cardiovascular Center Golf Challenge
Wisconsin Country Club
Milwaukee

You can now follow the Cardiovascular Center on Facebook!
Medical College of Wisconsin Cardiovascular Center

Stay up to date on what’s happening in the CVC, in the Medical College, and in the News!

A special “thank you” to everyone who provided suggestions and feedback for our Fall 2017 seminar speakers!
Vision
The Cardiovascular Center at the Medical College of Wisconsin aims to become the premier integrated basic and translational academic organization in the United States.

Mission
To improve cardiovascular health in Southeast Wisconsin and beyond through cutting-edge research, cost-efficient and high-quality healthcare delivery, rigorous training of the next generation of cardiovascular scientists, and engaging the community to eliminate disparities in health outcomes.

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