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The HIV Institute

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

Spring 2020 Newsletter

We hope this newsletter finds you and your family healthy and safe during these uncertain and unprecedented times.



Focus on the Future- Legacy and Impact

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"Our goal is to honor our family member and to advance the research to which Rick devoted his abbreviated professional life." -Skip and Gayle Stokes

In September 2009, Dr. Richard (Rick) S. Mitchell, PhD '04 died in a tragic accident. Dr. Mitchell was a long-time colleague and member of Dr. John Guatelli's research laboratory at UC San Diego. Dr. Mitchell's research led to seminal studies and publications describing how key HIV-1 accessory proteins facilitate the virus evading the immune response. He was admired and respected for his scientific accomplishments, his enthusiasm, and the kind-hearted and gentle manner with which he interacted with everyone.

The Mitchell family established the [Rick Mitchell Memorial Fund](#) in his honor, through the UC San Diego HIV Institute (formerly the AIDS Research Institute). [Donations](#) are used to support our annual Mitchell Memorial Lecture and may also be used to directly support the work of our scientists. We are so very thankful for their generosity.

We are thrilled to announce that his family has further bolstered Dr. Mitchell's legacy through a bequest to The HIV Institute. Dr. Mitchell's brother-in-law and sister, Skip Stokes and Gayle Mitchell Stokes, will be endowing **The Richard S. Mitchell, PhD '04 Endowed Post-Doctoral Fellowship**. Fellows will acquire HIV-focused basic science competencies in virology, cell biology and immunology. Fellows will also gain valuable experience with genomics, proteomics, and bioinformatics. They will foster scientific collaborations and disseminate important research discoveries to scientific communities through partnerships with a number of SD CFAR-affiliated institutions.

This new fellowship will fuel our ongoing growth and sustainability and will serve as an integral, highly influential investment in one of the most prestigious HIV research programs of its kind. Honoring Dr. Mitchell, his legacy at UC San Diego and The HIV Institute, will have direct and meaningful influence on our ability to train and develop the next generation of HIV scientists.

We share our deepest appreciation toward the Stokes family for this special gift that will advance the field and propel discoveries for generations to come

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The HIV Institute greatly appreciates UC San

Diego's hardworking, dedicated research scientists accelerating the field. The Investigator Spotlight gives us an opportunity to acknowledge our leading investigators and to share with the community how they are pursuing life-changing discoveries.

Gift



Antoine Challion, MD, PhD

Assistant Professor

Division of Infectious Diseases,
UCSD & VA San Diego Healthcare System
University of California San Diego

Tell us a little about yourself.

Well, not totally an easy question. The formal answer is that I am a French MD (specializing in Infectious Diseases and Virology) with a PhD in HIV evolution and immune responses. I grew up in a small village in the Loire Valley with only one store: a bakery. The area is known for picturesque castles, wildlife, and exceptional wine (if you need a recommendation for a great winery, just reach out!). My father was a veterinarian and I was surrounded by various pets including foxes and small deer (have you ever bottle-fed a baby deer or fox?). I could have ended up like 'Tiger King' but I decided to pursue medicine instead. I think this was a good choice. Fun facts: no clue. I am not fun, at least intentionally... Or maybe I should say that my French sense of humor cannot be exported...

What attracted you to this field?

As with so many who are inspired by their teacher or sport icon, I was inspired by my Department Chief while starting my residency in the ID department in the early 2000's. He passed away a few years later but he left a 'moral legacy' and some basic principles: how to care for persons with chronic infections such as HIV with sensitivity and humanity. *Learning from example...*

How did you land in San Diego and/or start working at UC San Diego?

I was a young PhD in France working on my thesis. I was trying to understand a really nice paper by Doug Richman about neutralizing antibodies. I emailed him to ask a few questions but with no real expectation of

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had only a few English words in my pocket and a lot of curiosity. I met Davey (Smith), Sara (Gianella), Sanjay (Mehta) and many other brilliant colleagues. *Learning from example.*

After a 'back to back' of several months in France, I finally had the opportunity to stay here and keep working with wonderful collaborators.

What are the major issues facing HIV researchers today?

Time. HIV research is a very dynamic field with constant evolution—I wish I had more time to satisfy my curiosity in all sorts of important areas. There is a trade-off between fulfilling this desire to learn and sleeping... I am still trying to find a good balance. Even if this is a 'forbidden word' in France, I cannot also ignore that funding is a challenge for our research activities. Fortunately, Davey Smith and the UCSD community have always been very supportive. *Learning from example...*

What are some of your research interests and/or what are you working on right now?

It can be hard to summarize my 'interests' in a few lines. I would say that I am passionate about HIV persistence, evolution and adaption within the host but also at the population level. I have had the opportunity to develop many local and international collaborations over the years. I have learned from each of these. I also had the chance to meet Dr Natasha Martin at UCSD a few years ago and working with her on ID modeling has been a wonderful experience that I am hoping to continue. I know UCSD is full of human ingenuity and brilliant colleagues and I am eager to learn from others soon. *Learning from example...*

What are some of your favorite or most important projects?

Being part of a wonderful team of collaborators involved in a very ambitious project named the 'Last Gift.' I am only one of many and I don't want to take any credit for it but I would like to invite you to visit the webpage: <http://lastgift.ucsd.edu/>. Persons with HIV who are at the end of their lives are giving us lessons about life,

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What is most important lesson you have learned during your tenure at UC San Diego?

No work can be accomplished alone (“*No man is an island*” - John Donne) and great projects can start with crazy ideas (“*One of many brainstorming session in Davey’s office...*” - Davey Smith). The greatest satisfaction I get from my accomplishments is to give back something to the people who trusted me and have always supported me. I really hope I will be able to do the same for others in the future. *Learning from example...*

Ending the HIV Epidemic

A PLAN FOR AMERICA

The San Diego Center for AIDS Research, the County of San Diego HIV, STD and Hepatitis Branch of Public Health Services, and the San Diego HIV Planning Group convened the San Diego Ending the HIV Epidemic Community Summit on February 29, 2020.



This first regional Ending the HIV Epidemic (EHE) Summit provided an overview of the EHE initiative as well as served as a listening session forum to ensure that the

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Supervisor Nathan Fletcher pictured here was one of many speakers for the event.

Upcoming Events

Seminar Series



"Trichomonas vaginalis interaction with human leukocytes."

The UC San Diego HIV Institute and San Diego Center for AIDS Research were pleased to present Frances Mercer, PhD, in Seminar on Friday June 19 at 3:30pm via zoom. This seminar will take place of the regularly scheduled Journal Club meeting of the Retrovirus Seminar Series.



Stay up to date with our latest seminars by visiting our [webpage](#).

Save the Date

The San Diego Center for AIDS Research is honored to host the 24th Annual National CFAR and National CFAR CAB Coalition Meetings in America's Finest City **November 2-6, 2020**.

The event will be held at the [Hilton San Diego Bayfront](#).



For more information visit our [webpage](#).

Support UC San Diego's HIV Programs

Did you know The HIV Institute is a [501\(c\)\(3\)](#) organization that serves as the umbrella organization for more than fifteen HIV/AIDS research and care programs at UC San Diego?

There are several ways you can [GIVE](#) to the UC San Diego HIV Institute.

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You shop and we get money for free. Get a free [iGive.com](https://www.igive.com) account so UC San Diego HIV Institute can earn money every time you shop online. It's so easy! To learn more or sign up now, [click here](#). There are over 1,900 businesses supporting [iGive](https://www.igive.com). When you use your iGive button installed on your browser 3% of your purchase amount will come back to the charity of your choosing. Give back today by signing up for a free [iGive](https://www.igive.com) account and select the "UC San Diego HIV Institute."

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Be sure to select "UCSD AIDS Research Institute."



Profoundly changing the study, treatment and prevention of HIV throughout the world.

Since the 1980s, HIV/AIDS research at UC San Diego has been at the forefront of discoveries that shape care and treatment standards on a global scale. We are internationally recognized as a place that combines the art of healing with the science of medicine and serves not only San Diego, but communities around the world.

For 24 years [The HIV Institute](#) has served as an umbrella organization to UC San Diego's many HIV-related activities. We work within and across departments, in multidisciplinary programs and with many other collaborators to translate new discoveries from our laboratories to patient care.

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"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does."

William James



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