



# The HIV Institute

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA SAN DIEGO

## Fall/Winter 2025 Newsletter



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### Investigator Spotlight

The HIV Institute (THI) greatly appreciates UC San Diego's hardworking, dedicated research scientists accelerating the field. The Investigator Spotlight gives us an opportunity to acknowledge our leading early stage investigators and to share with the community how they are pursuing life-changing research and discoveries.

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#### **Jessie Goldshear, PhD, MPH**

Assistant Professor, UC San Diego

[THI Supported Investigator](#)

#### **Tell us a little about yourself.**

I originally hail from Philadelphia, PA. I try and carry a bit

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been hosting and running Dungeons and Dragons games with friends for 12 years. I earned my 2nd degree black belt in Kenpo Karate when I was 19 and have since trained in boxing, Brazilian jiu jitsu, shinkendo, aikido, and jojutsu. I'm a novice banjo player and have been practicing for almost a year.

**What attracted you to this field?**

I became interested in HIV prevention and health behavior research as a master's student at Drexel University. Dr. Alexis Roth took me on as a mentee and research assistant, and it was through her work that I got my first exposure to syringe services programs and the incredible work they do. Spending time with the staff at Camden Area Health Education Center's SSP showed me what on-the-ground, community-engaged, and person-centered HIV and HCV prevention looks like. Their work was inspiring, as was the research conducted by Dr. Roth. I knew within my first year that I wanted to continue in academia.

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

I started at UCSD as a postdoc in the T32 in Substance Use, HIV, and Related Infections after earning my PhD at University of Southern California in the Department of Population and Public Health Sciences, where I was mentored by Dr. Ricky Bluthenthal. I was incredibly interested in Dr. Annick Borquez's ongoing research and joined the T32 as her and Dr. Steffanie Strathdee's mentee.

**What are the major issues facing HIV researchers today?**

The biggest issue facing HIV researchers today, in the US at least, is the retrenchment of government funding for critical research and a continuing shift in how the broader population understands the value of scientific endeavor. This loss of both funding and general public trust has impacted who can do this work and how it gets done.

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researchers, but potential future researchers as well.

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

My research interests primarily concern the social and structural drivers of health behavior that impact substance use health outcomes. In particular, I want to better understand how housing environments and homelessness policy influence these outcomes. My main project right now, under my K01, examines the role of emergent temporary housing measures (e.g. San Diego's Safe Sleeping Program) in substance use behaviors and outcomes.

**What are some of your favorite or most important projects?**

As a very early career researcher, my most important completed project to date has been my dissertation, in which I examined how feelings of security, safety, and wellbeing are shaped by different aspects of the homelessness risk environment.

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

One of the lessons I've most internalized in my time here is that "no person is an island". While I've always been a strong believer in the power of community and cooperation, it has been really awe-inspiring to see the ways in which our faculty, postdocs, and grad students all support each other and continually seek new project collaborations. I believe this spirit of communality is why we produce the fantastic and impactful work that we do.

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## Upcoming Programs

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### Seminar Series

The HIV Institute Seminar Series and the San Diego Center for AIDS Research are pleased to present the following speaker:

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12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

**Shirish Balachandra, MD**

Family Medicine, Brawley, CA

Former: Chief Medical Officer and Deputy Chief of  
the Dept. of Defense's HIV/AIDS Prevention  
Program**"From Macro to Micro: PEPFAR,  
Zimbabwe and a Dash of Good Luck"**Via Zoom: [Register Here](#)

Did you miss a seminar?

Stay up to date with our latest seminars by visiting our [webpage](#).**"Challenges in Estimating Vaccine Effectiveness Against Progression to Severe Disease"- presented by Natalie Dean, PhD****"Applications of AI to Healthcare and Public Health"- presented by John Ayers, PhD****"Advances in prevention of HPV-related cancers in people with HIV"- presented by Tim Wilkin, MPH, MD**Visit our [SD CFAR YouTube page](#), to watch previous presentations.

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## Recent Events

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We are enormously proud to share that three THI-award recipients and ESI trainees (Mattia Trunfio, MD, PhD, Elizabeth Hastie, MD, and Nicole Kelly, PhD, MPH) were selected to present their research at the **San Diego Center for AIDS Research (SD CFAR) Annual Research Day**, while another THI-award recipient, Renee El Krab, PhD, received the event's first annual Star Reviewer award. The event's theme was "Resilience in HIV Research and Treatment: Progress and Possibilities" and it took place on September 11, 2025. It was attended by over 85 people from across UCSD campuses and the San Diego community and offered significant networking opportunities for our trainees. The full day symposium highlighted groundbreaking discoveries that are transforming the landscape of HIV research, treatment, and prevention.



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*Pictured: Kim Schoonover, David Firestein, Gregg Gonslaves, Jen Yore, Liz Zunshine and Neil Dutcher*

Many THI-supported ESI's recently attended the first **SD CFAR Early Stage Investigator (ESI) Retreat** on Thursday, November 13, 2025, marking the start of an ongoing effort to bolster our support of ESIs as they advance their research careers. Participants were introduced to the services offered by the SD CFAR Cores and provided guidance on navigating the evolving processes and systems associated with NIH Common Forms, the UC San Diego Sponsored Projects Office and Office of Corporate and Foundation Relations, and Office of IRB Administration. This retreat was developed in response to our ESIs needs and concerns, which were expressed at a Summer 2025 ESI Focus Group.



*Pictured: Mary Lewinski, Laramie Smith, Jen Yore, Maile Karris, Nicole Kelly, Renee El-Krab and Lisa Gu*

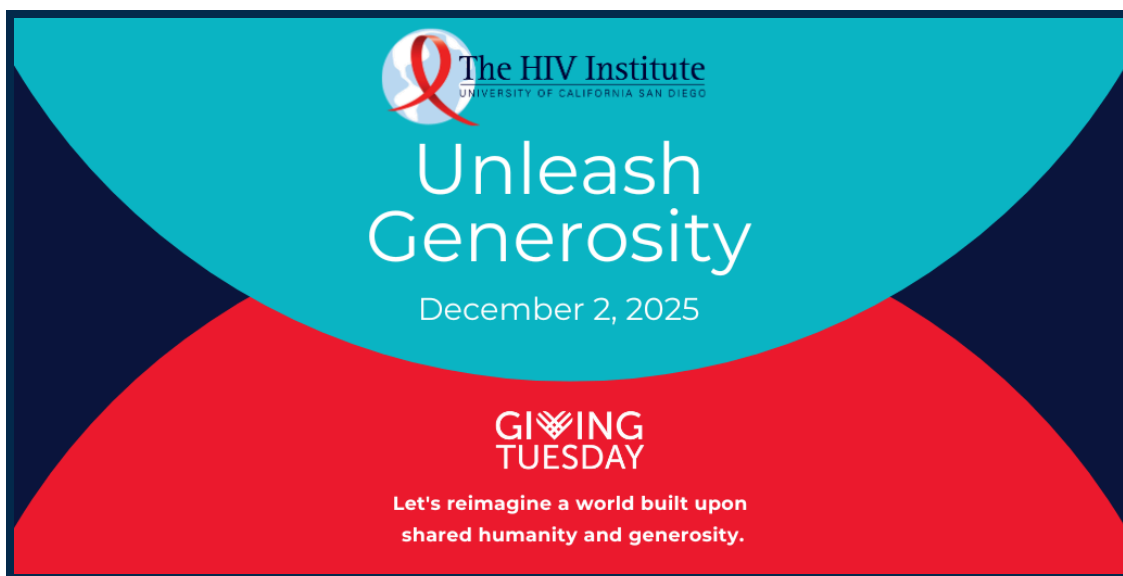
We are sincerely grateful to all of the speakers for their time, expertise, and commitment to strengthening the foundation for our ESIs.

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As 2025 draws to an end it's a great time to give back.  
There are several ways you can [GIVE](#) to the UC San Diego HIV Institute.

## Giving Tuesday

This global generosity movement unleashes the power of people and organizations to transform their communities and the world. The HIV Institute **needs your help** to [support](#) research that brings fresh perspectives, innovation, and renewed drive to the study of HIV!



## Shop at Ralphs?

It's easy . . . just shop, swipe your Ralphs rewards card at checkout and save while supporting HIV research! For more information on how to **ENROLL** in the community rewards program [click here](#) and follow instructions, or visit [Ralphs.com](https://www.ralphs.com). Be sure to select "UCSD AIDS Research Institute."

Over the past year, you have helped us raise over **\$450.00**. Thank you for your continued support!

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## Do you shop online?

Get a free [iGive.com](#) account so the 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](#). 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](#) account and select the "UC San Diego HIV Institute."**

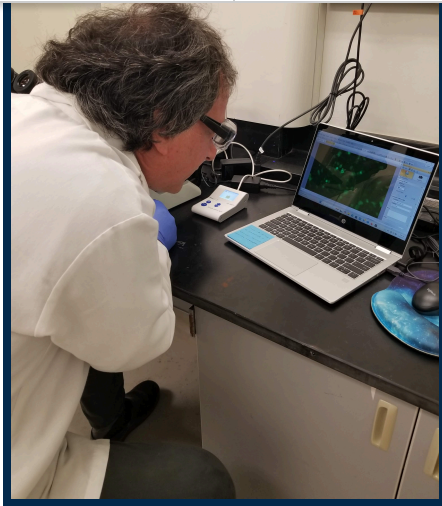


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## Donor Spotlight

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We would like to express our deep appreciation to **The James B. Pendleton Charitable Trust** which this year provided a generous \$275,000 gift to support the purchase of lab equipment for HIV research!

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*Pictured: Drs. Guatelli and Beliakova-Bethell with The James B. Pendleton Trust FY25 purchased equipment.*

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

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The HIV Institute is the bedrock of clinical and community innovation in HIV research, prevention, care, and treatment – translating discoveries from the laboratory to life. 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. Our funding is a shared resource for all HIV/AIDS programs at, and associated with, UC San Diego, making philanthropic support a crucial sustaining element for dozens of HIV care, education, and research initiatives.

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*"I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver."*

- Nelson Mandela

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