USC GEHR FAMILY CENTER FOR
HEALTH SYSTEMS SCIENCE

ANNUAL REPORT 2018-2019
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On October 25, 2018, the Gehr Center, in partnership with the Department of Medicine and Keck Medicine of USC, hosted the Inaugural David A. Goldstein Lecture, paying tribute to Gehr Center founder David A. Goldstein (pictured left). Dr. Christine Cassel was the featured speaker. Dr. Goldstein passed away in 2017. On the right, Gehr faculty member Michael Cousineau gives the 2018 Commencement Address to the Herman Ostrow School of Dentistry of USC.
To Our Community

The Gehr Center’s third year proved just as auspicious as the first two. Our team continued to grow, with two new faculty members joining our team – Barbara Turner, MD, who joined us from the University of Texas, San Antonio, and Cameron Kaplan, PhD, who hails from the University of Tennessee. Barbara is a general internist with over 30 years of experience in health disparities and community-partnered research and Cameron is an NIH-funded health economist with expertise in insurance benefits design and the Medicare prescription drug benefit program. Barbara and Cameron have helped us advance our vision of promoting “high-value and equitable healthcare for the Los Angeles community and nationwide.”

In 2018, we deepened collaborations with other clinicians and researchers at USC and Los Angeles, launching the Gehr Affiliates program, which provides scholarly guidance, partnership and grant funding. Under the leadership of Sonali Saluja, MD, MPH, we launched a 20-hour health policy curriculum for Keck Medical students. We also ran another successful Gehr Student Innovator program for 14 students over the summer, hosted talks by prominent healthcare leaders, launched an evidence-based medicine App, received a handful of new grants and contracts, and published high impact research and thought pieces.

We are ever-grateful to our benefactor, Mr. Norbert Gehr, and the Gehr Family Foundation, directed by Mr. David Lifschitz, whose support makes our work possible. We also keep our founder, David A. Goldstein, MD, close in our thoughts and continue to be guided by his vision.

The coming year promises to bring more opportunities for improving health, including a new collaboration with the USC Center for Health System Innovation, and a new 5-year grant with the LA County Department of Public Health and the USC School of Pharmacy to improve diabetes and hypertension management for vulnerable populations.

We look forward to another great year in 2019!

Michael Hochman, MD, MPH
Gehr Center Director
Norbert Gehr

Norbert Gehr arrived in New York City from Brazil in July 1960 as a teenager, with the dream of success and a few hundred dollars. He travelled across the United States to Southern California, where he took up residency and attended Santa Ana College and UCLA. In 1965, at age 24, Mr. Gehr pursued his dream by using the modest proceeds from the sale of his car to start a small distribution business, selling industrial supplies nationwide to contractors over the phone. He hired, trained and supervised commissioned salesmen and distributed his products out of a small storefront in the San Fernando Valley.

Through his drive, determination, hard work and perseverance, Mr. Gehr grew his business, hired more sales people and moved his expanding operations to downtown Los Angeles. In 1975, Mr. Gehr established his own manufacturing facility, producing extension cords and other wire and cable products. Competing with industry giants like General Cable, Woods Wire, Leviton Industries and others, he continued growing his operations and in 1986 relocated his businesses to the City of Commerce, east of downtown Los Angeles. In the same period, Mr. Gehr founded Gehr International and Gehr Development.

After 50 years since its inception, The Gehr Group has become a diversified multinational holding company headquartered in Los Angeles, California. Its principal business units are engaged in international trade, real estate, manufacturing, wholesale and distribution. In 2016, through the Gehr Family Foundation that he established, Mr. Gehr made a generous donation to Keck School of Medicine faculty member Dr. David Goldstein to establish the Gehr Family Center for Health Systems Science.
**Vision:**

To achieve high-value and equitable healthcare for the Los Angeles community and nationwide

**Mission:**

We accelerate the adoption of high-value and equitable healthcare through science, advocacy and education:

1) Delivery Science: We aim to build evidence to bridge the gap between science and real-world healthcare delivery. We collaborate with stakeholders in care delivery to implement evidence-based practices and evaluate these efforts using rigorous methodological standards.

2) Evidence Based Advocacy: We promote the translation of science into healthcare delivery and policy reform by disseminating strategies for improving patient care.

3) Education: We educate providers, policy makers and students in health systems science and mentor future leaders. We also create a network of individuals who are interested in exchanging ideas about healthcare delivery.

**Guiding Principles:**

- Changes in healthcare delivery should improve the health of all populations, particularly vulnerable individuals, families and communities.

- Innovations should be sustainable in real-world settings.

- Efforts should decrease disparities in the quality, accessibility and efficiency of care.

- Studies should aim to maximize generalizability.

- Projects should engage the Los Angeles community.

- Gehr faculty, affiliates and trainees should conduct their work with professionalism, scientific rigor and respect.
Meet Our Team

Michael Hochman, MD, MPH
Director

Sonali Saluja, MD, MPH

Barbara Turner, MD

Michael Cousineau, DrPH

Rusha Modi, MD, MPH

Albert Farias, PhD

Cameron Kaplan, PhD

Rachel Lim

USC GEHR FAMILY CENTER FOR HEALTH SYSTEMS SCIENCE
This year, the Gehr Center offered affiliate memberships to 13 clinicians, researchers, and healthcare leaders both here at USC and in the Los Angeles community. Below are some highlights from these partnerships.

**CareMore physician Gabe Waterman, MD, MBA**, served as the 2018-19 intern for the Gehr-CareMore internship. As part of this collaboration, CareMore designates one of its promising junior staff physicians to spend 20% of his/her time working on a scholarly project with Gehr faculty. For his project this year, Dr. Waterman is evaluating the impact of CareMore’s “Nifty After 50” exercise program for frail elderly adults on outcomes such as depression, fall rates, and functional status.

“As a clinician without formal research training, I found the Gehr Center faculty invaluable while developing an innovative immersive training program for physicians interested in integrating palliative care in their own practices. Their expertise was crucial to sparking the collaborations with outside partners, teaching me to evaluate the learners’ outcomes, and disseminating our exciting new model for clinical education. I feel very fortunate both for the Gehr Center’s generous support, and for the opportunity to contribute to this group’s mission as an affiliate faculty member.” **Carin Van Zyl, MD, director of the Palliative Care team at LAC+USC Medical Center**

“I am pursuing novel research on the implementation of complex health interventions in primary care settings. The Gehr Center has provided an ideal scientific forum, through brown bags and mentorship, for the development of these ideas and the feedback provided by a diverse group of health service researchers has been invaluable. In fact, these discussions informed a current pilot study, funded through matching funds provided by the Gehr Center, to field-test new constructs and methods. The support and opportunities provided by the Gehr Center have significantly contributed to my independent research agenda as junior faculty.” **Monica Perez Jolles, PhD, USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work**

**Gehr Affiliate Lello Tesema, MD**, was featured in February 2018 on NPR about innovations in jail health services in Los Angeles County. Dr. Tesema, along with other Gehr faculty, received a grant this year to study a protocol for managing patients admitted to jail who are intoxicated.
The Gehr Speaker Series is of immense value to anyone interested in understanding the tangible impact of healthcare reform on our systems of care. The speakers include some of the most influential decision-makers and leaders, representing a broad set of healthcare perspectives.

Sanjit Mahanti, Akido Labs
Educational Programs

The Gehr Student Innovators Program

This summer, the Gehr team sponsored and ran the third annual program for health professional students. As part of the 6-week program, each student develops a health systems science project under the mentorship of a Gehr faculty member. Students also receive health systems science didactics, and learn about pathways for healthcare leadership. This year, 14 students participated (12 USC medical and graduate students, and two undergraduates from the SCS Noonan Scholars program for high-achieving students from disadvantaged backgrounds).

The Gehr-Schaeffer Health Policy Educational Series

In partnership with faculty from the USC Schaeffer Center, Gehr faculty developed a 20-hour health policy curriculum taught longitudinally to Keck Medical Students during their first three years of medical school. The curriculum aims to provide students with health policy essentials for a career in medicine. Gehr faculty member Sonali Saluja, MD, MPH, directs the series.

The Keck Health Policy Selective

Gehr faculty collectively teach a 6-session selective course in advanced health policy for second year Keck medical students with an interest in health policy.

“The Gehr-Schaeffer health policy curriculum gave me the language, knowledge, and tools I needed to be able to better understand my patients’ struggles with insurance, worries about paying for medications, and barriers to accessing care. Learning everything from how Medicaid functions to the inner-workings of the pharmaceutical industry was an essential foundation to one day becoming a physician who is also an advocate for the patients I will serve.”

Sneha Panganamamula, second year Keck medical student

I am so grateful for the Gehr Summer Program, as it allowed me to take a deeper dive into research. As the first occupational therapy student in the Gehr program, I had the opportunity to learn more about interdisciplinary collaboration and advocate for my profession as a valuable addition to preventing and managing chronic conditions in primary care settings. In addition, the level of mentorship and friendship fostered from the six weeks was extraordinary and has carried over to this next year. The program has changed the lens through which I view my future career, and inspired me to seek out additional ways to contribute to the improvement of our healthcare system.

Elissa Lee, student in the USC Masters in Occupational Therapy Program
In a Medical Care Blog piece, Sonali Saluja, MD, MPH reports that with the $12 billion needed to build a border wall with Mexico, the U.S. might instead use these funds to “cover ALL 3.9 million uninsured children in the US today, and still have a couple billion left over.”

In this original research publication in Medical Oncology, Albert Farias documents concerning disparities in cancer care based on racial, geographic, and socioeconomic factors. Farias received a three-year R01 supplement grant from the NIH this year to continue his research on cancer disparities.

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An article in the NEJM Catalyst featured a program developed by Gehr Center affiliate Carin Van Zyl, in partnership with Gehr faculty, providing two months of intensive palliative care training for generalist clinicians. The program is now being utilized by CareMore Health System and the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services.

In a Health Affairs perspective piece, Gehr faculty member Michael Hochman explains the need for greater transparency among Medicaid providers. Hochman, along with Gehr faculty Rusha Modi and Michelle Levander, the director of the USC Center for Health Journalism, wrote a series of blogs on the topic. “Together, our two USC centers made the case to bring greater transparency for Medicaid, launching what we hope will become a movement. Medicaid has become one of the most significant pillars of healthcare since the passage of the Affordable Care Act, yet consumers and policy makers have no access to the data that would tell them whether local provider groups are doing a good job.” Levander said.
In November, the Gehr Center published an App called "50 Studies" that summarizes landmark medical studies for medical trainees. The App can be purchased on the iOS or android App stores by searching for "50 Studies". All proceeds support Gehr Center activities.

This American Journal of Preventive Medicine meta-analysis, co-authored by Cameron Kaplan found, surprisingly, that "smoking interventions targeting smokers not ready to quit can be as effective as similar interventions for smokers ready to quit; however, costs of intervening on this group may be higher." Kaplan is supported by an American Cancer Society grant investigating the impact of health insurance premium adjustments based on smoking status, as well as several NIH grants.

In a widely circulated blog for the USC Center for Health Journalism, Rusha Modi calls for greater emphasis on health policy in the medical school curriculum. "The next generation of physicians needs to work with community advocates, health policy experts, and public health scientists to craft innovative solutions. The promise of health care reform cannot be achieved without it," he writes.

Barbara Turner was named the editor of the internal medicine section of DynaMed Plus, a widely used tool providing clinicians with evidence-based decision support.
As part of Keck Medicine of USC’s efforts to improve care for USC employees, Keck partnered with the Gehr Center to develop a pilot program for improving blood pressure management for Trojan staff and faculty. The new program, which was initially conceived by Gehr Center founder, David A Goldstein, launched in December 2018. The program leverages, clinical pharmacists and occupational therapists to help treat patients with elevated blood pressure. Martha Jones, the Lead Ambulatory Care Manager at Keck Value Based Services said “This newly created team-based care model utilizes evidence-based treatment protocols to provide comprehensive care for patients in an interdisciplinary way. This program will form the foundation for future clinical models for managing chronic disease and improving outcomes,”
The 2018-19 Gehr budget totaled $1.7 million, of which $1 million comes from the Gehr Family Foundation and the remainder from grants and contracts to Gehr faculty.