

## RESEARCH COMMITTEE

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*Patricia D. Jones, MD, FACC*

### RESPONSIBILITIES AS STATED IN THE ACG BYLAWS

The ACG Research Committee is responsible for the annual review of applications for Clinical Research Awards and Junior Faculty Development Awards funded under the auspices of the ACG Institute for Clinical Research & Education. The Research Committee makes recommendations for clinical research funding to the ACG Board of Trustees, which approves the awards.

### COMMITTEE REPORT

#### ACG Grant Review Process

In January 2025, the ACG Research Committee met via Zoom and in person to review the submissions for the ACG 2025 Clinical Research Awards. This hard-working group completed an extensive review of all submitted grants. In assessing the applications for 2025, the ACG Research Committee utilized the Cadmium grant system. All grants were evaluated on a nine-point scale in line with NIH grant scoring practices. After preliminary review and scoring by three assigned reviewers, applications were further discussed, and a priority score for funding was assigned.

The Committee's typical process is that approximately one-third of the lowest-scoring grants are triaged without extensive discussion, and the rest have extensive discussion and re-scoring by the Committee at the meeting. The Committee pays meticulous attention to conflicts of interest and rigorously assesses the scientific merits and feasibility of all grants.

After prioritizing the quality of the science, the Committee discusses the appropriate cut-off lines denoting science of adequate quality to merit funding. Each applicant, whether successful or not, receives a written critique of the grant so that improvements can be planned for subsequent submissions either to the College or elsewhere. Overall, the investigators selected for the 2025 ACG clinical research awards were the top candidates of an outstanding group of applicants and should produce research of which the College will be proud.

#### Funding for 2025 Clinical Research

For 2025, the ACG Institute for Clinical Research and Education awarded \$2.3 Million in support of outstanding clinical research in gastroenterology based on the review and recommendations of the ACG Research Committee. This year, ACG will support three Junior Faculty Development Awards at an overall level of \$150,000 over 3 years, a substantial investment that recognizes and supports promising clinical researchers. There were thirty-three applications for this career development award.

ACG will support two Established Investigator Bridge Funding Awards at \$600,000 in total, over two years (\$150,000 per year), to sustain competitive, patient-oriented research programs during a gap in federal funding.

# ACG's Committees (cont.)

## **Research Committee (cont.)**

The Research Committee recommended funding for the Leonidas Berry Health Equity Research Award, re-named in honor of the life and legacy of Leonidas H. Berry, MD, MACG, ACG's first African American member (1946) and champion of social change to desegregate hospitals and medical schools. Funding was recommended to support one awardee at the funding level of \$75,000 (\$50,000 year one and \$25,000 year two). This award supports actionable science that will translate to reducing health and/or healthcare disparities.

The Committee funded one award for the ACG/ASGE Epidemiologic Research Award in Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. This joint society award supports a study utilizing data from the GIQuIC quality benchmarking registry.

From among forty-one submissions for the 2025 Clinical Research Award and Pilot Research Award, the Research Committee recommended funding for six investigators for a total of \$229,982. Two investigators received pilot awards at the \$15,000 level, and four received clinical research awards at the \$50,000 level.

The Medical Resident Clinical Research Award and the Medical Student Research Award categories recognize and support promising trainees as they develop careers in clinical research in gastroenterology and hepatology. Additionally, these awards provide an opportunity to travel to the ACG Annual Scientific Meeting. For these award categories, the Research Committee recommended funding three Medical Resident Clinical Research Awards for a total of \$29,954 and three Medical Student Research Awards for a total of \$12,600.

## **Junior Faculty Development Award**

The College is proud to support three Junior Faculty Development Awards this year. The ACG Junior Faculty Development Grant is a three-year award designed to support junior faculty members with outstanding promise to establish an independent, productive career in gastroenterology or hepatology. The primary goal of this career development grant of \$150,000 per year for each of the three years is to assist promising clinical researchers in developing research and careers that have a direct bearing on clinical gastrointestinal practice. This includes providing 50% protected time for clinical research.

The ACG Board of Trustees approved three Junior Faculty Development Awards recommended by the ACG Research Committee at their January 2025 meeting:

**Claire Beveridge, MD:** Cleveland Clinic — *Alternatives to Endoscopic Biopsies in Eosinophilic Esophagitis*

**Erica J. Brenner, MD, MSCR:** University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill — *Safety and Effectiveness of Nonsteroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs in Women with Crohn's Disease*

**Phillip Gu, MD:** Cedars-Sinai Medical Center — *A Multiorgan Radiomic Approach Towards Precision Medicine in Acute Severe Ulcerative Colitis*

## **Established Investigator Bridge Funding Award**

The ACG Established Investigator Bridge Funding Award is a two-year award supporting 30% protected time as bridge funding for established investigators. This bridge funding grant of \$150,000 per year for 2 years is designed to help researchers principally focused on digestive or liver diseases and to sustain their competitive, patient-oriented research programs during a gap in federal program funding. This year's recipients are:

**Lynn F. Butterly, MD, FACC:** Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center — *Optimizing Colorectal Cancer Prevention Through Population-Based Investigation of Serrated Polyps*

**Andrea Shin, MD, MSCR:** University of California, Los Angeles — *Microbiome Endophenotypes Over Time in Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)*

## **Leonidas Berry Health Equity Research Award**

The Leonidas Berry Health Equity Research Award supports up to \$75,000 for actionable science that will translate to reducing health and/or healthcare disparities, thereby promoting health equity. This two-year award provides funding to faculty or attending physicians who have completed all their training and are practicing gastroenterologists/hepatologists in the community, who have pilot data for funding at \$75,000 (\$50,000 year one and \$25,000 year two based on progress). This year's recipient is:

**Monica Tincopa, MD, MSc:** University of California, San Diego — *Advancing Health Equity for Hispanic Adults With MASLD Through Patient-Focused, Stakeholder-Informed, Tailored, Non-Invasive Screening, Risk Stratification, and Treatment*

## **ACG/ASGE Epidemiologic Research Award in Gastrointestinal Endoscopy**

The College, in partnership with ASGE, supports one or two-year awards of up to \$50,000 for projects involving the use and outcomes of gastrointestinal (GI) endoscopy within the GI Quality Improvement Consortium (GIQuIC). This year's recipient is:

**Lauren D. Feld, MD:** University of Massachusetts Chan School of Medicine — *Adenoma Detection Rate, Patient Sex, and Endoscopist Gender: Understanding the Interplay and Implications for Colonoscopy Quality Assessment*

## **Clinical Research Awards**

The College offers Clinical Research Awards of up to \$50,000 each year for original clinical research. The mission of this awards program is to fund innovative research that is patient-care oriented. The Committee also considers proposals for pilot awards (up to \$15,000) within this category.

## **2025 ACG Clinical Research Awards (up to \$50,000)**

**Siyan Cao, MD, PhD:** Washington University in St. Louis — *Type 2 Immunity in Predicting Response to Dupilumab in Patients With Eosinophilic Esophagitis*

**Colleen R. Kelly, MD, FACC:** Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School — *Exploring Predictors of Relapse in Microscopic Colitis*

**Amiko Uchida, MD:** University of Utah — *Microbial Metabolites for Eosinophilic Esophagitis*

**Tiange P. Zhang, MD:** University of Southern California — *Crowdsourced Culturally Tailored Education to Enhance Steatotic Liver Disease Knowledge and Care Seeking*

#### **2025 ACG Clinical Research Awards – Pilot Grants (up to \$15,000)**

**Diana Jo, MD:** Children's National Hospital — *The Role of Oral Bacteria in the Gut of Children With Newly Diagnosed Crohn's Disease*

**Alexandra Strauss Starling, MD:** University of Pennsylvania — *Characterization of the Cellular Landscape of Esophageal Lichen Planus*

#### **Medical Residents and Medical Students Awards**

These grant categories provide support for research by junior colleagues. The Medical Resident Clinical Research Award offers up to \$10,000 for original research under the mentorship of a more senior ACG member. The Medical Student Research Award provides a summer research experience for medical students, supporting up to \$5,000 in living expenses, to be completed under the supervision of a mentor who is an ACG member. These two award types will support travel to the ACG Annual Scientific Meeting as part of the experience.

#### **2025 Medical Resident Clinical Research Award (up to \$10,000)**

**Kiandokht Bashiri, MD, MSc:** Georgetown University/MedStar Washington Hospital Center — *Neutrophil-Lymphocyte Ratio as a Marker of Anti-TNF Therapy Response in IBD Using the SPARC Dataset*

**Allison Carroll, MD:** Massachusetts General Hospital — *Investigating the Impact of GLP-1 Receptor Agonists on Hepatocellular Carcinoma Risk Using a Protein-Based Prognostic Liver Signature*

**Christiane Gafrey, MBChB:** University of Toronto — *Exploring Perceptions of Inflammatory Bowel Disease Care Among Immigrant Women of Reproductive Age: A Focus Group Study*

#### **2025 Medical Student Research Award (up to \$5,000)**

**Emma Dester, BS, MS:** Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine — *Measuring the Association Between Pre-Operative Pelvic Floor Dysfunction on Anorectal Manometry and Inflammatory Complications of the Pouch in Patients With Ileal Pouch-Anal Anastomosis: A Retrospective Chart Review*

**Jose Luis Orozco, BS:** University of California, Davis — *Analyzing the Effects of Dietary Fatty Acids on Sex-Specific Changes in Colorectal Cancer Pathways After Roux-En-Y Gastric Bypass*

**Anjali Patel, BA:** Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School — *Investigating the Role of Crohn's Disease Genetic Risk in Shaping Host Response to Gut Microbial Exposures*