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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 2026, the ACG Research Committee met via Zoom and in person to review the submissions for the ACG 2026 Clinical Research Awards. This hard-working group completed an extensive review of all submitted grants. In assessing the applications for 2026, 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 made for subsequent submissions either to the College or elsewhere. Overall, the investigators selected for the 2026 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 2026 Clinical Research

For 2026, the ACG Institute for Clinical Research and Education awarded $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 five 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 applications for this career development award.

ACG will support one Established Investigator Bridge Funding Award at $300,000 in total, over two years ($150,000 per year), to sustain competitive, patient-oriented research programs during a gap in federal funding.

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 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 sixty-six submissions for the 2026 Clinical Research Award and Pilot Research Award, the Research Committee recommended funding for six investigators for a total of $389,735. Three investigators received pilot awards at the $30,000 level, and three received clinical research awards at the $100,000 level. The value of the Pilot Award and Clinical Research Award categories doubled this year, from $15,000 to $30,000 (Pilot Awards) and $50,000 to $100,000 (Clinical Research Awards).

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 six Medical Resident Clinical Research Awards for a total of $58,918 and four Medical Student Research Awards for a total of $19,250.

Junior Faculty Development Award

The College is proud to support five 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 five Junior Faculty Development Awards recommended by the ACG Research Committee at their January 2026 meeting:

Katie A. Dunleavy, MD: Massachusetts General Hospital — *Lifestyle Determinants and Dietary Modulation of the Bile Acid-Microbiome Axis to Reduce Pouch Inflammation in Patients With Inflammatory Bowel Disease*

Justin T. Field, MD: University of California, San Francisco — *Prevalence and Determinants of Anal HSIL in Patients With Perianal Crohn's Disease*

Corey J. Ketchem, MD, MSCE: Northwestern University — *Defining Optimal Therapeutic and Dilation Strategies in Eosinophilic Esophagitis Using AI and Real-World Data*

Sheila Rustgi, MD: Columbia University Irving Medical Center — *Novel Approaches to Early Detection of Gastrointestinal Cancer for BRCA Carriers*

Yee Hui Yeo, MD, MSc: The Cleveland Clinic Foundation — *SOBER-VR: An AI-Powered Virtual Reality Brief Intervention for Hospitalized Patients With Alcohol-Associated Liver Disease*

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 recipient is:

Robert Huang, MD, MS: Stanford University — *Comprehensive Characterization of the Oral-Gastric Microbial Axis Within the Gastric Precancerous Cascade*

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:

Lauren Nephew, MD, MSCE: Indiana University — *HOME-HCC: Home-Based Blood-Based Screening to Improve Hepatocellular Carcinoma Surveillance Equity*

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:

Kira Newman, MD, PhD: University of Michigan — *Patient, Procedure, and Practice Differences Between Male and Female Endoscopists*

Clinical Research Awards

The College offers Clinical Research Awards of up to $100,000 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 $30,000) within this category.

2026 ACG Clinical Research Awards (up to $100,000)

Bharati Kochar, MD, MS: Massachusetts General Hospital; Harvard Medical School — *Developing a Patient Decision Aid to Support Shared Decision Making for Older Adults With Inflammatory Bowel Disease*

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

Eduardo Vilar-Gomez, MD: Indiana University School of Medicine — *Defining the Role of Non-Heavy Alcohol Consumption in MASLD Severity, Progression, and Liver-Related Outcomes*

Xiao Jing Wang, MD: Mayo Clinic Rochester — *Development of a Noninvasive Metric to Measure Small Bowel Sensation – the Small Intestine Stress Test*

2026 ACG Clinical Research Awards – Pilot Grants (up to $30,000)

Molly R. Kelly-Goss, MD, PhD: University of California, San Francisco — *Single-Cell and Spatial Analysis of Vascular Cell Interactions Driving Gastrointestinal Arteriovenous Malformations*

Hyder Said, MD: Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai — *Biologic Chronotherapy in Inflammatory Bowel Disease: A Pilot Feasibility Study*

Irene Sonu, MD: Stanford School of Medicine — *A Pilot Study Using Gut-Directed Hypnotherapy for Hospitalized Patients*

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.

2026 Medical Resident Clinical Research Award (up to $10,000)

Tarek G. Aridi, MD: Indiana University — *The CarePal Study: Establishing a Digital Health Approach to Real-time Monitoring of Patient Reported Needs and Outcomes in Cirrhosis Care*

Isaac J. Benque, MD, MSc: University of California, San Francisco — *Investigating Novel First-Line and Adjunct Therapies in Immune Checkpoint Inhibitor Hepatitis*

Varun Jain, MD, MBA: University of Pittsburgh, School of Medicine — *Validating Iron Deficiency Anemia Diagnoses in a Longitudinal Nationwide Cohort to Improve Clinical Outcomes, Care Quality, and Research Rigor*

Daniel M. Simadibrata, MD, MSc: Case Western Reserve University / MetroHealth — *Investigating the Value of Supine and Upright Acid Exposure Time in Patients Undergoing Reflux Testing for the Diagnosis of Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease*

Katherine L. Stone, MD: NYU Grossman School of Medicine — *Long-Term Adherence to Colorectal Cancer Screening and Surveillance in the Veterans Health Administration*

Matthew Zhao, MD: Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai — *Optimizing Direct Access Screening Colonoscopy in a Large Integrated Health System*

2026 Medical Student Research Award (up to $5,000)

Clarety Kaseke, BA: The Cleveland Clinic Foundation — *Mechanisms of Inter-Individual Variability in Secretory IgA Responses to Dietary Fiber Supplementation*

Angela Minasyan, BS: David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA — *Impact of Anti-Inflammatory vs. High-Fiber Diets on Clinical Outcomes in Inflammatory Bowel Disease*

Kianna Nguyen, BS: Mayo Clinic Rochester — *Characterizing the Senescence Associated Secretory Phenotype in Cirrhosis and Its Role in Sarcopenia*

Easton M. Stark, MS: Indiana University School of Medicine — *Risk Stratification of Patients With Serrated Polyposis Syndrome: Determining Outcomes, Safety, and Cost of Extending Colonoscopy Surveillance Intervals*