Included in this Message from the Coordinator of the Florida Consortium for HIV/AIDS Research (FCHAR) HIV ResearchLink Newsletter are a presentation of FCHAR goals and objectives, and an invitation to participate actively in a proposed research project via team drafting of a protocol concept paper.

Following those items are an update on the Florida HIV/AIDS Research Inventory; a brief report of an initiative to involve the pharmaceutical industry in FCHAR; an update on the federal Affordable Care Act Navigator award; FCHAR subcommittees and meetings; and a summary of this issue's featured collaborative research study.

These reports and information will be of interest to FCHAR researchers and other colleagues. The content is provided in the context of a national and local political and economic environment that causes concerns among those engaged in scientific research. The AIDS Institute, which is FCHAR’s parent organization, continues to advocate for policies that will promote HIV/AIDS programs at all jurisdictional levels, with a particular emphasis on Florida. We will continue to promote inter-institutional
collaborations to address HIV/AIDS research opportunities. As we mark progress, we are reminded of FCHAR goals and objectives:

**Consortium Goals**

To promote and facilitate the design and conduct of collaborative, interdisciplinary and scalable studies on HIV prevention, treatment, cures and vaccines, to reduce HIV/AIDS incidence and mortality.

**Consortium Objectives**

**Cooperate:** Find common HIV research interest areas and network to bring new resources/studies to Florida

**Share:** Develop and maintain a shared HIV/AIDS Research Inventory database of clinical trials, prevention studies, and basic science research to create a central source for research study compilation within Florida

**Educate:** Provide education to clinicians, HIV support teams, and consumers to promote appropriate referral and entry of patients into clinical trials

**Collaborate:** Partner on proposed and future unique studies that address primary and secondary HIV prevention, improve patient outcomes, and advance an understanding of microbicides, a cure, and a vaccine

**Resolve:** Address challenges and discuss solutions to recruitment of participants for prevention studies, behavioral studies, and clinical trials; address challenges in collecting biologic specimens for virologic and other basic science studies

**Protocols:** Identify active or future protocols accessible to our patients for the prevention and treatment of HIV infection.

Click here to access a PowerPoint slide set that presents an FCHAR overview and update of FCHAR activities.

**Membership Drive**

We welcome researchers interested in joining FCHAR and any one of its various subcommittees, which are overseen by an Executive Advisory Committee: 1) Research
Rising to an Innovative and Creative Challenge

We are currently looking for a few creative FCHAR members who would be interested in joining a new ad hoc committee. The committee will function as a research protocol development team to produce a concept paper for the study outlined below. Out-of-the-box thinking and creativity are a requirement of team members. As usual, FCHAR promotes a collaborative effort among universities and other research entities.

Working Title: Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Care4Today Medication Adherence Program, Florida.

Background:

We have piqued the interest of Janssen Therapeutics in funding a Care4Today evaluation project. Care4Today Mobile Health Manager, version 2.0, is a free, secure, two-way messaging platform, mobile app and website provided by Janssen Therapeutics. Adherence reminder notices are texted to the individual. Complementary tools, including personalized follow-up by healthcare staff or case managers, are provided to help encourage taking medication on time. The study would examine the effectiveness of the Care4Today program. The dependent variable would be viral load. Study participants would probably be those Ryan White patients with a viral load (VL) >1,000 in the 12-18 months prior to entry in the study. If VL becomes undetectable within one year of project implementation, it will be counted as a success. Detectable VL would be counted as unsuccessful, and would be quantified according to VL level. One among many challenges would be the selection criteria for controls, if a clinical trial approach is warranted. The ad hoc protocol committee (AHPC) would include FCHAR researchers from two or more institutions. The AHPC would be charged to refine a study design, determine sample sizes, develop a recruitment strategy, and draft a concept paper.

The Care4Today platform description is available at: http://www.care4today.com/mobile-health-manager#
To join FCHAR or its various committees, to participate in developing a research study concept paper as described above, or to contribute a featured research study summary to the newsletter, please contact me.

Thank you,

Spencer Lieb, MPH
HIV/AIDS Research Coordinator
The AIDS Institute / Florida Consortium for HIV/AIDS Research
www.fchar.org
SLieb@TheAIDSInstitute.org
850-329-7021

Updating the Florida HIV/AIDS Research Inventory

FCHAR has begun the process of developing an updated, interactive, and web-based Florida HIV/AIDS Research Inventory. The current Inventory, dated 2012 is in Word format, which lacks a number of useful variables and cannot be sorted by type of study, enrollment issues, etc. Click here to access the 2012 Inventory. Clinical trials account for 39% of 412 research studies in the state inventory as of last year. Another 39% are behavioral or epidemiologic in nature, and 22% address basic science and bench work.

The Inventory is primarily aimed at Florida's research communities. Inter-institutional connections will enable our researchers to become involved with each other's studies to facilitate enrollment and retention of participants. Although the Inventory will target researchers, prospective participants may access the website to learn more about what is involved with each study, which would be another way to encourage community involvement and enrollment. The Inventory is thus an educational tool, as well as a practical tool for linking together disparate researchers within the state.

The draft template in Excel format (click here) shows a set of
variables that we could use in updating the FCHAR HIV/AIDS Research Inventory. They are shown in columns as they would be displayed in the Inventory. The data could be sorted on any variable to encourage interactivity. Below this layout is a line list of the variables and their corresponding codes or values. We would link the reader to the www.clinicaltrials.gov website in instances where a Florida HIV/AIDS trial is included on the government site.

Feedback Requested: Please share your thoughts with us about the proposed Inventory, and its potential for enabling and promoting collaboration. Should we contact our members one by one to obtain detailed information on their studies for publication? Other suggested ways to promote an optimal response to the request for these details? Contact: Spencer Lieb.

Funding Opportunities, October 2013

More than 100 current NIH Funding Opportunity Announcements for HIV/AIDS research are available at http://1.usa.gov/1fO8YKZ.

Other NIH, HRSA, CDC, Other Agency Funding Opportunity Announcements available at grants.gov:


Involving the Pharmaceutical Industry with FCHAR

The AIDS Institute has created an opportunity for fee-based Corporate Membership by pharmaceutical companies as a part of FCHAR. This followed a recommendation of the FCHAR Executive Advisory Committee and approval by the general membership. The primary intent is to assure that FCHAR has open communication and participation from all of the key stakeholders in HIV/AIDS-related research in Florida. The result would be better coordination, improved thinking, and faster results. Invitations are being sent to the eight companies who provide antiretrovirals listed on the AIDS Drug Assistance Program (ADAP) formulary: Abbvie
Boehringer Ingelheim, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Genentech, Gilead Sciences, Janssen Therapeutics, Merck & Co., and Viiv Healthcare.

Membership opportunities are available, at three different levels of support: Benefactor ($10,000), Supporter ($5,000) and Sustainer ($2,500). Benefits include all or some of the following, depending on level:

- Participation in all FCHAR committee meetings.
- Opportunity to provide an educational webinar/conference call to FCHAR members and affiliates on a topic of corporate member’s choice.
- Opportunity to provide members with information about ongoing or new clinical trials and/or studies.
- A premium exhibit space at annual Conference that includes four free meeting registrations.
- A one page insert in the FCHAR newsletter for two issues each year.
- First option for conference and programmatic sponsorships.
- Company logo to appear on FCHAR’s and/or TAI’s website for duration of membership.

University of South Florida Receives Grant to Help Uninsured In Florida Navigate Coverage Options

University of South Florida Receives $4.2 Million for Federal Grant to Help Uninsured Across Florida Navigate Health Care Coverage Options

(Source: "USF Health" lead story, August 15, 2013)

A $4.2 million grant awarded to the University of South Florida will help eligible uninsured individuals get health care. The one-year grant, awarded by the Department of Health and Human Services, will help individuals who want in-person assistance with shopping for and enrolling in plans through the Health Insurance Marketplace, the health insurance exchanges scheduled for open enrollment Oct. 1.

The Florida Covering Kids & Families program (FL-CKF) at the USF Chiles Center for Healthy Mothers and Babies, received the second largest award nationwide out of $67 million in
“Navigator” grant awards distributed to 105 organizations. USF got the largest of these awards among eight recipients in Florida.

USF will oversee and work with a consortium of 10 partners in all but three counties in Florida. Counselors, or navigators, will be trained and certified to guide people seeking health insurance coverage through the new online marketplace, as part of the Affordable Care Act. Navigators will provide unbiased information in a culturally competent manner to consumers about health insurance; the new Health Insurance Marketplace, qualified health plans, and public programs including Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance. (Editor’s Note: Currently the Florida’s Surgeon General [Secretary of Department of Health] prohibits Federal Marketplace navigators to provide services in County Health Departments or any other state-owned or leased property with the exception of Federally Qualified Health Center Programs.)

USF will work with the following 10 partners in expanding its education, outreach and enrollment:

- Health Council of Southeast Florida
- The Kids Healthcare Foundation
- Primary Care Access Network
- Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida
- North Central Florida Planning Council
- United Way of Brevard
- Panhandle Area Educational Consortium
- Health Planning Council of Northeast Florida
- Northwest Florida Comprehensive Services for Children (Families Count)
- Florida CHAIN

Upcoming FCHAR Subcommittee Meetings, Webinars, Annual Meeting

Subcommittees will begin meeting again this fall and winter on 1) Research Education, 2) Antiretrovirals and Other Therapeutic Research, and 3) Hard-to-Reach Populations. FCHAR will conduct three webinars per year that will include guest and member researchers who present their most interesting, current research efforts in their
respective specialty areas, most of which can be documented in the Inventory. A third annual meeting will be scheduled for early 2014. While we are working on an agenda for this meeting, the following link directs you to the agenda from the second annual FCHAR meeting in January 2012. This agenda (click here) will be a model for the third meeting.

**Highlights of Future Research Study: The Florida Cohort**

The Florida Cohort
Linking Individual and Multiple Systems Data to Monitor and Improve HIV Care Outcomes

Reported by Robert Cook, MD, MPH, Principal Investigator
Professor of Epidemiology and Medicine
Director, Southern HIV Alcohol Research Consortium
University of Florida -- Gainesville

Our University of Florida HIV research group is initiating The Florida Cohort, which is a new, longitudinal study that will study health care outcomes in persons with HIV infection living in Florida. We will study how individual characteristics, clinical health services, and community level factors influence the use of healthcare and how they influence HIV clinical outcomes, such as CD4 count and viral load. The cohort will help us understand how substance use and mental health treatment influence the HIV clinical outcomes. Our long term goals are to evaluate interventions that will improve acceptability and use of services for substance abuse and mental health, and determine if these help persons to have better outcomes and improved quality of life.

Plans for the Florida Cohort involve two types of cohorts: a live cohort and a virtual cohort. For the live cohort, our goals are to recruit 1200 or more persons with HIV from various settings in Florida, with a focus on persons whose care is based in public health facilities. Initially, we will start with clinics in Alachua, Columbia, and Hillsborough Counties, and we are working towards adding Orange and Sumter Counties. Participants will complete a 20-45 minute survey, which can be answered on paper or an iPad. Once persons are enrolled, they would have the option to participate in additional projects that may involve blood samples or testing of neurocognition and aging. In addition, we are working with the Florida Department of Health to create a "virtual cohort" that includes linkages of existing HIV surveillance databases.
Our collaborators include research faculty, public health HIV clinical staff, HIV surveillance personnel, and students in nursing, medicine, public health, and psychology. The Florida Consortium of HIV/AIDS Research is also a collaborating partner, and has helped us to identify potential collaborators and to consider how this research will benefit Floridians.

We are currently finishing up the pilot phase of this project, which has involved obtaining feedback on our proposed survey from members of the HIV community. The next phase of the cohort is currently being reviewed at IRBs affiliated with the Florida Department of Health and the University of Florida. Funding to initiate the cohort is provided by Southern HIV Alcohol Research Consortium, which is funded by the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (see www.sharc-research.org for more information). The investigators are still seeking funding support for the long-term aspects of the project. Persons who are interested in learning more about this project are welcome to contact Dr. Cook at Cookrl@ufl.edu.