

ACRC at the University of California, San Diego Becomes the Network's 20th Center



The American Lung Association Asthma Clinical Research Centers (ACRC) marked a milestone July 1, 2004 as it embarked on its next five years' work and welcomed its 20th center—the ACRC at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD).

With the backdrop of UCSD's intensive research infrastructure, Co-Principal Investigators, Stephen I. Wasserman, MD and Joe W. Ramsdell, MD, bring

more than 60 years' combined asthma and airways research experience to the ACRC. Both are highly enthusiastic about joining the network. The root of their excitement is the very essence of what makes the ACRC unique: an opportunity to focus on "real-world" studies where improved patient care is the immediate goal.

"I think these studies are going to be fun because they'll be immediately practical and usable by physicians," said Dr. Ramsdell, "And the ACRC studies will really complement our research portfolio here. They'll make us feel useful!"

UCSD has had a central focus on asthma for 30 years. ACRC studies will be managed by the UCSD Clinical Trials Center (CTC). Under Dr. Ramsdell's direction, the CTC executes an average of 20 new protocols per year, of which half are asthma studies.

"They have a very organized, effective center for clinical trials in San Diego, and they clearly will be an asset to the Network's efforts," said Nicholas Anthonisen, MD, PhD, ACRC Steering Committee Chair. "They have significant basic science experience and impressive investigator strength as well. It's a

very good mix that further bolsters our infrastructure."

Dr. Wasserman is currently a Professor of Medicine and Director of the Section of Allergy and Immunology in the Division of Rheumatology, Allergy and Immunology, Department of Medicine at UCSD. He has extensive experience with investigator-initiated and pharmaceutical clinical trials. Dr. Ramsdell is currently Division Head and Professor of Internal Medicine/Geriatrics. In this role, he has developed an expertise in multidepartmental coordination and leadership.

The ACRC at the University of San Diego team also will include lead coordinator Jane Viton and lab director Gerard Duffin, RRT, RPFT, who has 20 years' experience in pulmonary physiology.

"We have access to a very diverse patient population, particularly Hispanic and Asian and Pacific Rim patients, which should complement some of the other centers who probably have a larger population of African Americans," Dr. Wasserman said. "The large incidence of allergic disease among Asian and Pacific Rim patients may provide some insights into asthma care that we have overlooked."

According to Dr. Wasserman, the center became a reality only with the support of the American Lung Association of San Diego & Imperial Counties. "Janie Davis, Jan Cortez, and Mike Welch have been extremely supportive," he said.

Both researchers are quick to point out that they need time to assimilate into the ACRC Network but are anxious to work cooperatively with their colleagues. "We're here to learn and fit in with the overall philosophy and outlook of the network," explained Dr. Wasserman. "We're looking forward to taking an active role in providing intellectual input, and we'll try our best to bring the strengths of the University of California to bear on the overall program." ■

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