



Nutrition Obesity Research Center
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

NORC News: January 2026



From the Director: Paul MacLean, PhD

Happy New Year!! I hope everyone had a good holiday break. As we embark on the pursuits of another year, it would be good to remember you will need to generate your new **NIH Biographical Sketch Common Form** that is now available in [SciENcy](#). In addition, all senior/key personnel will need to take CITI Research Security Training for upcoming grant submissions ([policy requirement](#) and [take the CITI training](#)). These do take a considerable amount of time, so I wouldn't procrastinate them to the 11th hour of your grant submission.

Congratulations to the 2025 NORC Award winners!! Have a look deeper into the newsletter to see who was recognized by their peers for their outstanding contributions to our community. Be sure to give them your kudos the next time you see them!!

Finally, I recently joined Drs. James Hill and Holly Wyatt on the "[Weight Loss And...](#)" podcast to discuss the biological drivers of weight regain after weight loss. This podcast has highlighted a number of our NORC members over the past few years discussing a variety of obesity and weight loss topics.

Quick Announcements

- **CO-CDTR Webinar: Together Overcoming Diabetes: An Intergenerational and Culturally Grounded Diabetes Intervention.** Held on Thursday, January 15th, 2026 from 12pm-1pm MST. [Register to Attend.](#)
- **Gut-Brain Axis Keystone Symposia Conference.** Held March 16-19, 2026 at the Beaver Run Conference Center in Breckenridge, CO, this conference will highlight cutting-edge research on how the gut senses nutrients and relays signals to the brain, the neural circuits involved, and how these mechanisms can inform therapeutic strategies for obesity and metabolic disorders. Early Registration Deadline: January 15h! [Conference Site.](#)
- **ADA Scholars: Membership Applications** accepted through March 27th, 2026. The ADA Scholars program offers a career development program for early-career professionals who treat and/or research diabetes and its complications. Participants who are accepted into this diabetes scholar program will: Receive practical guidance on career development; Develop relationships amongst attendees; Interact with senior leaders in the field. Learn more and apply on the [program website.](#)
- **40th Lillian Fountain Smith Nutrition Conference: Nutrition Through the Lifespan** hosted by Colorado State University and the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition. Held on April 16-17, 2026 at the Hilton in Ft. Collins. More details and registration found on the [conference website.](#)



Diabetes Research Virtual Seminar Series

Wednesday, January 14, 2026

11:00 AM PT | 12:00 PM MT | 1:00 PM CT | 2:00 PM ET

<https://zoom.us/j/91323894836>



Karen Reue, PhD
Professor, Human Genetics,
David Geffen School of
Medicine at UCLA

Biological Sex and Disease Mechanisms: Insights Into Obesity, Adverse Drug Response, and Atherosclerosis

Biological sex is a determinant of cardiometabolic disease risk with males and females having different prevalence, pathology, progression, and prognosis for many chronic conditions. We investigate the sex determinants of cardiometabolic disease using mouse models that parse the contributions of gonadal sex (ovaries vs. testes) and chromosomal sex (XX vs. XY chromosomes). A key finding has been the unexpected importance of X chromosome gene dosage in many cardiometabolic traits including adipose tissue function, postprandial lipid metabolism, atherosclerosis, mitochondrial function, and statin drug adverse effects.



This seminar series is organized by the Diabetes Research Centers and Centers for Diabetes Translation Research. To view previous webinars, please go to <https://diabetes-virtual-seminar.org/>.

Faculty Highlight: Zachary Clayton, PhD

Dr. Zachary Clayton is an Assistant Professor in the Anschutz Department of Medicine - Division of Geriatric Medicine, a mentored member of the CU Cancer Center, and a faculty member in the Anschutz Integrated Physiology graduate program. Dr. Clayton is also an adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Integrative Physiology at the University of Colorado (CU) Boulder. Since joining the faculty at Anschutz, Dr. Clayton has served as a research mentor to junior faculty, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, undergraduates and high school students.



Dr. Clayton completed his BS and MS degrees at San Diego State University where he studied nutritional science and exercise physiology. He subsequently obtained his PhD in Human Physiology at the University of Oregon. After completing his predoctoral research training, he spent 4 years as a postdoctoral fellow (2018-2022) and 2 years as an Assistant Research Professor (2022-2024) in the Department of Integrative Physiology at CU Boulder. As a postdoctoral fellow and Assistant Research Professor, Dr. Clayton was supported by a postdoctoral NIH T32 training fellowship, an NIH F32 fellowship and an NIH K99 Pathway to Independence Award.

Dr. Clayton's laboratory's work bridges basic, translational and clinical research with an emphasis on understanding how disease processes intersect with aging to influence cardiovascular health. His team specifically focuses on understanding how cancer and cancer treatments influence the vascular aging process, including arterial stiffness and endothelial dysfunction. His lab employs integrative methods ranging from cellular and animal models to translational human studies to uncover molecular and physiological mechanisms of vascular dysfunction throughout the adult lifespan and how these mechanisms can be used as therapeutic targets for safe and effective interventions.

Dr. Clayton is currently supported by awards from the NIH, CU Cancer Center, Ludeman Family Center for Women's Health Research, the Colorado Scientific Center of Research Excellence in Women's Health, and the Colorado Clinical Translational Sciences Institute. He has received the Career Development Award from the North American Artery society and was recently named an Anschutz Department of Medicine Rising Star. He provides National-level service as an editorial board member for journals published by the American Physiological Society and serving as an ad hoc reviewer for NIH, VA and the American Heart Association. He provides institutional service as a member of the Department of Medicine Early Investigator Taskforce, a reviewer for the Scientific Advisory Review Committee and a postdoctoral mentor on the Division of Geriatric Medicine's Integrative Physiology Aging NIH T32 training grant.

Outside of work, Zach enjoys spending time with his wife and dog, and getting up in the mountains to ski, hike and run.

NORC/AHWC Appreciation Event and Awards 2025



We had 88 attendees at this year's AHWC/NORC Employee Appreciation event. It was wonderful to see everyone together, connecting in person. Thank you all so much for your contributions and support of the Colorado NORC - we're lucky to have such fantastic members that keep us going.

Thank you to our 2024 awardees who formed the awards committee and reviewed the 76 nominations across 18 individuals we received for this year's awards. Their selections highlight the outstanding contributions that our research base makes to the NORC's success. Be sure to congratulate this year's awardees in the categories of Outstanding:

Research Support
Graduate Student
PhD Fellow
MD Fellow
Faculty Member
Outstanding Mentor

Jasmine Hendrix
Asia Ingram
Catherine Cohen
Anthony Wang
Irene Schauer
Wei Perng

If you'd like to read the personalized limericks written for each awardee by Paul Maclean, or view any of our past year's awardees, visit the [Awards page](#) on our website.



Wendy Kohrt, PhD: ACSM Honor Awardee 2026!



Dr. Wendy Kohrt, a Distinguished Professor in the Division of Geriatric Medicine and the Ludeman Center Nancy Anschutz Chair in Women's Health Research at the University of Colorado-Anschutz, has been named the 2026 American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) Honor Award winner! The Honor Award is ACSM's most prestigious award and is granted to an individual with a distinguished career of outstanding scientific and scholarly contributions to ACSM's mission: "To educate and empower professionals to advance the science and practice of health and human performance."

Dr. Kohrt's research focuses on age-related changes in metabolism, sex steroids, and body composition, with an emphasis on understanding those alterations triggered by the menopausal transition in women.



Her team's pioneering research has created new paradigms for understanding the sometimes-opposing effects of exercise on skeletal health. Her team has also pursued innovative research regarding the role of estrogen in regulating the production of adipose cells from stem cells residing in bone marrow, which can exert negative metabolic impacts. Over the course of her productive career, Dr. Kohrt has published more than 300 papers which have garnered more than 31,000 citations. Her past and current federal funding as principal investigator, director, and core director exceeds \$130 million, much of it from the NIH, including a Specialized Center of Research Excellence on Sex Differences. Dr. Kohrt's exceptional mentoring of 70 post-doctoral fellows and junior faculty expands her scholarly impact well into the future, as the vast majority are now independently funded investigators.

Dr. Kohrt has earned numerous honors during her distinguished career, including ACSM's Citation Award and the Honor Award from the Environmental and Exercise Physiology Section of the American Physiological Society in 2019 (the first woman to receive this award). Her extensive contributions to ACSM include serving on the Board of Trustees (2012-14) and as a Vice President (2021-23).

LEAD Center Celebrates Ten Years!



In December 2025, the NORC joined the Lifecourse Epidemiology of Adiposity and Diabetes (LEAD) Center in celebrating their 10-year anniversary. Established in 2015 by Dr. Dana Dabelea, LEAD was launched with an initial focus on understanding the biological underpinnings of obesity and diabetes, with more recent efforts adding comprehensive assessments of above-the-skin exposures, such as air quality, chemicals, built environment, social factors, and their combined impact.

LEAD investigators oversee observational cohorts, randomized clinical trials, and basic science projects nested within human cohorts, and have published more than 450 manuscripts in top-tier journals. LEAD's research has enhanced health of youth, pregnant women, and adults in the US and internationally. Landmark studies from SEARCH highlighting the burden and severity of youth-onset type 2 diabetes led to trials and consortia, and new prevention programs globally.



Studies based in ECHO inform minimum thresholds of airborne pollutants in the US and federal guidelines regarding dietary intake for pregnant women and children. Studies from the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP) resulted in Medicare coverage of DPP-based lifestyle programs for diabetes prevention, among others.

Congratulations to the LEAD Center on 10 amazing years and many more to come!



On the occasion of

2026 CU DRC Diabetes Day

CU DRC is organizing

POSTER & PRESENTATION Competitions

Friday, March 6, 2026

Nighthorse Campbell Native Health Building, CU Anschutz Medical Campus



Registration for Competitions



Deadline: Jan 30, 2026

Event & Competition Details



As part of its commitment to advancing diabetes research and fostering collaboration, the CU DRC is hosting **Poster and Oral Presentation Competitions** during the 2026 CU DRC Diabetes Day (March 6, 2026) —a full-day event featuring recent developments in diabetes research, expert speakers, and keynote address by **Dr. Kevan Herold**, MD, C.N.H. Long Professor of Immunobiology and Medicine, Yale School of Medicine.

Registration Deadlines:

Competition Registration: January 30, 2026

Event Participation: March 1, 2026

Eligibility for Competitions:

Awards are open to trainees (students, and postdoctoral researchers).

Junior faculty (i.e., assistant professors) are welcome to present posters or oral presentations but are not eligible for awards.

Faculty (i.e., associate professors and above) are welcome to present posters but are not considered for oral presentations.

For questions or clarifications, contact clara.tang@cuanschutz.edu

Event Details

2026 Kern Lipid Conference

**"Lipids and Lipoproteins in
Cardiometabolic and
Neurodegenerative Diseases"**

**August 10-12, 2026
Breckenridge, CO**



Registration, abstract submissions and award application submissions for the 2026 Kern Lipid Conference are now OPEN!

Regular Abstract & Award Application Deadline: April 1, 2026

Late-Breaking Abstracts Deadline: July 5, 2026

****You must be registered for the conference in order to submit an abstract or award application.****

Conference Site

Publication Highlight



Congratulation to Drs. Miguel Lanaspá García and Ana Andrés Hernando for their recent publication in *Nature Metabolism*, entitled "*Identification of a common ketohexokinase-dependent link driving alcohol intake and alcohol-associated liver disease in mice* (Nat Metab. 2025 Nov 10;7(11):2250–2267)". Their work uncovers a previously unrecognized mechanism linking alcohol intake to endogenous fructose production and its downstream metabolic effects. While it has long been known that sugar and fructose can synergistically promote alcohol use disorder (AUD) and aggravate alcohol-associated liver disease (ALD), the dominant explanation has centered on the hedonic "sweetness" of this sugar. Miguel and Ana's study reveals something fundamentally different. They show that alcohol itself stimulates the endogenous production of fructose in multiple tissues, including the liver and intestine, independent of dietary sugar.

The metabolism of this internally generated fructose is required for the liver to process excessive alcohol and to suppress GLP-1 secretion by the intestine, a hormone known to reduce alcohol appetite in humans. When blocking fructose metabolism at its first step, using ketohexokinase (KHK) inhibitors or genetic deletion, mice show a dramatic reduction in alcohol intake, driven by increased GLP-1 and impaired hepatic processing of acetaldehyde, a metabolite that naturally limits consumption. Importantly, inhibiting KHK also slows the progression of ALD, even when animals are forced to consume alcohol, by blunting the combined lipogenic effects of alcohol and fructose metabolism. Miguel and Ana's paper has received notable attention, including high online engagement and coverage in a recent *Science* blog post.

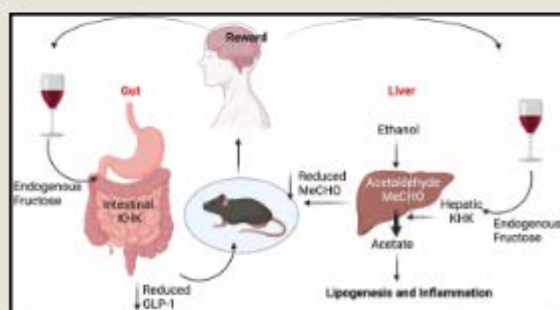


Fig 5.a. Schematic with the study design and depiction of endogenous fructose production and metabolism in the liver via AR and the two main sites of regulation by fructose: ALDH expression or activity and promotion of de novo lipogenesis (DNL) and inflammation.

Miguel continues to lead this work as an Associate Professor of Medicine in the Division of Endocrinology, Metabolism, and Diabetes. Ana is a former NORC Pilot Awardee (2020) and continues to work with Miguel to advance the science in this area.

Miguel and Ana's paper has received notable attention, including high online engagement and coverage in a recent [Science blog post](#).

[View Publication](#)



Is there someone working in the area of obesity or nutrition that you'd like to see speak on campus? You can nominate them for NORC sponsorship.

Nominate a Speaker

NORC Partners

Thank you to all of our partners for your collaboration and support.

- [Anschutz Health & Wellness Center \(AHWC\)](#)
- [Anschutz Medical Campus](#)
 - [Dept of Orthopedics](#)
 - [Division of Endocrinology](#)
 - [Dept of Pediatrics, Section of Nutrition](#)
- [Barbara Davis Center \(BDC\)](#)
- [Centers on Aging \(CoA\)](#)
- [Centers for American Indian & Alaska Native Health \(CAIANH\)](#)
- [Colorado Clinical Translation Science Institute \(CCTSI\)](#)
- [LEAD Center](#)
- [Ludeman Center for Women's Health Research](#)
- [Office of Laboratory Animal Research \(OLAR\)](#)
- [Perinatal Research Center](#)
- [UC Cancer Center \(UCCC\)](#)

Journal Clubs

*Held Monthly from Sept–May
More info on journal clubs [HERE](#).*

- **FAT Chat**
4th Thursday at 3pm
Organizer: Andrew Libby
- **BAT Chat**
2nd Monday at 10am
Organizer: Ed Melanson
- **Physical Activity MADness**
3rd Tuesday at 10am (Virtual Only)
Organizer: Ana Pinto
- **Molecular Metabolism**
4th Thursday at 11am
Organizers: Amy Keller & Kimberly Bruce
- **Skeletal Muscle Working Group**
4th Tuesday at 11am
Organizer: Andrea Bonetto
- **Bone Think Tank**
3rd Monday at 3:30pm
Organizers: Christine Swanson & Sarah Wherry
- **SuperMito Group**
3rd Tuesday at 10:30am
Organizer: Cecilia Caino

Cite the Grant

Did you use any of the Colorado NORC resources to support your published research? Please cite the NIDDK Grant Number: [DK048520](#)

Membership

Not yet a member of the Colorado NORC?
Email your CV/BioSketch to:
norc@cuanschutz.edu

Have questions or an idea for the next NORC News?

Email our Program Administrator: Olivia.Schmidt@cuanschutz.edu



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