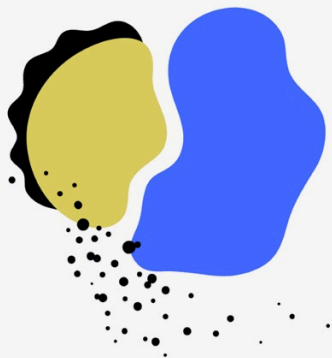


Colorado NORC News: October 2026



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(Nutrition Obesity Research Center)



From the Director: Paul MacLean, PhD

I thank Dr. Nancy Krebs for her original work in establishing our center in 1995 and for her many years of service on the NORC Executive Committee. Our NORC would not be what it is today without her vision and efforts over the past three decades. As she steps toward retirement, Dr. Ihuoma Eneli, the Section Head of Nutrition in Pediatrics will be taking her place on the Executive Committee, and we look forward to working with her in the coming years. I am also excited to announce that Dr. Travis Nemkov has been appointed as Associate Director of the NORC's Molecular and Cellular Analytical (MCA) Core, helping our research base access the expertise and equipment in our institution's Mass Spectrometry Metabolomics Shared Resource Facility.

This edition of the NORC News highlights a number of faculty accomplishments, new shared resources, and research programs of our members. You can also find the nomination links for the 2026 NORC Awards Program. I encourage all of our members (faculty, trainees, and technicians) to participate in this year's

awards program, as it gives us the opportunity to acknowledge the fantastic people in our local research community. We look forward to seeing everyone at the 2026 NORC retreat on October 26th.

Quick Announcements

Fall and Spring Speakers

We have again partnered with centers and seminars on campus to support visits from researchers doing work in the areas of nutrition and obesity. See our lineup of speakers on our [website](#). Details with presentation titles will be shared as each date gets closer. If you would like to meet with any of these speakers while they are on campus, please let [Olivia Schmidt](#) know.



Lori Sussel, PhD - 2026 Arthur Riggs Award

Dr. Lori Sussel, Director of the CU Diabetes Research Center, has been awarded the 2026 Arthur Riggs Award for Excellence in Diabetes Basic and Translational Science. This award recognizes outstanding contributions to diabetes basic and translational research and honors scientists whose discoveries have advanced the understanding and treatment of diabetes. As part of this honor, Dr. Sussel will deliver the award lecture at the Rachmiel Levine-Arthur Riggs Diabetes Research Symposium in **October 2026 in Pasadena, California**. Congratulations, Dr. Sussel!

Darleen Sandoval, PhD - George A. Bray Founders Award from the Obesity Society

The **George A. Bray Founders Award** recognizes an individual for significant contributions that advance the scientific or clinical basis for understanding or treating obesity and for extensive involvement with The Obesity Society. Congratulations, Dr. Sandoval, on a well deserved award!



Kristen Boyle, PhD - New Funding and Tenure!

Congratulations to Kristen Boyle as she was recently promoted to **full professor with tenure**! Additionally, Dr. Boyle received **two NIH grants** over the summer. Her **R01** is in collaboration with Brianna Moore, PhD, (CSPH & LEAD Center) and Emily Su, MD (OB/GYN), investigating how prenatal cannabis exposure influences placental and fetal cell biology and contributes to offspring metabolic health. Her **R21** is in collaboration with Shanlee Davis, MD, PhD, and the eXtraordinary Kids program, focusing on understanding why children with Klinefelter syndrome (47,XXY) are at increased risk for obesity, insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes, and other metabolic complications.

Dr. Boyle has recently started writing short essays about science, mentorship, academic life, and the process of doing research which you can find on her blog: <https://kristenboylephd.com/essays/>

VS200 Slide Scanner System now on campus

The Advanced Light Microscopy core and Neurotechnology center received SIRC funding for the purchase of a **VS200 automated slide scanning system**. The Olympus/Evident VS200 can rapidly image full tissue sections and slides using both multi-color fluorescence imaging (up to 7 colors) and bright field imaging (via a color camera). The system provides high resolution imaging, (i.e. <1 micron spatial resolution) and utilizes several microscope objectives providing performance and flexibility similar to that of a modern confocal microscope. Contact [Richard Benninger](#) for more information.



Faculty Highlight Seth Creasy, PhD

Dr. Seth Creasy is an Associate Professor of Medicine in the Division of Endocrinology, Metabolism, and Diabetes at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. He also serves as Director of Research Integration at the Anschutz Health and Wellness Center and Associate Director of the Energy Balance Assessment Core within the Colorado NORC. Dr. Creasy is an exercise physiologist whose research focuses on understanding how the timing and patterns of physical activity, food intake, and sleep influence energy metabolism and cardiometabolic health. Ultimately, his work seeks to translate this knowledge into more targeted and effective lifestyle interventions for the prevention and treatment of chronic diseases.



Dr. Creasy's interest in lifestyle interventions and energy balance began during his graduate training at the University of Pittsburgh. He came to CU Anschutz as a postdoctoral fellow in 2016 and joined the faculty in 2019. Throughout his training and early career, his work increasingly focused not only on *how much* people exercise, eat, or sleep, but also on *when* these behaviors occur. This led to a broader interest in whether aligning lifestyle behaviors with underlying physiology can improve cardiometabolic health and obesity treatment. A major focus of his current research is **chrono-exercise**. He and Victoria Catenacci, MD, currently collaborate on a randomized trial examining the effects of morning versus evening exercise on weight loss and energy balance in adults with overweight or obesity. He was also recently awarded an NIH R03 examining the impact of aerobic exercise on cardiometabolic health during nighttime shift work and is

a Translational Research Scholar in the School of Medicine studying time- and nutrient-dependent responses to aerobic exercise.

Dr. Creasy recently transitioned into the role of **Associate Director of NORC's Energy Balance Assessment Core**, where he will help oversee two unique resources for studying human energy metabolism: the whole-room calorimeter and the Doubly Labeled Water Isotope Laboratory. The whole-room calorimeter enables highly controlled, continuous measurement of energy expenditure and substrate metabolism over extended periods, while doubly labeled water provides a gold-standard method for measuring total daily energy expenditure under free-living conditions. Together, these complementary approaches allow investigators to study human energy metabolism across the spectrum from tightly controlled laboratory experiments to everyday life. Dr. Creasy and the Energy Balance Assessment Core welcome opportunities to help NORC investigators incorporate these resources into new or ongoing studies. **Interested in utilizing these resources or discussing a potential collaboration? [Contact Dr. Creasy.](#)**

Outside of work, Dr. Creasy enjoys spending time with his wife, Hana, and their children, Kellen and Myla. He can often be found hiking, fly fishing, or coaching wrestling. Fall is his favorite time of year in Colorado, and he readily embraces the season—including just about anything pumpkin, whether it comes in the form of pie, a spiced latte, or a beer.



2026 Obesity Fellow Akshata Sanga, MD

Dr. Akshata Sanga is a family physician and Obesity Medicine Fellow at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. She completed her medical degree at St. George's, University of London. She completed postgraduate training at Oxford University Hospitals and General Practice specialty training through the Royal Free Hospital NHS Foundation Trust in London.

She is particularly interested in evidence-based, individualized approaches to obesity treatment, including lifestyle interventions, pharmacotherapy, and multidisciplinary care. Her professional interests also include improving access to effective obesity treatment, addressing health disparities, and exploring emerging approaches to metabolic health and obesity care through clinical trials involvement.

Outside of medicine, Dr. Sanga enjoys traveling, exploring different cuisines, cooking, reading, watching films and practicing hot Yoga and Pilates.

MoTrPAC Symposium Recap

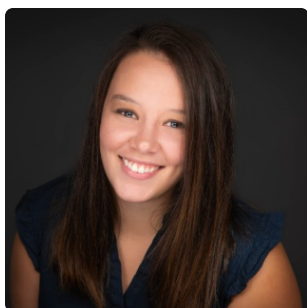


We were delighted to have over 60 attendees for the MoTrPAC Symposium held on July 20th. Attendees shared an appreciation for learning about the history of MoTrPAC and gaining tips on how to access and use the resources that have resulted from this work.

All presentations for the symposium were recorded and can be viewed [here](#).

2026 Pilot Awardees

We received over 15 applications for this year's pilot award and are excited to fund the following 4 individuals. More information and current and past pilot awardees can be found on our [website](#).



Mikayla Borton

Food Science and Human Nutrition - Colorado State University

“Rewiring Gut Microbial Carnitine Metabolism to Modulate Host Cardiometabolic Risk”

I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition at Colorado State University. My research focuses on how gut microbial metabolism influences human health using genome-resolved multi-omics approaches. In this study, my laboratory will investigate whether redirecting microbial metabolism of dietary carnitine away from trimethylamine (TMA) production can reduce circulating trimethylamine N-oxide (TMAO), a metabolite linked to cardiovascular disease. Using an ApoE-/- mouse model, I will combine microbial interventions with metagenomics and metabolomics to identify the microbial pathways that protect against TMAO production and improve cardiometabolic outcomes. This project builds on my expertise in microbiome metabolism and genome-resolved multi-omics and will provide the critical preliminary data needed to develop microbiome-based interventions for cardiovascular disease in future NIH-funded studies.



Thomas Cardaci

Health and Exercise Science - Colorado State University

"Accelerated Skeletal Muscle Mitochondrial Aging in Breast Cancer Survivors"

Breast cancer survival now exceeds 90%, yet many survivors experience persistent declines in physical function that can threaten long-term health, independence, and quality of life. Cancer and its treatments may accelerate biological aging, but the underlying mechanisms remain unclear. Our preliminary data show persistent mitochondrial damage and reduced oxidative metabolism in skeletal muscle, suggesting that skeletal muscle may be particularly vulnerable to the long-term effects of breast cancer and its treatments. In this pilot project, we will test the hypothesis that breast cancer survivorship accelerates skeletal muscle mitochondrial aging, characterized by impaired mitochondrial structure, genomic integrity, dynamics, and bioenergetics, and that these alterations are associated with reduced physical function. We will compare premenopausal breast cancer survivors with age-, BMI-, and physical activity-matched controls and integrate skeletal muscle mitochondrial phenotyping with objective measures of muscle strength and physical function. These findings will define tissue-specific mechanisms of accelerated aging and support future interventions targeting mitochondria to preserve physical function and healthspan in breast cancer survivors.



Katlynn Emaus

Biomedical Informatics - CU Anschutz

"The Role of Mitochondrial Dysfunction in the Development of Preeclampsia"

Preeclampsia (PE) is a multisystem vascular disease of placental origin that threatens maternal and fetal survival and increases lifelong cardiometabolic risk. Maternal metabolic stress, including obesity, increases PE risk 2- to 3-fold, yet the mechanisms linking placental metabolic injury to maternal vascular dysfunction remain poorly understood. Emerging evidence suggests that disrupted placental mitochondrial function, including impaired fatty acid oxidation (FAO), oxidative phosphorylation (OXPHOS), and excess mitochondrial reactive oxygen species (mtROS), contributes to PE pathogenesis. This proposal will determine how alterations in placental mitochondrial morphology and bioenergetics contribute to vascular dysfunction in PE. We will (1) quantify placental FAO-linked OXPHOS and mtROS using high-resolution respirometry and (2) define mitochondrial network remodeling using machine learning-based three-dimensional reconstruction of placental tissue together with spatial transcriptomics to identify cell-specific changes in mitochondrial morphology and regulators of mitochondrial dynamics and biogenesis. Findings will provide preliminary data for future NIH applications aimed at defining how placental mitochondrial

dysfunction drives PE and identifying therapeutic targets to improve maternal and offspring cardiometabolic health, directly advancing NORC research priorities.



Katrina Oselinsky

Endocrinology, Metabolism and Diabetes - CU Anschutz

“Biobehavioral Mechanisms of Physical Activity: Implications for Cardiometabolic Health in Breast Cancer Survivors on Anti-Endocrine Therapy”

Breast cancer survivors receiving endocrine therapy are at elevated risk for cardiometabolic disease, driven in part by treatment-induced metabolic dysfunction and lifestyle changes associated with cancer and its therapies. Physical activity targets multiple contributors to metabolic dysfunction and improves cardiometabolic health, yet most breast cancer survivors fail to achieve recommended levels, and existing interventions have had limited success in improving adherence. This persistent gap highlights the need to understand the mechanisms that constrain physical activity in this population. To address this gap, this study will test a novel biobehavioral model in which affective responses to physical activity and neurobiological regulators of mood and reward jointly influence physical activity behavior. Findings will inform the development of mechanism-based interventions to improve physical activity adherence and cardiometabolic health in breast cancer survivors receiving endocrine therapy.



Colorado NORC Retreat

Monday, October 26th 2026 | 12-6pm

Krugman Conference Hall, Research 2

We have a fantastic agenda planned for this year's **Colorado NORC Retreat!** This annual event provides the Colorado NORC's members an opportunity to learn about what is happening within the Colorado NORC and beyond, as well as network with other members.

The program includes an overview of the Colorado NORC from our Director, Dr. Paul MacLean, two keynote speakers (Dr. Krik Habegger from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and Dr. Nancy Krebs from CU Anschutz), updates from the NORC's Pilot Awardees, poster viewing and awards, and a reception.

There is no cost to attend, but [REGISTRATION](#) is required. Non-NORC members are welcome to join us as well, so please share with others who may be interested in attending.



2026 NORC Awards: Call for Nominations

The 2026 NORC Award Nominations are now open! Nominations are accepted via the links below for each category from any faculty, trainee or staff member who is affiliated with the Colorado NORC.

Click on each category to complete a nomination or see the [2026 NORC Awards Program](#) for more details and links. This is your chance to acknowledge the fantastic people we have in our NORC! Deadline for nominations is 10/31/2026.

Awards will be announced at the annual AHC/NORC Employee Appreciation event being planned for Friday, December 4th, 202. More details to come on this event soon.

Award Categories include Outstanding:

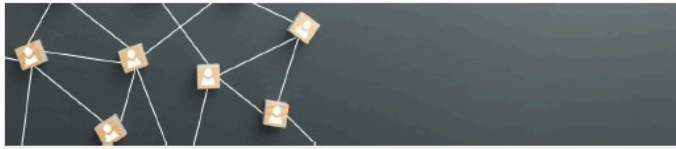
[Graduate Student](#)

[PhD Instructor/Fellow](#)

[MD Instructor/Fellow](#)

[Research and Education Support Staff](#)

[Faculty Member](#)



NORC Partners

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

- Adult & Child Center for Outcomes Research & Delivery Science (ACCORDS)
- Anschutz Health & Wellness Center (AHWC)
- Anschutz Medical Campus
 - Dept of Orthopedics
 - Division of Endocrinology
 - Dept of Pediatrics
- Barbara Davis Center (BDC)
- Centers on Aging (CoA)
- Centers for American Indian & Alaska Native Health (CAIANH)
- Colorado Clinical Translation Science Institute (CCTSI)
- Colorado State University (CSU)
- CU Boulder
- LEAD Center
- Ludeman Family Center for Women's Health Research
- UC Cancer Center (UCCC)
- VA Medical Center - Diabetes Team



Ongoing Journal Clubs

Typically held monthly from Sept-May.
More info on our [website](#).

- FAT Chat
- BAT Chat
- Physical Activity MADness
- Molecular Metabolism
- Muscular Skeletal Working Group
- Bone Think Tank
- SuperMito Group

Membership

Not yet a member of the Colorado NORC?
Request Membership on our website.

Cite the Grant

If you use Colorado NORC resources to support your published research, please site our grant: **DK048520**

Have a question or an idea for the next NORC News?

Email our Program Administrator: olivia.schmidt@cuanschutz.edu

E: norc@cuanschutz.edu

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