

OLDER ADULTS IN RESEARCH NEWSLETTER



Understanding Clinical Trials and Why Your Participation Matters

by Kathryn Nearing, PhD

Clinical trials lead to new ways to prevent, detect and treat health conditions. Clinical trials test whether products such as drugs, devices, or behavioral health interventions are safe and work for populations affected by a specific condition. The goal is to **improve health care and health promotion services available in the community.**

When a population is not represented in clinical trials, the products that result may not be as beneficial to those populations, and those products may even have negative or harmful side effects that had not been discovered previously.

Older adults tend to be underrepresented in clinical trials -- even those clinical trials that are specifically focused on addressing conditions that are more prevalent in or can more negatively impact older adult populations. Consequently, health care providers may lack information about how to prescribe or use these products in those populations that were not included in the clinical trials research.

This is why the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus Multi-disciplinary Center on Aging is working with Older Adult Research Specialists to improve the recruitment and retention of older adults from diverse backgrounds in clinical trials. **Increased inclusion in research** is one way to improve the quality of healthcare and quality of life for older adults.



Multidisciplinary Center on Aging

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Overcoming the Challenges of Reaching Older Adults with Alzheimer's Disease About Clinical Research Regarding an Immunity Boosting Medication

Dr. Peter Pressman, MD is a clinical neurologist at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus Alzheimer's and Cognition Center (CUACC). He is the lead researcher (Principal Investigator) of several clinical trials, including the Safety and Efficacy of Sargramostim in Alzheimer's Disease (SESAD) trial.

The purpose of this clinical trial is to determine if receiving injections of a medicine called Sargramostim improves cognitive function and memory in people with Alzheimer's disease. The clinical trial is also studying the safety of this drug. Sargramostim has been FDA approved for more than 30 years to boost the body's innate immune system among patients undergoing chemotherapy, but it is not yet approved to treat Alzheimer's disease.



Results of an initial three-week Sargramostim clinical trial were promising in slowing cognitive decline and, in some cases, reversing it. This second study was launched in 2020 to study the effects of the medicine over a longer period (6 months). Reaching Alzheimer's patients and caregivers to participate in this study has not been easy, given that the study started during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, participation required that individuals with Alzheimer's Disease and a caregiver attend weekly clinic visits for six months (since modified to allow home nursing visits for 20 of the 24 weeks). The study requirements coupled with the pandemic made recruitment challenging.

Those challenges led the study team to hire an Older Adult Research Specialist to help lead community outreach and recruitment. **Dr. Pressman shared:**

“We decided to bring an Older Adult Research Specialist on board to propose and implement **new recruitment strategies.**”



Richard McClintock has sent emails in advance of phone calls to explain the study, provided written answers to frequently asked questions, and coordinated recruitment with other clinical trials to match interested participants with the right opportunities.”

Richard has also been engaging in community outreach events in partnership with the CUACC outreach coordinator Michelle Stocker. They have especially engaged the Black community through the CUACC African American Alzheimer’s Advisory Council (the 4AC) and the Center for African American Health. Rich is also working to help revitalize the CUACC Hispanic/Latino Community Advisory board.

According to Dr. Pressman, “Richard’s experience showed us the importance of diverse staff perspectives, especially the perspectives of older adults since that is our priority population.” The Neurology department has hired two additional Older Adult Research Specialists graduates, Carol Willis and Janet Clarke, who support research studies focused on movement disorders.



Older Adult Research Specialist Spotlight: Rich McClintock

1. Share with us a bit about your personal and professional background.

I have been involved in civic engagement to promote public health for more than 30 years, including 13 years as the Executive Director of CoPIRG (Colorado Public Interest Research Group) working on issues such as clean air and water as well as promoting walkable, livable communities. On a personal level, I graduated with excellent grades from Colorado College (CC); my grandfather went to CC as well. I later received my Executive MPA (Masters in Public Administration with a non-profit focus) from CU Denver. My Colorado roots run deep, my great grandparents homesteaded in the Grand Junction area starting in 1883 and later retired there.

2. What was your motivation to join the Older Adult Research Specialist Training Program?

I was looking for an encore career after many years as a nonprofit executive director. Healthy aging is a passion. It builds on my work for healthy communities focused on walkable places that are socially connected with opportunities to connect cross. I am very much a proponent of healthy aging and creating healthy places for older adults to age in place.



Rich McClintock

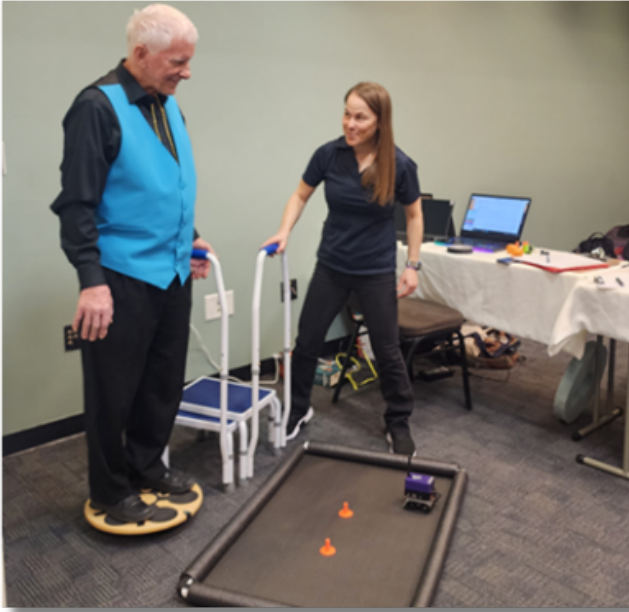
3. What would you like older adults to know about the importance of participating in research -- clinical trials, specifically?

Far too often older adults have not been included in medical research, making it much harder to promote healthy aging. In a study conducted by the Multi-disciplinary Center on Aging at CU Anschutz, only one in four clinical trials have clinical trial participants over the age of 50. More recently, CU Anschutz received the designation as an Age-Friendly University. Older Adult Research Specialists encourage more older adult participation especially through peer-to-peer community outreach. Being part of the Research Roadshows has really opened my eyes to the importance of talking with people face to face and answering their questions about clinical research. Many trials would benefit from hiring an Older Adult Research Specialist.

Research Roadshows Connect Older Adults with Research

by Kathryn Nearing, PhD

Older adults 65+ are underrepresented in clinical trials – the type of research that leads to new ways to prevent, detect and treat conditions affecting our health. We are working to support the inclusion of older adults in clinical trials so that the products of research will be safer and work better for these populations.



To foster meaningful community engagement in research, the University of Colorado Multidisciplinary Center on Aging partners with local communities to organize Research Roadshows. Research Roadshows are each uniquely tailored for a specific community or population to help older adults connect with research in ways that are fun, personally meaningful and accessible.

Research Roadshows feature different activities, including opportunities to try out new innovations in aging and provide feedback to research teams. One example is *SteadyPlay*, an innovation developed by a physical therapist-turned-engineer. The device makes balance training for fall prevention fun as participants shift their weight on a balance board to direct a car around an obstacle course. Through such user testing activities, older adults have a first-hand experience using their voice and participation to improve the products of research to make a difference in the lives of older adults.



Team that participated at the Research Roadshow.

Other research teams share about their studies and screen and enroll eligible participants, thus providing opportunities to immediately connect older adults with studies of interest. The research featured at each Research Roadshow focuses on priority topics for the specific community of older adults with whom we are engaging and is aligned with the theme of the Research Roadshow, which is determined in collaboration with community partners. We also work to ensure that studies are feasible for participants who live far from the CU Anschutz Medical Campus (i.e., require few or no in-person study visits). In addition to research study teams, we include service providers such as audiologists who can offer free hearing aid checks. This service to the community also provides an anchor for highlighting what we are learning from research about the connections between hearing health, social connectedness and healthy brain aging. Thus, we provide a direct service to the community that supports multiple facets of healthy aging while reinforcing the importance of research to gaining knowledge about what helps us age well.



We hope Research Roadshows communicate positive, affirming messages about the importance of older adults participating in clinical trials to improve healthcare and health outcomes. We also hope to help connect those who want to participate in research with feasible, accessible opportunities to do so, at the Research Roadshow event and in the future. We will sustain engagement by continuing to offer educational programs available through the CU Anschutz Multi-disciplinary Center on Aging.

Our Research Roadshow team is made up of Older Adult Research Specialists who work to support the inclusion of peers in clinical research. They also work to plan Research Roadshow events with community partners to connect research with local life and community culture. Community strengths, needs and interests inform every aspect of Research Roadshows.

Your Roadmap to the Fun Engaging Things to Do at a Research Roadshow in a Community Near You!

Station 3: Research Study Teams

- Share information about opportunities to participate in research studies on topics that are priorities for the community
- Guided tours of research studies website based on health topics of interest

Key message: There are many opportunities and different ways to participate in research.

Station 5: Training Opportunities

- Learn about free training to become a Community Health Worker (health navigator) and research navigator

Key message: Explore new career pathways to support the health of communities.

Station 4: Roadshow Rest Stop

- Place to rest, get refreshments, chat with Older Adult Research Specialists
- Testimonials from research participants (in-person and with a video)

Key message: Connection to research provides a way to connect with others and better health.

Station 2: User Testing Experiences

- Interactive activities to test new innovations in aging and give researchers your feedback

Key message: Products of research are safer and work better for others like you because your voice and perspectives informed the research.

Station 1: Welcome

- Grab a bag and other swag
- Older Adult Research Specialists orient participants to Roadshow Roadmap, descriptions of activities

Key message: You can make a difference – you can have a voice – through research!



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Scan the code to learn how you can play an active role in improving health care for older adults.



Visit research.cuanschutz.edu/olderadults

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