Announcing our Emerging Scholars in Healthy Aging Research Recipients, Fundraising Campaign

UC San Diego
SAM AND ROSE STEIN INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH ON AGING

Welcome to the UC San Diego Center for Healthy Aging and the Sam and Rose Stein Institute for Research on Aging e-newsletter!

Announcing our Emerging Scholars In Healthy Aging Research Recipients

We are delighted to announce the recipients of the Stein Institute for Research on Aging Emerging Scholars in Healthy Aging Research Program. This competitive award recognizes outstanding trainees whose work advances our understanding of aging across biological, clinical, behavioral, and community domains. Our Emerging Scholars represent the next generation of innovators dedicated to improving the health, well-being, and resilience of older adults. We congratulate this year's cohort for their exceptional promise, creativity, and commitment to advancing healthy aging science, and we look forward to supporting their continued growth and impact.

Andrea Coppola, PhD

Andrea M. Coppola, PhD is an Advanced Fellow at the VA San Diego Healthcare System and Visiting Scholar at UC San Diego. Her research focuses on social relationships, support provision, and loneliness across the lifespan with particular emphasis on vulnerable populations including older adults and Veterans with serious mental illness. Dr. Coppola earned her PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Arizona and has expertise in multimethod research design, including neuroimaging, psychophysiology, and ecological momentary assessment. Her work has been recognized by the National Science Foundation, American Psychosomatic Society, and Society for Psychophysiological Research.

Project Description:

This project, "Empathy and Social Connection in Late Life: Identifying Behavioral Targets for Healthy Aging," investigates novel intervention targets for loneliness in older adults. While loneliness is increasingly recognized as a critical barrier to healthy aging with serious health consequences, existing interventions are limited and not universally effective. This study examines how empathy and informal support provision—such as sharing wisdom or giving advice—might help prevent loneliness in older adults. Using an innovative multimodal approach that combines laboratory assessments with mobile surveys, this work aims to identify potentially modifiable behavioral targets that could inform more precise and effective loneliness interventions for this vulnerable population.

Miya Gentry, MA, MS

Miya Gentry, M.A., M.S., is a fourth-year doctoral student in the SDSU/UC San Diego Joint Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology, mentored by Dr. Barton Palmer. Her research focuses on social functioning, traumatic stress, and resilience across the lifespan, with particular interest in how psychological strengths shape health and well-being across trauma-exposed, serious mental illness, and aging populations. Miya has strong experience in trauma-informed research and clinical training. She is committed to advancing research that promotes resilience and well-being in vulnerable populations. Her work is supported by NIMH fellowships and institutional awards.

Project Description:

Miya's Emerging Scholar project examines whether curiosity, the drive to seek novelty, learning, and cognitive challenge, helps older adults maintain better physical health in the face of stress. Using data from the Successful Aging Evaluation (SAGE) study, this longitudinal analysis tests whether curiosity buffers the long-term health effects of both early adversity and recent life stress, measured through annual prescription medication use from 2014–2023 as an objective indicator of health burden. By integrating life-course stress exposure with a potentially modifiable psychological strength, this project highlights curiosity as a promising resilience factor in aging and may inform future interventions that promote healthy aging through curiosity and engagement.

Travis Ramirez

Travis Ramirez is a 2nd-year PhD student in the Neurosciences Graduate Program at UC San Diego. He works in the Digital Health Technologies Lab where he studies how the brain processes speech and uses AI-driven voice design to develop technologies that enhance intelligibility and reduce listening effort for older adults. He earned his Bachelors of Science in Symbolic Systems with a concentration in neuroscience from Stanford University. His work integrates auditory neuroscience, machine learning, and behavioral listening assessments to support healthy cognitive aging.

Project Description:

My research integrates auditory neuroscience with AI-driven voice design to reduce listening effort and improve speech understanding in aging populations. I focus on identifying “optimal voices” that enhance intelligibility in noisy environments for people with age-related hearing loss. Using a data-driven approach, I will evaluate these voices through behavioral listening experiments and physiological measures of cognitive load. AI tools that can generate and modify speech will enable personalized voice transformations tailored to each listener’s perceptual needs. By uncovering how specific voice characteristics shape intelligibility, preserve speaker identity, and reduce listening effort, this work aims to promote healthy communication and help older adults remain socially connected.

Dylan Walmsley

Dylan Walmsley is a second-year PhD student in the Neuroscience Graduate Program, studying under Dr. Mark Tuszynski. Before UCSD, he spent the first 23 years of his life in and around the beautiful state of Virginia. Growing up in a small town with a supportive family, he learned to appreciate the simple pleasures of life: meals with friends and family, being active outdoors, and learning from those around him. The UCSD community and San Diego culture allow him to enjoy those aspect of his life and then some. Dylan says, “What a cool place to be a graduate student, studying what I love.”

Project Description:

The goal of my project is to translate basic neurobiological mechanisms of exercise into therapeutic candidates to promote healthy aging processes. To do so, I will be perform deep sequencing on a specific subpopulation of cells in the entorhinal cortex that are crucial to memory formation/storage and are especially vulnerable to deterioration during aging. The tools I will use allow for sequencing at unprecedented depths, providing a comprehensive understanding of aging processes and how exercise promotes healthy aging in these neurons.

Congratulations Andrea, Miya, Travis, and Dylan!

More about our Emerging Scholars in Healthy Aging Research Program

Know a Successful Ager?

At the Stein Institute for Research on Aging we like to highlight the stories and lives of successful agers in our community. Successful agers are

those who continue to engage in activities that are meaningful and have found ways to adapt to challenges as they age. If you know of someone that you think we should spotlight please email Sasha Weiss at saweiss@health.ucsd.edu to nominate them!

Invest in a Future of Healthy Aging

Our *Invest in a Future of Healthy Aging*campaign is continuing! Your support helps drive innovative research, train the next generation of leaders in aging science, and strengthen programs that improve health and well-being across communities.

Click the button below to visit our campaign page and discover how your contribution is making a real impact on the future of healthy aging.

GIVE NOW

Resilience, Compassion and Self-Compassion Program available for license

After nearly a decade of research led by our Executive Director, Danielle K. Glorioso, LCSW we are thrilled to announce that our Resilience Intervention is now officially licensed through UC San Diego and available for implementation in community settings. This evidence-based, six-session program is specifically designed to enhance resilience, compassion, and self-compassion in older adults. It has been studied in various community settings across the United States, as well as in England and Israel, with results showing improvements in resilience and self-compassion, along with reductions in perceived stress, depression, and loneliness.

For more information about our intervention, please contact Danielle K. Glorioso, LCSW at dglorioso@health.ucsd.edu

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We Need Your Support!

When you give to the UC San Diego Center for Healthy Aging and the Stein Institute for Research on Aging, you're making the decision to support **the pursuit of a healthier, longer life for you and your loved ones**. Please **make a gift** to help sustain and expand our successful aging programs.

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