About Us
The Michigan Alzheimer’s Disease Center is dedicated to the discovery of new ways to diagnose, treat, and prevent Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. We promote state-of-the-art clinical care, conduct memory and aging research, and provide education and wellness programs.

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SUPPORT
Gifts from generous donors are critical to support our work. If you are interested in giving, please contact Mike Harders at miharder@umich.edu or 734-763-1402. A variety of gifting opportunities are also available at alzheimers.med.umich.edu/support-us

CONTACT US
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National Institutes of Health Funds Center For Five More Years
It is with great pleasure that we report that the National Institutes of Health has funded our Center for an additional five years. In addition to maintaining the formal collaboration across our three universities and maintaining the already existing Neuropathology Core. A program we are eager to begin is our new Leaders Initiative program which will incorporate several younger investigators into junior leadership positions in each of our cores. This will not only train younger investigators in the activities of leading a nationally funded research center, but also incorporate many new projects and initiatives into the foundations of our Center. You can see the faculty joining our Center in this leadership capacity, along with their affiliated institution, in the graphic above.

First, we will develop two new cores — a Neuroimaging Core which will drive the collection of MRI to increase our understanding of the causes of dementia, including underlying racial disparities, and a Biomarker Core based at Michigan State University in Grand Rapids which will drive our work in peripheral blood biomarker discovery and validation. We also plan to incorporate an innovative technology called Automated Microscopy into our research activities of the University of Michigan Memory and Aging Project, this $15.3 million grant will fund several new activities over the coming five years.

We are very excited to continue our work in the national network with this continued funding. For more information, including our funding plans, please visit our website at https://michmed.org/G2qgK
Note from the Director

I am pleased to announce exciting information about our Center: We just received word that, once again, we will receive funding from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as an Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center. Being chosen as one of the NIH-designated centers comprising this national network is always a big deal. But this year, in light of the difficulties faced by all of us during the pandemic, I feel as though it’s truly momentous. I am particularly proud of the resilience, innovation, and determination that our staff showed in adapting our activities so that we could continue to battle Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias. We are honored and thrilled to be able to continue working with other centers across the country to find answers for Alzheimer’s disease, frontotemporal dementia, vascular dementia, Lewy body disease, and more.

What is our theme as a Center? We will continue to focus on the non-amyloid contributions to brain dysfunction and degeneration. You may recall that beta-amyloid is one of the two hallmark proteins that accumulate in Alzheimer’s disease. We believe much more attention needs to be paid to other factors and proteins underlying various dementias, ranging from environmental factors, to genetics, to specific molecules like tau, which is the other hallmark protein of Alzheimer’s disease, or TDP-43, a protein implicated in both frontotemporal dementia and late-life memory loss. We are committed to facilitating research along these lines across our three partner universities, and this work will be aided by two new cores, a Biomarker Core and a Neuroimaging Core, in our Center.

This non-amyloid emphasis applies to Alzheimer’s disease as much as it does to the other dementias. You may have heard that an anti-amyloid medication, Aducanumab (Aduhelm), recently received accelerated approval from the FDA for Alzheimer’s disease. It remains to be seen whether this medication will be a “game changer” in Alzheimer’s. (I do encourage you to visit the informative Q&A that we’ve provided on our website at alzheimers.med.umich.edu/aducanumab-QA or more information). In fact, it’s still not clear that this medication will even provide clinical benefit. In my view, the existence of Aduhelm underscores the importance of continuing to look for other therapeutic targets in Alzheimer’s disease and related dementia. And those of us here at the Michigan Alzheimer’s Disease Center embrace that challenge!

Henry Paulson, MD, PhD
Lucile Groff Professor of Neurology
Director, Michigan Alzheimer’s Disease Center
Interim Director, Michigan Neuroscience Institute
Donor Gift Funds Research Project That Addresses Health Disparities in Dementia

“Black Americans are more likely to have dementia. Explaining what leads to this difference is important. This project examines whether neighborhood resources shape differences in memory and brain health as people get older. Results could guide programs to build healthier neighborhoods and reduce dementia risk.” — Dr. Ketlyne Sol

Dr. Ketlyne Sol

You may remember in our last Mind Matters issue that we announced the generous gift of Dr. Antonio Claudio Lenstra to explore the disparate causes of dementia in the African American community, and to recruit young researchers of underrepresented groups into the fields of science and medicine. We are happy to report, less than one year after receiving this generous gift, that we funded Dr. Ketlyne Sol of the University of Michigan Department of Psychology, and her project “Risk and Resilience Mechanisms Underlying Race Disparities in Alzheimer’s Disease and Related Dementias: An Examination of Neighborhood Resources, Brain Integrity, and Cognition” as one of our 2021 pilot projects.

“Racial inequalities in Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (ADRDs) are well-established, but underlying causes are not well understood. We know that neighborhood resources such as the density of parks, recreational facilities, senior centers, and libraries are associated with cognitive health in older age in part through greater opportunities for physical activity, social interaction and intellectual stimulation.

Through de facto racial residential segregation that persists despite eradication of de jure segregation, Black and White Americans have been sorted into neighborhoods of vastly different quality. The relative lack of cognitively beneficial resources in predominantly Black neighborhoods may, in turn, negatively affect residents’ health, including impaired brain and cognitive aging. As such, differential exposure to neighborhood contexts may contribute to racial inequalities in ADRD,” says Dr. Sol.

Prior to this project, Dr. Sol received a National Institute on Aging-funded Diversity Supplement Award to study the role of literacy and social support in racially and ethnically diverse older adults’ memory performance. We are grateful for Dr. Sol’s commitment to health disparities research that continues to push our field toward more equitable solutions to this set of diseases, and even more excited to have the opportunity to support her work in this innovative stage.

Center funds new pilot projects to improve understanding and treatment of dementia

Dr. Alexandru Iordan of the University of Michigan Department of Psychology will investigate a project titled “Multimodal Investigation of Neural Plasticity Induced by Non-Invasive Brain Stimulation.” Transcranial direct current stimulation (tDCS) is a promising non-pharmacological intervention for the treatment of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (ADRD), however, we do not fully understand how it influences brain activity to improve memory. Dr. Iordan and his team will use two specialized brain imaging techniques to investigate changes in brain metabolism and neural activity induced by tDCS. Understanding these aspects of brain function will be critical for developing new and more effective treatments for ADRD.

Dr. Natalie Tronson of the University of Michigan Department of Psychology will study “Inflammation and the Risk for Cognitive Decline and Dementia After COVID-19.” In some individuals, major illnesses, including COVID-19, cause lingering “brain fog,” memory problems and other cognitive impairments. In this project, Dr. Tronson and her team aim to identify whether and how immune activation inflammation similar to that triggered by the SARS-COV-2 virus causes lasting changes in the brain and contributes to persistent memory impairments, exaggerated cognitive decline, and increased risk for age-related dementias including Alzheimer’s disease.

Lastly, Dr. Hanna Trzeciakiewicz of the University of Michigan Department of Neurology will conduct the project “Distinguishing Tauopathies by a Post-Translational Modification Profile.” Dr. Trzeciakiewicz intends to uncover how the tau protein is involved in a myriad of neurodegenerative disorders. The project seeks to first, determine the biochemical mechanisms driving the accumulation of tau in progressive supranuclear palsy, a vastly understudied demunting tauopathy, and second, establish how this process differs from tau accumulation in Alzheimer’s disease, the most common form of neurodegeneration.
Center Registry Offers Ongoing Research Opportunities for Older Adults and Caregivers

In addition to our Center’s main longitudinal research study, the University of Michigan Memory and Aging Project (UM-MAP), we invite anyone interested in participating in aging research studies to join our Michigan Neurological Data Set, or MiNDSet Registry.

What is the MiNDSet Registry?

The MiNDSet Registry is a database created to match interested older adults – with normal cognition, with mild cognitive impairment or dementia, or those caring for someone living with mild cognitive impairment or dementia – to studies offered at the Michigan Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center. This registry helps us connect research volunteers with appropriate studies based on interest, eligibility, and additional information provided in the screening questions.

Research Recruitment Coordinator, Kate Hanson, states “The main goal of the MiNDSet Registry is to match older adults with research studies that they may find interesting and relevant to their lives. The registry also helps provide our study teams with some initial information about prospective volunteers that helps in determining eligibility for a study before we contact them.”

What do we do with information in the MiNDSet Registry?

Once the screening questions in our Research Volunteer Form are completed, participants are entered into the MiNDSet Registry. All information in the MiNDSet Registry is confidential. We store this information in a secure database and share it with researchers who are studying brain aging and dementia. Protecting the privacy of this information is of upmost importance, and we only share data with researchers who have completed a strict review process and who are leading studies which we have deemed appropriate to support.

After submitting information to the MiNDSet Registry, participants may be invited to participate in current or future research studies based on the information they provide. The corresponding study team will review and explain the risks and benefits of a study so that participants can make an informed decision about whether or not they would like to participate. Participation in a study is entirely up to the participant and their family.

What types of studies might someone in the MiNDSet Registry participate in?

At any given time, we support roughly twenty studies in addition to our longitudinal study, UM-MAP. The types of studies we support vary widely, including medication studies, observational studies, caregiver studies, and more. For a complete and current list, visit our website at alzheimers.med.umich.edu/research

If someone joins the MiNDSet Registry, can they remove themselves if they later decide that they do not want to participate?

Participants can remove themselves or a family member at any time by calling or emailing our research team. If they choose not to participate in research, we will update our registry and they will no longer be contacted.

Can someone join the MiNDSet Registry if they are already in the UM-MAP study?

Yes! Participants are automatically enrolled into the registry as an UM-MAP volunteer. They have the choice, however, to restrict their participation to this study alone. If they prefer to be contacted for other research, they can indicate your preference via the UM-MAP consent form at their yearly visit.

How does someone get started?

We are always looking for interested older adults to join the MiNDSet Registry. For more information and to get started, visit our website at alzheimers.med.umich.edu/research to fill out a Research Volunteer Form. Additionally, prospective participants can call our Research Recruitment Coordinator, Kate Hanson, at 734-936-8332 to fill out a form over the phone.
New Brain Bank director expands collections, plans to support specialized studies locally & across the country

Sami Barmada, MD, PhD, Associate Professor and the Angela Dobson and Lyndon Welch Research Professor of Neurology, assumed directorship of the University of Michigan Brain Bank in February.

Dr. Barmada has an outstanding history of research in frontotemporal dementia and ALS. He is especially known for utilizing innovative technologies such as fluorescence microscopy, computer science, bioinformatics, genome engineering and molecular biology to study and advance the field of neurodegenerative disease.

When asked about his plans for his new role, Dr. Barmada shared, “I am delighted to assume leadership of the Michigan Brain Bank. Since its inception nearly 30 years ago, the bank has grown to include nearly 3,000 specimens—an impressive feat! I have the pleasure of joining an experienced team including Matthew Perkins, Andrew Lieberman and Kyra Strachan, all intent on continuing to provide high-quality post-mortem samples to local researchers at the University of Michigan as well as investigators throughout the country. New initiatives that we are working on include the acquisition of post-mortem spinal fluid in addition to brain and spinal cord, and genotyping new and existing specimens for all known disease-associated variants, thereby extending the value of our current collection while also identifying rare specimens that may be needed for specialized studies.”

Center Director, Dr. Henry Paulson is especially pleased about Dr. Barmada’s new leadership, sharing that his role will spark a modernization of the bank, thereby hoping to drive an expanded use by scientists everywhere.

For more information about the Michigan Brain Bank visit brainbank.umich.edu

Three sisters join research after father passes away from Alzheimer’s

Following the death of their father from Alzheimer’s disease, three sisters from Port Huron join our Center’s UM-MAP study. Here they describe their motivation for and involvement in our research.

Our father passed from Alzheimer’s disease in November 2012. His cognitive health declined rapidly after 2010, however, he struggled with memory for several years beforehand. In his final eight months he knew none of his children and his death left us wondering if we could have done something different for our dad. It was terribly sad to watch him deteriorate and lose all living skills — our father who was the epitome of manhood and strength. He did pass away peacefully with family surrounding him. It was a stark reminder that any of us siblings could have the same outcome toward the end of our life.

We knew that it was too late for our father, but my sisters and I decided to pursue a research program. We hoped that we could contribute valuable data for future victims, and maybe benefit as well. Through internet searching, we found the Memory and Aging Project at the University of Michigan, thought it was a good fit and, though we live in Port Huron, the distance did not deter us. We want to make a difference as a sisterhood to preserve memory and to be a part of finding a cure to help our children and their children. We feel it is our duty so others may not have to suffer this horrible disease.

The UM-MAP tests are not difficult but really make you realize that your memory skills may not be as healthy as you hoped. We sisters are now more aware of our surroundings and have increased reading and crossword puzzles. We have incorporated some balancing exercises and that is proving to be more beneficial in maintaining our memory as well. We highly recommend this research program that has helped clarify some of the unknowns of this disease and may, like it has us, help others incorporate skills and practices to maintain a longer life and healthier memory.

Written by Marianne Schock, Julie McCoy, Susan Williams
Lewy Body Dementia Support Groups

Our support groups are available for those with an early diagnosis of LBD and for caregivers or family members of those with LBD. For ongoing support group information, consider signing up for our monthly LBD e-newsletter on our website.

Ann Arbor & Brighton (Virtual)
2nd Tuesday of the Month
2:00-3:00pm for Families, Caregivers
3:00-4:00pm for Individuals with LBD

Boyne City (In Person)
2nd Tuesday of the Month
2:00-3:30pm for Individuals with LBD and their Families, Caregivers
Sommerset Pointe Yacht Club
00970 Marina Drive

Michigan Caregivers (Virtual)
2nd Tuesday of the Month
6:00-7:30pm for Families, Caregivers
Anyone in Michigan is invited to attend

Lansing & West Bloomfield (Virtual)
4th Thursday of the Month
2:00-3:00pm for Families, Caregivers
3:00-4:00pm for Individuals with LBD

To register:
Please visit our website at
alzheimers.med.umich.edu/lbd

Newcomers and more information:
Please contact Renee Gadwa at
rgadwa@med.umich.edu or
734-764-5137

For more information about the PACE-DLB Study and to get involved reach out to U-M Study Coordinator Kelly Mattingly, LMSW
at mattingke@med.umich.edu or by phone at 734-223-9297

RINNE LEWY BODY DEMENTIA INITIATIVE
MICHIGAN MEDICINE

New Study Aims to Improve End-of-Life Care for Persons Living with Lewy Body Dementia

Lewy body dementia is the second most common degenerative dementia in the United States behind Alzheimer’s disease. Dementia with Lewy Bodies (DLB) is one of the two diseases under the Lewy body dementia umbrella. Currently there is not much known regarding the end of life in DLB, leaving families to face difficult medical decisions with little information or guidance. Many caregivers describe lack of knowledge of what to expect at the end of life as an important driver of negative end-of-life experiences.

We are thrilled to partner with Dr. Melissa Armstrong, Neurologist and Director of the Mangurian Clinical-Research Headquarters for Lewy Body Dementia at the University of Florida, affect quality end of life experiences for persons with DLB and their caregivers. Individuals with moderate to advanced DLB and their main caregiver will participate in the study as a dyad (pair), with caregivers answering most of the study questions. Dyads will attend study visits virtually every six months through the end of life or through the duration of the project.

The U-M site for this study is led by Drs. Susan Maixner, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, and Center Director Henry Paulson, Lucille Groff Professor of Neurology, who both hold leadership roles in the U-M Rinne Lewy Body Dementia Initiative. The Rinne Lewy Body Dementia Initiative aims to support people living with DLB and their caregivers, educate health care professionals and build public awareness of DLB in Michigan. Dr. Maixner states, “I foresee robust participation in the study among our Rinne Lewy Body Dementia Initiative community, given their commitment to improving the recognition and treatment of DLB. Michigan’s participation in this study will inform the field about the later stages of DLB, which is currently lacking. Knowing the characteristics of these later stages will inform better clinical care at end of life, and improved support of patients and their families in their journey with DLB.”

The Identifying Factors Predicting Accurately End-of-Life in Dementia with Lewy Bodies and Promoting Quality End-of-Life Experiences study, or the PACE-DLB Study, aims to learn more about the advanced stages of DLB. Some participants will be in the study for all three years, while others may pass away during the course of the study. This will allow researchers to understand what change predict when end of life is approaching. The study also hopes to identify what factors

For more information about the PACE-DLB Study and to get involved reach out to U-M Study Coordinator Kelly Mattingly, LMSW
at mattingke@med.umich.edu or by phone at 734-223-9297

the Lewy Body Dementia Association (LBDA), and four LBDA Research Centers of Excellence on a new study to address this unmet need. “Several active studies enroll individuals with DLB in the early stages of the disease,” Dr. Armstrong explained. “This study is unique in that it will partner with people in moderate to advanced stages of DLB and their caregivers to learn more about what to expect in these later stages. The ability to do virtual study visits will allow people to participate from home, giving more people access to the research study.”

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Committed to Memory and Aging Research, Clinical Care, Education and Wellness

New Program Addresses Anticipatory Grief for Loved Ones of Those with Dementia

When a family member receives a diagnosis of dementia, families oftentimes begin the grieving process. Emotions flood in about what the dementia journey will bring and how their lives will change. When at one time death felt elusive and distant, it can sometimes now feel far too close for comfort. Despite the overwhelming grief faced by many, there are not many groups designed to assist caregivers and family members of those living with memory loss with this unique and challenging process. We’ve found programming around this experience to be necessary as it offers a support system not only for exploring grief, but also to create connection with other caregivers and family members who may be navigating similar experiences.

Understanding the unique experience had by family caregivers, we launched a new program this year called Living Grief as part of our Wellness Initiative. The emotions faced by family caregivers while the person they’re caring for is living are oftentimes complex and can call for a dedicated space to learn and develop coping skills to work through these emotions in a way that prevents additional distress and isolation. This work can be difficult, but we’ve found that when it is done among a close community of peers who are going through similar experiences, it can also be one of connection with others, finding both relief and humor in shared experience.

Our Living Grief program is a six month program that meets monthly. Currently, it takes place virtually and is led by Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW and Theresa Gierzynski, LLMSW.

Tending to the grief process before a loved one’s death is a unique component of this program. The program explores how sorrow can be an ongoing experience for many years throughout caregiving, felt by spouses, adult children, and others with significant relationships to those with a new dementia diagnosis. A few definitions below expound upon the foundations of our program:

Anticipatory Grief
The pain of losing a loved one, felt in advance of their death.

Ambiguous Loss
The pain and discordant feeling that comes from interacting with a person who is physically alive though no longer able to be present socially or psychologically.

For more information about the Living Grief program, visit our website. Interested in signing up for the next session? You can do so at alzheimers.med.umich.edu/living-grief

Wellness Initiative Programs

We offer a variety of programs to support the well-being of caregivers and people living with early-stage dementia. Our current programs are listed below, and an ongoing list is available on our website at alzheimers.med.umich.edu/wellness-initiative

For ongoing wellness program information, consider signing up for our monthly Wellness Initiative e-newsletter on our website.

For Caregivers:
Catching Your Breath
2nd Tuesday of the Month
10:00 - 11:30am

For those with Early-Stage Dementia:
Mitten Minds Support Group
3rd Tuesday of the Month
3:00 - 4:00pm

To register:
Please visit our website at alzheimers.med.umich.edu/wellness-initiative

Newcomers and more information:
Please contact Ashley Miller at acmil@med.umich.edu or 734-615-8293.

Loss of One’s Old / Planned Life
The pain experienced which requires someone to reimagine and reinvent their life, while letting go of long held dreams, hopes, experiences, relationships, opportunities, lifestyles and personal time.

These definitions are likely new to many outside of the clinical and therapeutic settings, but recognizing these and allowing the space for caregivers and loved ones to grieve through these changes can not only build resilience but also a more enjoyable and meaningful life while caregiving through dementia and beyond.
Giving Back by Administering Vaccines in Detroit During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dr. Edna Rose volunteers in the Detroit area to give vaccines as a way to support those who have so loyally participated in our research

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges and hardships were faced by many. Many also rose to face the new environment that emerged. While our many research participants remained committed to our studies by moving online, and our staff took on the tireless effort of supporting our research participants through the unexpected losses, challenges of isolation and more, Dr. Edna Rose saw an opportunity to give back to the very community that so loyally supported our research during the many years prior to the pandemic.

Dr. Rose volunteered multiple times weekly at Fellowship Chapel and Northwest Activities Center in Detroit. During her time volunteering, she also educated the community and the local council of baptist pastors on the disproportionate risk and mortality faced by African Americans, and how receiving a vaccine could assist in lowering mortality rates.

“When the call was made for volunteers to administer the COVID-19 vaccine in the many areas where I had once recruited, it became a no brainer to volunteer to serve. I signed up and began to give back to a community that had given so much of their time to us in research projects. There were hundreds of Detroit residents that came out to receive vaccinations. This was truly a way I could give back to the Detroit communities that had given so much to our Center through their participation in research.”

Stay in Touch with Us

Whether you're a participant in one of our research studies, a generous donor or a member of one of our support groups or wellness programs, there are many ways to stay in touch with us throughout the year.

Join us at any of our upcoming events
Our full calendar of events is at alzheimers.med.umich.edu/events

Sign up for one of our monthly e-newsletters
You can sign up to receive at alzheimers.med.umich.edu/subscribe

Find resources, support, and more by following us on social media

Visit our website at alzheimers.med.umich.edu

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