



A Message from the New Director

Ian de Boer

It is with great humility, gratitude, and enthusiasm that I begin my tenure as the new director of the Kidney Research Institute. The KRI is a special place, where a supportive community and rich academic environment enable skilled and passionate people to improve kidney health through innovative research. I came to the University of Washington as a nephrology fellow in 2003, experienced the birth of the KRI in 2008, and became KRI

Associate Director in 2016. Over that time, I've witnessed firsthand how our unique institute advances science and improves people's lives. This has been made possible by the visionary partnership of UW and Northwest Kidney Centers, broad support from the kidney community and all levels of UW leadership, generous charitable contributions, and a committed group of investigators and staff.

The success of the KRI would of course not have been possible without the vision and leadership of our founding director, Jonathan Himmelfarb. In this newsletter, you will learn about Dr. Himmelfarb's work to establish the KRI as a premiere kidney research center. In addition to his own work focused on kidney precision medicine, Dr. Himmelfarb pioneered a committed to patient engagement, including establishing the KRI Patient Advisory Committee in 2016. The PAC recently met for its seventh annual meeting in May 2022 and serves as an example for authentic engagement of kidney patients.

The KRI is dependent on the generosity of donors to support our mission of improving lives for people with kidney disease. In the newsletter, you'll also learn about a recent gift from the Mount Baker Foundation to fund recruitment of underrepresented nephrology trainees. This gift will enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion in kidney research and clinical care, a top priority for the KRI and its stakeholders as well as the Mount Baker Foundation.

The KRI has a bright future ahead, building on its impressive accomplishments to date. The nephrology field is abuzz with new discoveries and new treatments, propelled by incredible advances in technology and a focus on the patient experience. The KRI will continue to lead this charge, pursuing innovative new methods to develop new strategies that are valued by patients and healthcare providers. I look forward to sharing progress with you in future newsletters.



KRI Visionaries Celebrate 10-years of accomplishment (2018): Drs. Stuart Shankland, Ian de Boer (associate director), and Jonathan Himmelfarb (director) join Joyce Jackson (NKC President and CEO)

**TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH
INNOVATION AND DISCOVERY**

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Jonathan Himmelfarb celebrates 14 year run as Director of the Kidney Research Institute

In April 2022, Jonathan Himmelfarb stepped down after 14 years as the inaugural director of the Kidney Research Institute (KRI), where he built and will continue to support a visionary center focused on clinical and translational kidney research. "The Kidney Research Institute was established in 2008 as a collaboration between UW Medicine and the Northwest Kidney Centers with the mission to conduct research that can improve the lives of people with kidney disease. In 2008, Dr. Himmelfarb relocated to Seattle from Maine after being appointed the founding director of the KRI. Dr. Stuart Shankland, former UW School of Medicine, Division of Nephrology Chief, was pivotal in recruiting Dr. Himmelfarb to be the inaugural director of the KRI. Dr. Shankland notes "Through his leadership, innovation and mentoring, Jonathan transformed a concept into a reality, that is now considered the national gold standard for how to do kidney research. These extraordinary efforts have significantly impacted how we now care for patients with kidney disease."



In 2010, Dr. Stuart Shankland, professor and head of the Division of Nephrology, with Joyce Jackson, President and CEO of Northwest Kidney Centers, and Dr. Jonathan Himmelfarb - looking over the inaugural issue of the KRI's On the Horizon newsletter.

Over the last 14 years, Dr. Himmelfarb has overseen the efforts of the KRI investigators to build collaborations across the various schools within the University of Washington and nationwide, procure nearly \$200 million in aggregate extra-mural funding, enroll over 8000 participants in the registry

and/or clinical studies of kidney diseases, and generate over 1500 research publications. Dr. Himmelfarb recruited highly successful investigators to UW and engaged UW trainees and faculty from multiple Divisions, Departments, and Schools, to become leaders in kidney disease research. Notably, under his leadership four members of the KRI received the prestigious Fialkow Scholars Award, which recognizes the outstanding achievements of junior faculty in medicine in research, teaching, clinical work, and academic citizenship. Under his leadership, the KRI has served in a leadership for high-profile research projects, including currently serving as the Central Hub for the Kidney Precision Medicine Project (KPMP).



Dr. Himmelfarb with the 2016 Inaugural KRI Patient Advisory Committee (PAC): (left to right) Kevin Fowler, Glenda V. Roberts, Bill Peckham, Bobbi Wager, Sam Pederson and Tami Sadusky

Dr. Himmelfarb strongly believes in patient engagement and empowerment through research, and he has led several initiatives to see patient engagement in action. In 2016, he established the KRI Patient Advisory Committee (PAC) with the goals of empowering patients for improved quality of life, expanding outreach at all levels, to drive educational efforts, and to support KRI philanthropy. The current KRI PAC is a diverse group of kidney patients who provide critical feedback on KRI research endeavors. The PAC model has been used for other research efforts across UW and nationwide.

Dr. Himmelfarb was fundamental in procuring insurance coverage for the research participants of the Kidney Precision Medicine Project; this is a first of its kind effort. "Just as he did during his tenure as president of the American Society of Nephrology (2015-2016), Dr. Himmelfarb elevated the patient voice and strengthened its relationship with industry. The KPMP, KRI PAC and the Center for Dialysis Patient Advisory Board are just a few examples of how his commitment has modeled the way to ensure that patient engagement and external relationships were strengthened to produce transformative, powerful collaborations among patients, families, researchers and the healthcare community.

Dr. Himmelfarb has been rewarded for his commitment to drive research and patient care forward across the nephrology field. He has been recognized by multiple patient-centric

organizations, including the American Association of Kidney Patients and the Kidney Health Initiative Patient and Family Partnership Council for his commitment to patient engagement in all aspects of research,” said Glenda V. Roberts, who serves on the KRI executive leadership team and as the director of External Relations and Patient Engagement. “This role is often cited as the first executive level leadership role of its kind within the kidney research community. It is indicative of Dr. Himmelfarb’s commitment to patient engagement and leadership at all levels,” Roberts continues.

While Dr. Himmelfarb will be stepping away as KRI director, he will continue on as Professor of Medicine and a KRI investigator, thus allowing him to commit more time to his own research portfolio focused on kidney precision medicine. In 2012, he received NIH funding to develop a “kidney on a chip” to be utilized in clinical trials. The project has continued and has received supplemental funding to send the chip into space in order to study the effects of microgravity on the kidney, study clinical trials on chips, and study COVID-19 effects on the kidney. In 2017, the University of Washington received NIH funding to serve as the Central Hub for the Kidney Precision Medicine Project. Dr. Himmelfarb is the chair of the KPMP Steering Committee, and the project was recently renewed for additional 5 years of funding.



Drs. Benjamin (Beno) Freeman and Jonathan Himmelfarb take a break from consulting on their kidney disease projects. Beno manages the KRI’s South Lake Union laboratory.

Dr. Himmelfarb will also continue as the co-Director of the Center for Dialysis Innovations (CDI), as well as, his teaching and mentorship responsibilities, which have been a steadfast priority over the years. Dr. Benjamin (Beno) Freedman, who was recruited to UW as an early-career investigator by Dr. Himmelfarb, and who works closely on the “kidney on a chip” project, notes “Jonathan has been a mentor in the truest sense of the word. He is a person who I have learned from intellectually but also spiritually. He leads by example and shows us how to be generous and meaningful in the way we conduct our lives. He’s our George Washington, our founding father. I’m glad he’ll still be around because I don’t know what we’d do without him.” The Kidney Research Institute is grateful to Dr. Himmelfarb for his years of leadership at the KRI.

Also in the news

- **Dr. Nisha Bansal** is newly elected member of the American Society of Clinical Investigation
- **Dr. Christopher Blosser** and the Center for Innovations in Cancer & Transplant team, along with the Glenda Roberts, were selected for the American Society of Transplantation (AST) Transplant Visionaries Challenge for their work in establishing the Center for Innovations in Cancer & Transplant.
- **Dr. Rajnish Mehrotra** is the recipient of the Dimitrios Oreopoulos Award from the Canadian Society of Nephrology.
- **Dr. Catherine Butler** authored the perspective “Perspectives of Triage Team Members Participating in Statewide Triage Simulations for Scarce Resource Allocation During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Washington State” in *JAMA Network Open*.
- **Dr. Susan Wong** wrote a commentary in *Medscape*, “Opting Out of Dialysis Not Instant Death Sentence for Kidney Disease”.
- **Drs. Simon Hsu, David Prince, Andy Hoofnagle, Bryan Kestenbaum and Ian de Boer** published “Clinical and biomarker modifiers of vitamin D treatment response: the Multi-Ethnic Study of Atherosclerosis” in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.
- **Drs. Christine Limonte, Yoshio Hall, Katherine Tuttle, Ian de Boer and Leila Zelnick** published “Prevalence of SGLT2i and GLP1RA use among US adults with type 2 diabetes” in the *Journal of Diabetes Complications*.
- **Drs. Ian Stanaway, Pavan Bhatraju and Jonathan Himmelfarb** published “Angiopoietins as Prognostic Markers for Future Kidney Disease and Heart Failure Events after Acute Kidney Injury” in the *Journal of American Society of Nephrology*.
- **Dr. Beno Freedman and Dr. Nelly Cruz** published “Modelling ciliopathy phenotypes in human tissues derived from pluripotent stem cells with genetically ablated cilia” in *Nature Biomedical Engineering*
- The KRI met with the Patient Advisory Committee (PAC) for their seventh annual meeting.
- **Glenda Roberts** was the patient panelist for the APOLLO study. Facebook Live panel: <https://www.facebook.com/nationalkidneyfoundation/videos/372265071533609/>

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Major Gift from Mount Baker Foundation Promotes Health Equity Within the Kidney Research Workforce

In November 2021, the Mount Baker Foundation (MBF) of Bellingham, WA, made a \$1,000,000 pledge to the KRI to increase diversity in nephrology research and the workforce. MBF's annual gift is \$100,000 for 10 years.

"We are proud to support the mission of the KRI, and in particular, this very important project in conjunction with UW Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Center for Transformational Research," said Bill Lombard, MD, past MBF Board president, nephrologist and retired medical director, Mount Baker Kidney Center. "The intent of this gift is to increase diversity in the research workforce by supporting candidates in the early-stage of their career, when securing funding is particularly difficult. Our hope is that by doing so, we can start to correct the negative impact of inequitable healthcare for people of color, diverse ethnicity and poverty."

The NIH National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), a major supporter of the KRI, affirmed the need for this program: "While NIDDK researchers from every race and ethnicity are striving to help achieve health equity, the Institute believes that these vital efforts would be strengthened by having a scientific

workforce that better reflects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the U.S. population. While scientific talent is surely well represented across all groups, opportunity is not. The NIDDK is therefore committed to overcoming the dearth of minority scientists across its mission areas."



Christine Limonte



Justin Bullock

We are pleased to announce that Drs. Justin Bullock and Christine Limonte are the first UW fellows to be recipients of support from the Mount Baker Foundation gift.

We are grateful for Mount Baker Foundation's support and their generosity to advance the mission of nephrology.