



OECM Winter 2024 Newsletter

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Left to right: Drs. Gina Solomon, Rahmat Balogun, John Rampulla, Jamie Bigelow, Lisa Zacharewicz, Brad Moy

Welcome to the Saints !

In 2024, UCSF Health acquired St. Francis and St. Mary's hospitals (the "Saints"). These hospitals collectively operate three occupational health clinics: At the airport, the ballpark, and St. Francis.

We are excited to connect with our new colleagues at these locations! So far, we have toured the clinics, met with the staff, and met with UCSF leadership to discuss the future of the sites.

We also had a welcome party at St. Francis in October with some of our OECM faculty and clinic staff, as well as staff from all three clinics. The three clinics have great infrastructure, solid teams, and a history of lots of demand. Unfortunately, they are currently under-staffed and are operating far beneath their potential.

Thanks to Timur Durrani and Rahmat Balogun for leading our efforts to link with the new sites, and thanks also to Bob Kosnik for consulting and assessing the needs. We are especially excited about the teaching and learning potential as our residents begin to rotate at these sites in the future!



New California Law

On September 29th, 2024 Governor Newsom signed **AB2164** into law. This law prohibits the Medical Board of California from asking invasive and discriminatory questions that stigmatize mental healthcare on physician licensure applications.

Dr. Max Blumberg, Associate Medical Director for UCSF Occupational Health Services and alumnus of our UCSF OEM residency program worked to pass the law while he was a resident. He collaborated with other house staff leaders across California from the Committee of Interns and Residents Union (CIR). CIR and the California Medical Association sponsored the bill.

Forty percent of physicians report that they are **reluctant to seek mental health** treatment due to licensure concerns. This law is an important first step to reduce mental health stigma and allow doctors to seek treatment of mental health conditions without fear of licensure repercussions.

Dr. Blumberg also wrote **an op-ed published in July** in support of the bill, where you can read more.



Research Spotlight: Dr. Suzaynn Schick, PhD

Schick Lab Research

(Pictured, Left to right:
Jason Nghe, Bryanna Perez, Dr.
Suzaynn Schick, Abel Huang)

Suzaynn Schick, PhD, and her staff study the health effects of exposure to biomass smoke. In her first postdoc, she analyzed the research that US tobacco companies had done on the toxicity of secondhand smoke. This data had never

been published. The data showed that side stream, the smoke coming from the cigarette when the smoker isn't puffing on it, is three to four times more toxic than the smoke that smokers inhale. The tobacco industry data also suggested how important the indoor environment is in our exposure to tobacco smoke.

Tobacco smoke, like any other complex mixture of chemicals, changes constantly. Chemical reactions happen; in tobacco smoke, nicotine reacts to form the carcinogen NNK. Physical changes occur: when hot tobacco smoke cools and mixes with air, a lot of the chemicals that were in the gas phase condense and become solids. Smoke is composed primarily of oily, waxy semi-volatile organic compounds that are more likely to stick to surfaces than to remain in the air. This is why our clothes and hair smell of smoke when we've been around smokers. It is also why smokers' homes have higher concentrations of carcinogens in the dust and on surfaces than the homes of nonsmokers.

The two main projects in Schick Lab now are a study of air pollution exposure in public places where people are using cannabis and a study of how melanin, in our skin, affects uptake and retention of nicotine and NNK from clothing. To study air pollution from cannabis use, we measure PM_{2.5} in dispensary smoking lounges, at cannabis festivals, concerts, street fairs and bars. Our research has shown that when people are actively smoking, vaping or dabbing cannabis, the PM_{2.5} concentrations usually reach concentrations that are hazardous to human health.

Our highest average PM_{2.5} measurement was 1,746 µg/m³, which is about 1,500 µg/m³ higher than the worst wildfire smoke seen in the Bay Area in the last decade. The reason we are studying dermal melanin is that melanin binds to nicotine. The study, which is still in the early stages, is designed to test the hypothesis that nicotine binds to melanin in the skin leading to a slower release into the body and longer exposure. If melanin modulates nicotine exposure, this might help explain why African Americans smoke on average smoke fewer cigarettes per day than whites, but are more likely to die of smoking-related disease.



OECM Staff Luncheon

Despite flash flood warnings, OECM Staff came together for a lovely lunch at Mission Rock Resort. A great time was had by all, at our first of hopefully many gatherings.

Left row (front to back): Jason Nghe, Bryanna Perez, Abel Huang, Ceasar Chavez
Right row (front to back): Serena Lee, Shraddha Swaroop, Eric Chu

OECM Fundraiser

**Donate to the UCSF OEM
Residency!**

Our program relies on the



generosity of our alumni and supporters.

As resident salaries and other expenses go up, our funding for the program has remained flat, and we need help filling the gap so our program can thrive!

Front row from left to right:

Drs. Bob Harrison, Gina Solomon, Margaret Murray, Stephanie Holm

Back row from left to right: Drs. John

Bossalini, Somayeh Fahim Nia,

Rupesh Patel, Rahmat Balogun,

Aditya Rajan, Matthew Gribble

Here are some ways you can help:

\$100 supports a local industrial site visit for our residents

\$500 supports a resident to go to the WOEMA meeting

\$750 supports the purchase of Board review materials for three graduating residents

\$1000 supports a landmark event for our residents (orientation, holiday party, graduation)

\$3000 covers our entire conference and travel budget for one resident for a year!

Thank you for your generosity!

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Join us at the March 2025 CME Course

This year's course is titled, "Health, Occupation, and the Environment: Global Issues and Local Action". The first day will be in honor of the late Dr.

Joseph “Joe” LaDou, MD., a great teacher and editor of the definitive textbook in occupational and environmental medicine.

The second and third days will cover challenging cases in Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Generative AI, Integrative Medicine and effective advocacy for patients and communities.

This year’s conference will include breakout sessions, interactive demonstrations, and other opportunities to interact with the presenters and other attendees. A poster session will be held during afternoon of the second day to showcase work from students, trainees, and other participants. A call for posters will be issued prior to the meeting.

[More details here](#)

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