

OECEM Spring 2026 Newsletter

Content and news at a glance

- UCSF OEM Awarded Grow Grant to Expand Training in Agricultural Communities
- Good News for NIOSH!
- Environmental Clinic Opens in Bayview Hunters Point
- Clinic Spotlight: UCSF Occupational Health Services
- Alumni Profile: Anthony Pacini, MD, MPH, MRO
- Research Spotlight: Anu Ramachandran, MD, MPH



Announcements

UCSF OEM Awarded Grow Grant to Expand Training in Agricultural Communities



The UCSF Occupational and Environmental Medicine (OEM) Residency Program has been awarded funding through the University of California Health Grow Grants program to support a new rural training track focused on California's agricultural regions. This competitive statewide initiative, established through Proposition 35, aims to expand the physician workforce in high-need specialties and underserved communities across California.

With this award, UCSF OEM will partner with clinical and public health sites in the Fresno–Merced area and the Salinas Valley to provide residents with immersive, community-based training in occupational and environmental health. Beginning in 2026, two residents per year will have the opportunity to complete longitudinal rotations in these regions, with additional residents participating in shorter activities such as site visits, seminars, and quality improvement projects. Training sites will include UCSF Fresno, Kaiser Fresno, the Merced County Department of Public Health, and the Agile and ProActive Occupational Health clinics in Salinas.

California's agricultural workforce faces significant occupational health risks, including pesticide exposure, heat illness, musculoskeletal injury, and wildfire smoke exposure. Yet many rural communities lack access to physicians trained in occupational medicine who can diagnose, treat, and prevent these conditions. This new track will prepare OEM residents to provide clinical care, consult with employers on workplace safety, and collaborate with public health agencies on surveillance and prevention.

The Grow Grant will enable UCSF OEM to build a sustainable pipeline of physicians interested in serving farmworkers and rural employers while strengthening partnerships with community organizations and health departments. The program is designed to serve as a scalable model for expanding specialty training in underserved regions throughout California.

We are grateful to our many partners across the Central Valley and Central Coast who helped make this initiative possible and look forward to welcoming our first rural track residents next year.

[Read more here](#)

Good News for NIOSH!



A major workforce reversal has unfolded at the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH): Layoffs in 2025 affected roughly 90% of NIOSH staff. These layoffs were turned into prolonged Administrative Leave following a judicial challenge. In mid-January 2026, federal authorities officially revoked layoff notices, paving the way for most NIOSH employees - approximately 873 positions - to be reinstated. In addition, Congress passed the FY26 spending package in early-February, which included \$366.8 million for NIOSH, including \$32 million for Education and Research Centers (ERCs), \$30 million for Ag Centers and \$11.8 million for Total Worker Health.

This restoration preserves NIOSH's capacity to conduct frontline research, respirator testing, coal miner health surveillance, and other essential occupational safety and health programs. The reinstatement also signifies bipartisan support for worker protection, with national safety groups like the National Safety Council and union advocates expressing relief and urging continued support for NIOSH's mission.

While rebuilding full operational momentum may take time, this development ensures that UCSF and the broader occupational and environmental medicine community can continue to engage NIOSH's expertise in workplace hazard evaluations, preventative research, and evidence-based guidance—key pillars of our shared commitment to safeguarding worker health.

[Read more here](#)

Please donate to the UCSF OEM Residency!

Environmental Clinic Opens in Bayview Hunters Point



UCSF's new Environmental Health Clinic in Bayview–Hunters Point is a collaborative effort between the San Francisco Department of Public Health, UCSF OEMC, and the Southeast Family Health Center FQHC to help address the community's long-standing pollution challenges. Located at 2403 Keith St. and operating one day each month, the clinic is tailored to evaluate, diagnose, and treat patients whose health may be affected by air pollutants, mold, chemicals, or occupational exposures.

This initiative directly responds to community concerns around toxins in the neighborhood—ranging from air pollution and radioactive contamination at the Hunters Point Shipyard to mold and other exposure concerns described to UCSF clinicians during community health assessments over the past six months. The model centers on individualized care and includes UCSF medical students, OEM residents, and three core faculty providing pro-bono services: Drs. Durrani, Solomon and Harrison.

This clinic is in a trial stage for six months, and will be reassessed in June 2026. After clinics in November, January and February, the model appears to be successful. By embedding environmental health expertise into neighborhood-based care, we are fostering a more equitable and responsive healthcare approach—one that recognizes and addresses the environmental determinants of health affecting Bayview residents.

[Read more here](#)



Clinic Spotlight: UCSF Occupational Health Services

**OCCUPATIONAL
HEALTH SERVICES**

University of California San Francisco (UCSF) Occupational Health Services is a leading Occupational Health Program, located in the San Francisco Bay Area, that serves approximately 20,000 UCSF Health employees and approximately 23,000 UCSF Campus employees across several campuses and sites in the San Francisco Bay Area and Fresno, California. The team operates under the Clinical Leadership of Rahmat Balogun, DO, MS, MPH (Medical Director) and Max Blumberg, MD, MPH (Associate Medical Director); and the Administrative Leadership of Tisha Bertlow (Administrative Director). Additionally, our team consists of 13 administrative staff (7 Practice Coordinators, 2 Healthcare Navigators, 1 Practice Manager, 1 Work Strong Coordinator, 1 Administrative Officer and 1 Project Manager), 21 clinical staff (12 Registered Nurses, 4 Licensed Vocational Nurses, 4 Nurse Practitioners, 1 Medical Assistant) and 8 Workers Compensation (WC) / Ergonomic staff (1 WC Manager, 3 Ergonomists, 4 WC Analysts) across all of our sites.

We operate 7 clinics, with 2 full-service clinics at UCSF Mt. Zion Campus and UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital, Oakland Campus. We have 5 satellite clinics located at the following Campuses: UCSF Mission Bay, UCSF Parnassus, UCSF Stanyan Community Hospital, UCSF Hyde Community Hospital, and UCSF Fresno. Our clinic services include, Pre-Employment Physicals, Medical Surveillance and Annual Screening, Vaccination Compliance, Return to Work Evaluations, Communicable Disease and Outbreak Response, 24-hr Needlestick Exposure Response, Workers' Compensation Care, and a variety of special programs, including a Work Strong Program, Hearing Conservation and Clinical Outreach across campuses. Additionally, our team manages Student Health Compliance and Exposure Response.

Our team works closely with various partner groups within the organization to ensure Worker Health and Safety. We partner with Hospital Epidemiology and Infection Prevention (HEIP) and Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) at the various UCSF locations to manage outbreaks and exposures, mitigate risk and develop and publish policies to maintain a safe environment for employees, patients, learners and visitors. We collaborate with UCSF HR partners for the pre-employment process to ensure timely new hire onboarding. We also collaborate closely with UCSF Data Analytics and IT to continually develop solutions to streamline our occupational health oversight and care systems. Additionally, we work closely with our partners at Zuckerberg San Francisco General (ZSFG) Hospital and the San Francisco Veterans Affairs (SFVA) Hospital where many of our UCSF employees also work clinically.

As UCSF is a learning institution, we routinely host medical students, residents and fellows to support their learning and understanding of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. These learners have an opportunity to work with our faculty and staff and get a depth of understanding of the field of Occupational and Environmental Medicine.

Our UCSF Occupational Health Services team is proud to serve workers by ensuring that a safe work environment is at the forefront of the care we provide, and we are excited to be a part of the learning journey of the next generation of health care providers.



Alumni

PROFILE



Anthony Pacini, MD, MPH, MRO (UCSF OEM 2021)

Where are you now?

In 2024, I completed my final three-year tour in Okinawa, Japan, and relocated to Hawai'i, where I now work as a staff physician with Hawai'i Permanente Medical Group. I am currently the sole occupational health provider at West O'ahu Medical Center, which serves a patient population with the highest proportion of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander on O'ahu.

This role presents unique challenges, including limited engagement with routine medical care and historical distrust of Western medicine among portions of the Native Hawaiian community. Additionally, Hawai'i's high cost of living and strong cultural values around contribution to family and community result in many individuals remaining in physically demanding jobs well beyond traditional retirement age, often within multi-generational households. These factors contribute to a higher burden of chronic and cumulative work-related injuries in an aging workforce.

Care delivery is further complicated by limited specialty availability on the island and delays in accessing sub-specialty services. In addition to workers' compensation and injury care, I support the Employee Health Department by overseeing the blood and body fluid exposure program, conducting pre-employment physicals, contributing to medical surveillance and policy development, and performing Medical Review Officer (MRO) services following recent certification.

My current focus is improving communication and collaboration between employers and occupational health services. I have conducted site visits and meetings with local employers, including Goodfellow Construction Company and Aulani, a Disney Resort & Spa, to better align occupational health practices with workplace demands.

Do you have any achievements you would like to share?

On November 7th, 2025, I was a speaker for the Work Injury Medical Association of Hawaii. The title of my talk is "Rewriting pain: Pathways, Mindset, and Function in Workers' Compensation Recovery".

Share one memory that you have from the OEM residency program.

Being in residency during the start of the COVID-19 Pandemic was full of pros and cons. One recurring memory I have is leaving the house to drive to the hospital without my "essential personnel" letter from law enforcement and worrying about being pulled over. I still have the letter to this day to look back on the crazy times that they were.

What advice do you have for the incoming/current residents?

Take advantage of engaging in discussions with staff and mentors. There is a collection of physicians, nurses, and other professionals associated with the UCSF program who truly are the masters of their trade. Don't take that for granted. Ask lots of questions.

Any updates to share (e.g kids, family, other things you're doing)?

We had our third boy while stationed in Okinawa. They are all extremely different and our home life is very hectic.

Tell us your news



Research Spotlight: Anu Ramachandran, MD, MPH



Dr. Ramachandran is a new faculty member in OECM and the Department of Emergency Medicine. She is an emergency physician with specialized training in public health and medical informatics, and is leading a research program at the intersection of environmental disasters, health system resiliency, and emerging technologies.

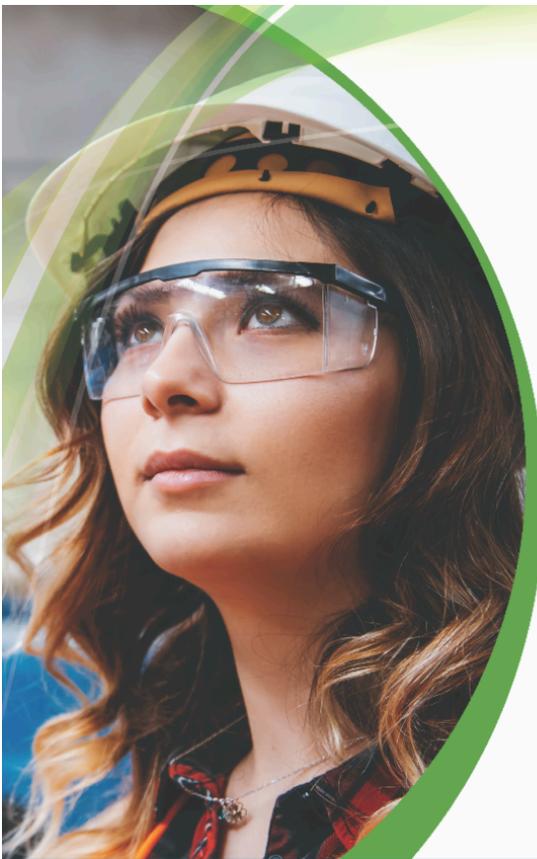
Heatwaves, wildfires, and other environmental disasters can cause time-sensitive medical emergencies, exacerbate chronic diseases, worsen mental and behavioral health, and threaten continuity of care. These challenges are increasing in frequency, severity, and duration, and have disproportionate impacts on outdoor workers, older patients, and those with chronic medical conditions.

Emergency departments are a safety net for the health system, but face rising challenges of boarding and overcrowding, which are worsened during disasters. Dr. Ramachandran's research combines large electronic health record datasets with environmental data on heat and air quality to study the relationships between climate-sensitive natural hazards and emergency department utilization, with a goal of improving the resiliency of acute care systems in the face of these hazards.

As a medical informatics fellow at Stanford University and the Palo Alto Veteran's Administration, Dr. Ramachandran developed the first national dataset of acute care utilization by veterans to be linked with environmental exposure data to study the impacts of heat and wildfire smoke on veteran health. She is building on this work through a collaboration between the VA National Office of Primary Care and Stanford's Doerr School of Sustainability to explore and develop telehealth interventions to maintain care continuity during extreme weather events and evaluate the impact of these programs on emergency department visits. At UCSF, she is leading a project to use electronic health record data to identify patients at high risk of medical complications during extreme heat and poor air quality events, linking to real-time weather data to develop targeted alert systems and clinically tailored patient messaging tools. These tools can be adapted to different clinics and patient populations to support clinicians as they care for high-risk patients during heatwaves and wildfires.

Dr. Ramachandran's work has been supported by multiple awards, including a Pilot Grant from the VA's Center for Innovation to Implementation, a Rapid Research Award from the Public Health Extreme Events Research Network, a Disaster Research Fellowship through the Center for Disaster Resilient Communities, and an Innovation Award from the UC Office of the President's Global Climate Leadership Council. Her findings have been published in high-impact journals including *JAMA Network Open* and *NEJM Catalyst*, has informed national-level VA policy and led to the development of a new Climate and Health working group at the American Medical Informatics Association. Her goal as a physician-scientist is to use emerging technologies to empower communities to mitigate the health impacts of environmental disasters, strengthen health system preparedness and policy, and improve access to care for vulnerable patients.





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