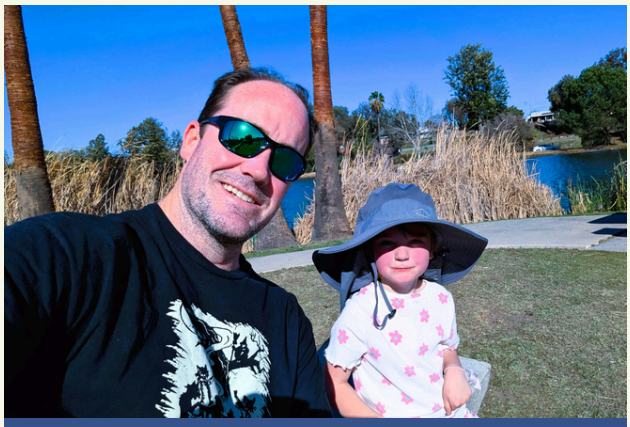
TV CORE

February 2025 *Monthly Newsletter*



BRENDON WOODWORTH

Brendon is a San Diego native who, after a brief stint in Monterey working at the Monterey Bay Aquarium, returned to his hometown to complete his degree in Cellular and Molecular Biology at SDSU. After taking a 10-year break from school, Brendon returned to finish his degree, gaining diverse skills along the way. He worked in the service industry, as a bartender, electrician apprentice, and eventually at the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Upon returning to SDSU, he worked as a chemistry tutor and research assistant, studying the effects of time-restricted feeding on circadian rhythms and its link to obesity and heart disease. His interests in cellular biology, disease, and immunology grew during this time, leading to his current role in research.

On a personal note, Brendon has faced significant challenges, including three spinal surgeries and ongoing pain, which have limited his physical activities. One thing that he always wanted to try was sky diving, but that one “got a hard no from my surgeon”. Despite this, he stays active through bowling, snowboarding, camping, and playing frisbee golf. He’s also passionate about movies, especially classics like The Princess Bride, The Goonies, and Star Wars, and enjoys watching anime and sci-fi series.

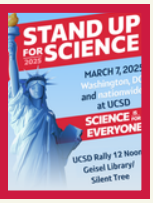
(cont) Above all, Brendon values spending time with his daughter (pictured, right), enjoying outdoor activities like trips to the beach, playgrounds, and local attractions. She is his greatest source of joy and pride.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Project **"Navigating the Dual Role of Physician and Clinician Investigator in End-of-Life Research"** explores the ethical and practical challenges faced by physicians who also serve as research investigators, particularly in recruiting people living with HIV (PWH) for end-of-life (EOL) studies. This paper pertains to The Last Gift Study at UCSD enrolls PWH in their final months to contribute to HIV cure research by donating biological samples during life and postmortem. While this study offers valuable scientific insights, recruiting participants presents challenges, as patients often prioritize immediate clinical care, struggle with accepting their prognosis, or face time constraints that make research discussions difficult.

The study found that primary care providers (PCPs) play a crucial role in successful recruitment, as patients are more receptive to hearing about research opportunities from their own physician rather than an unfamiliar research team member. Analyzing recruitment efforts from September 2022 to August 2023, the researchers identified 27 potential participants, of whom 9 (33.3%) enrolled. PCP-led discussions resulted in higher enrollment rates compared to outreach from study personnel alone, emphasizing the influence of trusted clinicians in research recruitment. However, this dual role raises ethical concerns, as clinicians must ensure they are not exerting undue influence or creating a sense of obligation for their patients to participate.

To mitigate ethical risks, the study recommends that PCPs introduce the research opportunity but avoid involvement in the informed consent process, ensuring discussions remain free from coercion. Additionally, clinical care should always take priority, and research participation should only be discussed when appropriate for the patient’s emotional and physical state. By maintaining a patient-centered approach and upholding ethical safeguards, the study demonstrates that EOL research can be conducted responsibly while respecting the autonomy and well-being of individuals in end-of-life care who wish to contribute to such scientific advancements.



LOOKING FORWARD TO MARCH

March 7: A nationwide rally—including one at UCSD—will take place to protest recent legislation that threatens scientific integrity and research advancements across the country.
March 8: International Women's Day, a global celebration of women's achievements and a call for gender equality.
March 10: National Women and Girls HIV/AIDS Awareness Day, dedicated to raising awareness and advocating for better healthcare and support for women and girls affected by HIV/AIDS.
March 17: St. Patrick's Day, a cultural celebration honoring the patron saint of Ireland.
All of March: National Women's History Month, recognizing and celebrating the contributions of women throughout history.

SCAN THIS QR CODE WITH YOUR PHONE CAMERA TO BE TAKEN TO THE "STAND UP FOR SCIENCE" ADVOCACY SHEET

SHOUTOUT!

We would like to wish a very happy birthday to Tina (2/21) and Nadia (2/26)!

The department of Medicine research day is coming up at the end of April but registration is open now! Sara is part of the team putting this day together as well as leading a roundtable discussion in the morning. For more information, please reach out to Sara or Frida.

SFAR
SAN DIEGO | CENTER FOR AIDS RESEARCH

TRY SOMETHING NEW

March is International Women's Month – a time to honor the incredible achievements of women around the world and reflect on the work still to be done. This month, let's shine a spotlight on the trailblazing women in STEM who are breaking barriers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
We have chosen to highlight one woman in STEM in this month's newsletter whose contributions to science have impacted genetics, medicine, and biotechnology. Dr. Jennifer Doudna is a biochemist who co-invented CRISPR-Cas9, a revolutionary gene-editing technology that has transformed the field of genetics. This breakthrough allows scientists to precisely edit the DNA of living organisms, which holds immense potential for treating genetic diseases, advancing cancer therapies, and improving agricultural practices. Her pioneering work with CRISPR has been described as one of the most significant scientific breakthroughs of the 21st century.
In recognition of her incredible contributions to science, Dr. Doudna was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2020, alongside her colleague Emmanuelle Charpentier. Her work continues to inspire the scientific community, especially women pursuing careers in STEM, as she has demonstrated the power of innovation and perseverance. Beyond her research, Dr. Doudna is also dedicated to addressing the ethical implications of gene editing, ensuring that these powerful tools are used responsibly to benefit society.