

 Health Equity Sociobehavioral Science Core

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January 12, 2022

Maile Young Karris, MD

Associate Professor of Medicine

Divisions of Infectious Diseases and Geriatrics

Co-Director Center for AIDS Research Clinical Investigations Core

University of California, San Diego

9500 Gilman Drive, MC 0665

La Jolla, CA 92093-0665

Dear Dr. Karris,

We are delighted to provide this Letter of Support for your proposed clinical research trial: “A randomized trial comparing an integrated CBT, tai chi and text message intervention with usual care to improve physical performance, reduce substance use, and improve pain in older PWH”, also known as Project Strong.

The Health Equity Sociobehavioral Science (HESS) Core of the San Diego Center for AIDS Research (CFAR) aims to enhance HIV research by creating unique interventions tailored to hard-to-reach, vulnerable, and/or under-served populations. Individuals living with HIV are among the most vulnerable and underserved populations for whom face severe stigma and encounter other socio-structural barriers that poorly impacts care along theire care. Specifically, in San Diego County the populations greatly impacted by health disparities, particular to HIV, include Black/African Americans and women. The foremost goal of the HESS Core is to increase access to and retention in HIV research and HIV care for the most vulnerable and under-served populations in our communities.

The San Diego CFAR Disparities Core Community Advisory Board (CAB) is a body convened to foster collaborations in the community, provide policy and procedural guidance by working with members of underserved populations, and to disseminate multiple services for the community of San Diego. The CAB has over 25 members who are comprised of a diverse and interdisciplinary group of individuals across San Diego County. Members represent local CBOs, agencies, the San Diego County Health and Human Services Department, and health centers. Also, members consist of industry leaders, community advocates, local health care consumers, as well as persons living with HIV. As the Chair and Co-Chair of the CFAR Disparities Core CAB, we are both community members with a vested interest in addressing HIV disparities and are committed to supporting research studies that seek to address HIV disparities.

We understand that your proposal seeks to implement a clinical research trial targeting to mitigate the multiple conditions older patients with HIV suffer including chronic pain, low levels of physical activity, higher prevalence and risk for substance abuse and other psychological conditions. Further, your novel proposed study recognizes the mutually reinforcing occurrence of these distinct but related mental and physical health conditions the older HIV community experiences.

As such, we offer the support of the CFAR Disparities Core CAB leadership and membership to provide expert advice and guidance to you and your research team to ensure successful development of Project Strong’s aims and provide guidance on a recruitment, referral, and recruitment pathways for this underserved population of people living with HIV/AIDS in San Diego. Specifically we will assist with helping you develop recruitment strategies to encourage diversity in your research participant population. We will also assist in the development of your study advisory board including implementing payments for service (as you are currently proposing).

Therefore, we whole heartedly support the application for this NIH planning grant. Please let us know if we may provide you with any additional information. We look forward to working with you and your research team in the future on this important work in San Diego.

Sincerely,

James Jackson, MBA

Chair, Community Advisory Board

Judi Patterson

Co-Chair, Community Advisory Board