

TV CORE

APRIL 2025

Monthly Newsletter



RITA CARRILLO

Rita was born in Los Angeles, California, to Mexican parents and spent her early years in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico. It was there that she completed her elementary and middle school education before returning to the United States. One of the most significant challenges she faced was learning English at the age of 16—a task that required tremendous dedication, patience, and perseverance. Even today, Rita continues to strengthen her language skills, a testament to her lifelong commitment to growth and learning.

Family has always been at the heart of Rita's life. She speaks with great pride about her children, who have grown into caring, hardworking, and accomplished adults. Watching them overcome their own challenges and flourish into compassionate human beings has been one of her greatest joys. The time they spend together is deeply meaningful to her, and she treasures the strong bonds they share.

In her free time, Rita finds peace and fulfillment in gardening and cooking. Whether she's tending to her plants or preparing a meal for loved ones, these hobbies allow her to relax, be creative, and stay connected to the things that bring her happiness.

Rita's professional journey began when she was looking for a stable position to help support her family. She was fortunate to join Dr. Douglas Richman's lab as a laboratory aide—an opportunity that would become the foundation of a long and fulfilling career. Despite having no previous background in laboratory work, Rita embraced every challenge with determination. She learned everything on the job, gaining experience through hands-on tasks and continuously expanding her skills. Over the past 25 years, she has grown professionally within the lab, taking on new roles and responsibilities and becoming a valued and trusted member of the team. Rita, you inspire each and every one of us and your dedication to our lab never goes unnoticed!

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

The study “**Predictors of Acute HCV Incidence in People with HIV: Insights from a Long-term Cohort Study**” assessed predictors of acute hepatitis C virus (HCV) acquisition in people with HIV (PWH) using data from the ACTG ALLRT cohort, a long-term observational study of antiretroviral therapy (ART)-treated individuals.

The study incorporated nucleic acid testing (NAT), a more sensitive method than antibody screening, for detecting acute HCV, addressing gaps in previous research. Among 4,015 PWH with baseline negative HCV serology, 42 seroconversions occurred over 18,150 person-years, corresponding to an incidence rate of 0.23 per 100 PY. The incidence was significantly lower among women (0.06 per 100 PY) compared to men (0.27 per 100 PY), suggesting potential sex-specific differences in risk exposures or biological susceptibility. Multivariable Poisson regression identified independent predictors of HCV seroconversion: self-reported injection drug use (IDU; RR 6.3), persistent viremia with HIV RNA ≥ 400 copies/mL (RR 2.7), and elevated alanine aminotransferase (ALT) levels (grade ≥ 3 ; RR 4.7).

These associations reinforce the biological plausibility that unsuppressed HIV infection may impair immune responses and mucosal integrity, increasing vulnerability to co-infections. Similarly, high ALT levels, often a marker of hepatocellular injury, align with the hepatic inflammation characteristic of acute HCV infection. The absence of sexual risk behavior data limited interpretation of non-IDU transmission routes, particularly among men who have sex with men (MSM), a group with rising HCV incidence in other studies. Nevertheless, the findings underscore the importance of integrating HCV RNA testing in routine care for PWH, especially those with elevated liver enzymes or detectable HIV viremia. Targeted harm reduction and viral suppression strategies are critical to mitigating HCV transmission in this population.



LOOKING FORWARD TO MAY

May 5: Cinco De Mayo

May 11: Mother's Day!

May 23-24: 50th anniversary gala for UC San Diego's Medical Scientist Training Program (MD/PhD)

May 26: Memorial Day (Federally observed)

Hope is not the conviction
that something will turn
out well but the certainty
that something makes
sense, regardless of how it
turns out.

Vaclav Havel

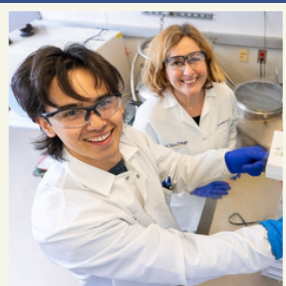
SHOUTOUT!

We would like to wish a very happy birthday to Karole (4/13) and Charlotte (4/23)!

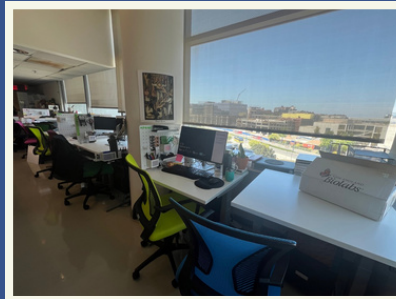
We extend our heartfelt congratulations to our incredible students, Nikki and Alec, on their exciting college commitments! We are immensely proud to see them take this important step toward shaping the future of science and medicine.

Nikki will be attending USC, where she'll be studying Human Biology on the Pre-Med track!

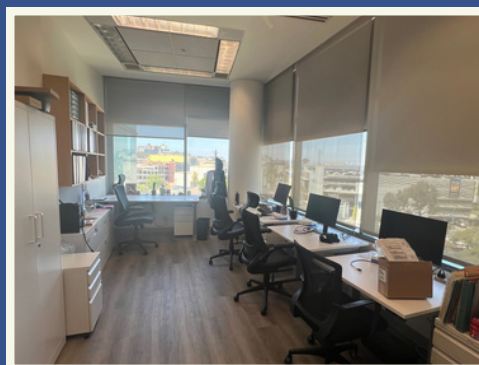
Alec will be attending UC Berkeley, where he'll be on the Pre-Med track as well!



OUR NEW LAB SPACE! NOW FOUND ON THE FOURTH FLOOR OF THE STEIN CLINICAL RESEARCH BUILDING



NEW OFFICE SPACE



THE NEW BSL2+ ROOM

