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### San Diego Center for AIDS Research Launches Health Equity Sociobehavioral Science Core

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La Jolla, CA: Building upon its thriving suite of laboratory, clinical, and biostatistical services, the NIH-funded San Diego Center for AIDS Research (SD CFAR) is pleased to announce the launch of the Health Equity Sociobehavioral Science Core.

The launch follows a 10-month strategic planning process co-led by Dr. Jamila K. Stockman, Associate Professor of Medicine at UC San Diego and Vice Chief of Global Public Health in the Division of Infectious Diseases and Global Public Health, and Dr. Eileen Pitpitan, Associate Professor, San Diego State University School of Social Work. The purpose of the Core is to provide sociobehavioral scientific methods to researchers studying the health equity needs of key populations living with or at-risk for HIV in Southern California.

“We are delighted to expand SD CFAR’s health equity and sociobehavioral research services,” says Dr. Davey Smith, Chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases and Global Public Health at the University of California San Diego School of Medicine and SD CFAR Co-Director. “Our Center has a 27-year history of service in the basic and clinical sciences. Scaling up our sociobehavioral science portfolio will give the scientific community a new set of tools to prevent HIV transmission and get more people into care.”

The Core is an exciting expansion of the SD CFAR Disparities Core that was originally funded by the [California HIV/AIDS Research Program \(CHRP\)](#) from 2015-2019. In its first four years, the original Disparities Core established relationships with community-based HIV service organizations, formed a powerful Community Advisory Board, participated in community and scientific symposia, and ensured the needs of key populations were appropriately considered in research studies. When CHRP funding ended, SD CFAR continued to support the Disparities Core through its primary NIH grant.

The Health Equity Sociobehavioral Science Core both rebrands the Disparities Core and enhances the original Core’s strengths by adding expertise in qualitative and mixed methods research, intervention development, recruitment of hard-to-reach and underserved populations, psychosocial statistical methods, and co-occurring conditions, such as homelessness and substance use. Core members are available to assist researchers in studies involving sexual, gender, racial, and ethnic minorities; women, adolescents and young adults; people in sex work; and other at-risk populations.

“Addressing health disparities is an essential component of the U.S. [Ending the HIV Epidemic \(EHE\)](#) initiative,” notes Dr. Douglas Richman, Distinguished Professor of Pathology and Medicine at University of California San Diego School of Medicine and Co-Director of SD CFAR. “Our Health Equity Sociobehavioral Science Core will better position our Center to realize EHE goals.”

SD CFAR has a strong track record of synergizing high-impact, multidisciplinary HIV/AIDS research through four priority research areas: optimizing HIV care, relieving health disparities, finding a cure, and developing

vaccines. The Health Equity Sociobehavioral Science Core will add new vision and direction to the first two priorities and confirm that the needs of underserved and key populations are equitably addressed in the others. Core members will foster new collaborations with individual researchers; encourage the use of other SD CFAR service cores and resources; promote new funding collaborations and publishing opportunities; and facilitate the professional development of junior faculty and trainees in health equity research and the sociobehavioral disciplines. Several Core members are also active participants in the SD CFAR [EHE Scientific Working Group](#).

Members of the Health Equity Sociobehavioral Science Core currently include faculty at UC San Diego and San Diego State University, which joined SD CFAR in June 2020. Researchers at SDSU immediately began partnering with Drs. Stockman, Pitpitan, and colleagues in strategic planning meetings. “We developed a synergy among our UC San Diego and SDSU colleagues that will broaden and strengthen SD CFAR’s research in HIV-related disparities,” says Dr. Stockman, who will co-direct the Core along with Dr. Pitpitan.

“My colleagues and I are excited to have an active role in the Health Equity Sociobehavioral Science Core and the SD CFAR,” Dr. Pitpitan adds. “We anticipate this Core will advance sociobehavioral science in the context of HIV research and ultimately have a positive impact on individuals and communities disproportionately affected by HIV.”

For more information about the SD CFAR, please visit <https://cfar.ucsd.edu>.

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**About the San Diego Center for AIDS Research:** The San Diego Center for AIDS Research (SD CFAR) is one of 17 NIH-funded academic centers providing administrative and shared research support to synergistically enhance and coordinate high-quality HIV/AIDS research projects at academic institutions across the U.S. The SD CFAR supports multidisciplinary research to end the HIV epidemic and is recognized as a Tier 3 Center at the highest quality of research and funding. For more information, please visit <https://bit.ly/2ZgM76C>.