

UC San Diego

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

The Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology &
Palliative Care Newsletter



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In this edition:

- Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month
- Spotlight: Khai Nguyen, M.D.
- What's Happening
- Congratulations
- In the News...



Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month

— June is —
**ALZHEIMER'S
& BRAIN**
AWARENESS
MONTH



June is Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias (ADRD) and to honor the individuals, families, and caregivers affected. Dementia impacts every aspect of a person's life, making compassionate, person-centered care more important than ever. At the Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology & Palliative Care, we are dedicated to quality clinical care, research, training of the workforce, educating families and caregivers about the resources available, and developing dementia-friendly communities. In particular, our division leads the San Diego Alzheimer's Disease Resource Center for Minority Aging Research (RCMAR) and the San Diego Imperial Geriatrics Education Center (SDIGEC). Learn more about these programs and their efforts centered on ADRD at the links below. We encourage our community to learn about the warning signs and risk factors of dementia, get screened, support loved ones and caregivers, and join us in promoting brain health at every age.

[Alzheimer's & Brain Awareness Month](#)

[San Diego Alzheimer's Disease RCMAR](#)

[Training and Community Resources - SDIGEC](#)

Spotlight: Khai Nguyen, M.D.



What is your current profession/role?

Clinical Services Chief of Senior Medicine at UC San Diego Health. I'm also handing off the role of Clinic Medical Director to my colleague Dr. Eddie Lam, who will lead the Geriatric Medicine Clinic going forward.

What initially inspired and motivated you to pursue a career in your field?

It began at home. My father suffered a stroke when I was in college, and watching his experience pulled me toward geriatrics before I fully understood why. A Newsweek profile caught me at 22 saying something I still believe today: "I know as a future health-care professional, it will enrich my career if I study gerontology now. My father is in his mid-70s and he suffered a

stroke in 1989. A lot of things I'm learning now apply to my own life. Some issues are bleak, but there's hope I can make a difference in the future." Decades later, that hope is still what drives the work.

What parts of your work have been particularly inspiring or rewarding for you?

Swimming upstream. The most rewarding moments come from finding non-conventional ways to advance geriatrics—challenging assumptions about how we care for older adults and building models that put what matters to patients first.

What is your go-to stress relief activity during a busy workweek?

The museum. I lose myself in art, even though I don't have an artistic bone in my body. Standing in front of a great work resets something for me.

If you had to choose a different profession, what would it be?

At 12, I wanted to be a U.S. Senator. Today, I'd want to be an artist—someone bold enough to say what's on my mind and paint what I think society needs to look at, without preaching. More inviting people to notice than telling them what to think.

2000

THE MILLENNIUM NOTEBOOK

For Entrepreneurs, Lawyers and Doctors, There's Gold in Old

PREMED STUDENTS usually dream about the glamour jobs in medicine—becoming a surgeon. Not Khai

Nguyen, a senior at UCLA. Nguyen, 22, says he hopes to specialize in geriatric medicine, and he has already begun to study the aging process. A biology major like many premed students, Nguyen carries a strong minor in gerontology. That includes courses on the biology, psychology and sociology of aging and even a class on public-policy issues, such as the future of Medicare and the Social Security system, that affect the elderly. "I know that as a future health-care professional, it will enrich my career if I study gerontology now," he says. "My father is in his mid-70s and he suffered a stroke in 1989. A lot of things I'm learning now apply to my own life. Some issues are bleak, but there's hope I can make a difference in the future."

For an increasing number of students at UCLA and other schools, Old is suddenly In. The reason is obvious: the graying of America means jobs. Coupled to the aging



Wall Street gets 'bullish on gerontology'

Wall Street is bullish on gerontology." Lawyers can specialize in "elder law," which covers everything from trusts and estates to nursing-home abuse and age discrimination. Entrepreneurs see huge opportunities in the elder market because the baby boomers, 74 million strong, are likely

spending so much time thinking about older people. "I think they're bored by it," she says. "Or maybe they're just scared of getting older themselves."

For Susan Stewart, a 26-year-old Ph.D. candidate at USC's School of Gerontology, working with the elderly means much more than a paycheck. Stewart got interested in elder care when her own grandmother was living in a poorly run nursing home. "I knew it was bad there, and it was recently shut down," she says. Now she plans to become a professor of geriatrics specializing in social policies that affect older Americans. "I've heard that people spend more time looking at cars than they do on a nursing home when deciding which one to choose," she says. "We need to spend more time thinking about the psychological well-being of

people living in those homes. I'm hoping that my degree will help me shape policies on such things." Like other gerontologists, Stewart may be helping to redefine the politics of the future.

TARA WEINGARTEN

What's Happening

UC San Diego Geriatric Medicine Clinic Hosts Special Open House

The Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology & Palliative Care recently held a special open house at our Geriatric Medicine Clinic. The event celebrated two meaningful additions made possible through the generous support of the Seuss

Foundation: the installation of new Dr. Seuss-inspired artwork throughout the clinic and the launch of *The Triton Guide to Age-Friendly Care* developed by Dr. Khai Nguyen, Geriatrics Clinical Service Chief.



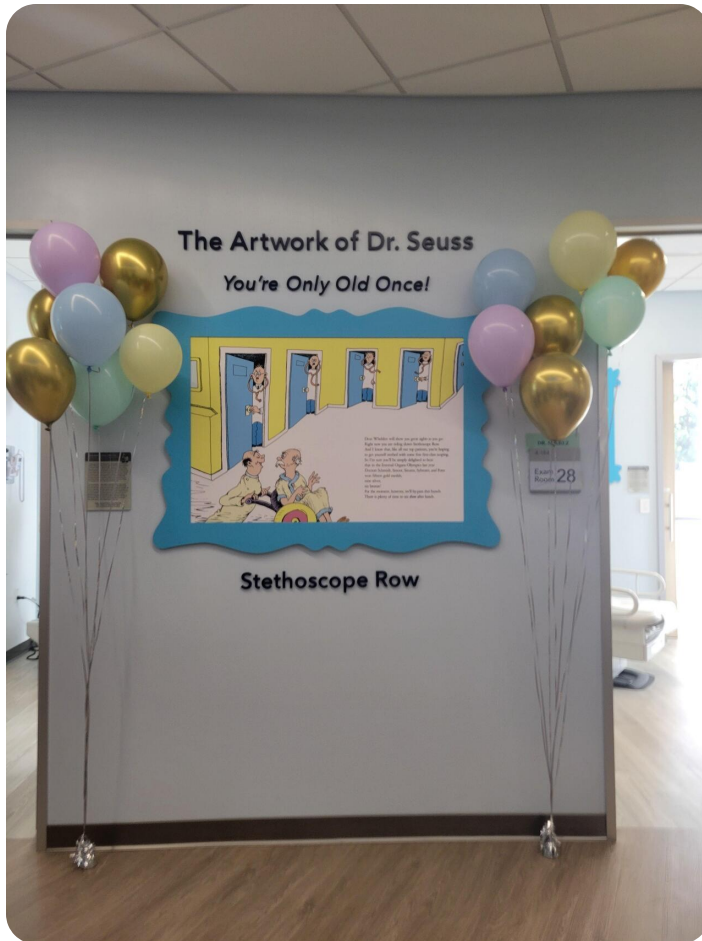
Larry Gratt, Susan Brandt, Lynda Claassen, Dr. Khai Nguyen, Dr. Alison Moore, Claudia Prescott, Judith Morgan

Attendees had the opportunity to explore the newly enhanced clinic environment, learn more about the Triton Guide's role in advancing age-friendly care and improving health literacy, and connect with the many individuals who helped bring these projects to life. We were honored to welcome representatives from the Seuss Foundation and Dr. Seuss Enterprises, along with patients, division supporters, and project collaborators whose contributions helped make this vision a reality.

These initiatives reflect our ongoing commitment to creating welcoming, patient-centered spaces and providing innovative resources that support healthy aging and high-quality care for older adults.







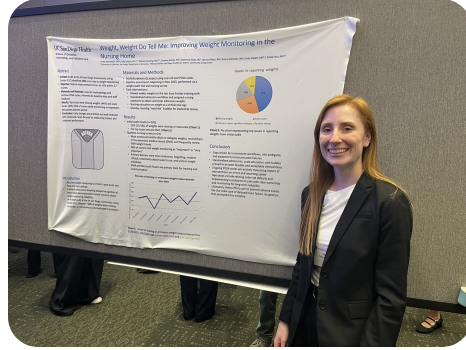


[Visit the Triton Guide Website](#)

2026 California Academic Geriatrics Institutions (CAGI) Annual Conference

Members of the Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology & Palliative Care were well represented at the 2026 California Academic Geriatrics Institutions (CAGI) Annual Conference held at Stanford University on May 29, joining colleagues from across the state to advance education, research, clinical innovation, and collaboration in the care of older adults. The conference provided an opportunity for faculty, fellows, and trainees to engage with leaders in the field and showcase the outstanding work being done at UC San Diego.





A special congratulations goes to geriatrics fellow, Dr. Emily Venvertloh, who received the Fellow-in-Training Award for her first-author presentation of the fellows' Quality Improvement project abstract titled *Weight, Weight Do Tell Me: Improving Weight Monitoring in the Nursing Home*. We are proud of all who attended and represented our Division at this year's conference.

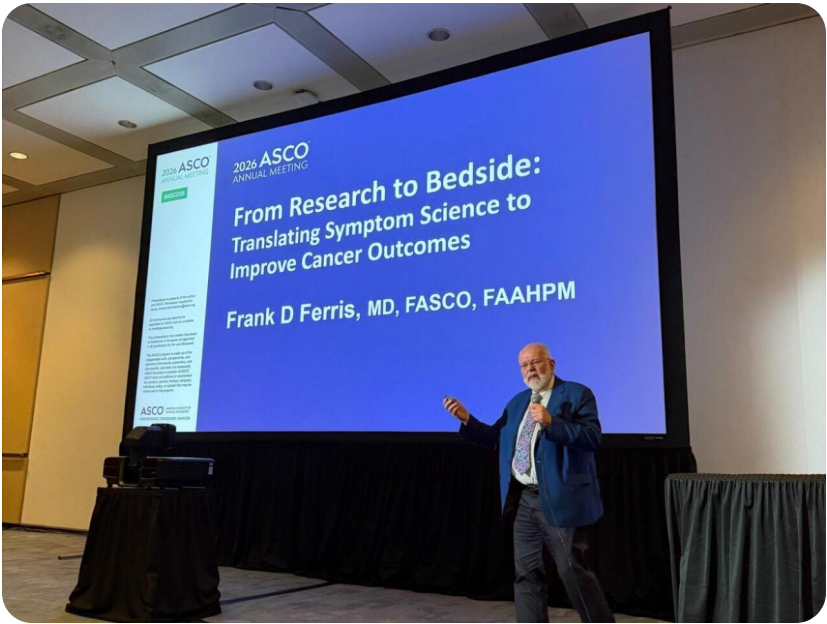
More about CAGI

Congratulations
are in order...

Congratulations to Dr. Frank Ferris



Congratulations to Dr. Frank Ferris on being the 2026 recipient of the Walther Cancer Foundation Supportive Oncology Award! Presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology Annual Meeting, this award recognizes outstanding contributions to supportive oncology & improving care for patients with cancer.



[More about Walther Cancer Foundation Supportive Oncology Award](#)

Congratulations to Dr. Lasé Ajayi



Congrats to Dr. Lasé Ajayi on her re-election to the American Medical Association Board of Trustees and appointment as Chair of the Board.

[Read more here](#)

Congrats to Dr. Tessa Antalan & Danielle Glorioso

We are proud to congratulate faculty member and geriatrician, Tessa Antalan, MD, along with the Stein Institute for Research on Aging's Executive Director, Danielle Glorioso, LCSW, for serving on the Board of Directors for the Social Service League La Jolla, supporting older adults in need, and strengthening community-centered care in our region.



[More about the Board of Directors](#)

Medical Student Awards in Geriatrics and Palliative Care

Congratulations to Nhi Ngoc Quynh Nguyen and Karen Villegas, recipients of the Ruth Covell Award in Geriatrics, and Yasmin (“Yaz”) Zuch, recipient of the Excellence in Palliative Care Award.

The Ruth Covell Award in Geriatrics recognizes graduating medical students who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to geriatrics through scholarly achievement, leadership, and active participation in geriatrics programs at UC San Diego. The award is made possible through the generosity of Dr. Ruth Covell, whose endowed gift to our division ensures that future generations of physicians dedicated to the care of older adults are recognized and encouraged.

The Excellence in Palliative Care Award honors a graduating medical student who has shown outstanding dedication to the field of palliative care through clinical excellence, leadership, scholarship, and compassionate patient-centered care. This award is supported by the generosity of the Step Family Foundation, whose longstanding commitment to advancing palliative care at UC San Diego has helped expand education, training, and access to high-quality care for patients and families facing serious illness.

Please join us in congratulating Nhi, Karen, and Yaz on these well-deserved honors. We are proud of their accomplishments and look forward to seeing the impact they will make as they continue their careers in medicine.



[Read more here](#)

In the News...

Dr. Alison Moore was featured in UC San Diego Today following her election as President of the American Geriatrics Society. Read more [here](#).

Dr. Ian Neel shares expert insight in a new PolitiFact article on heat-related illness, medication risks, and why older adults are especially vulnerable. Read more [here](#).

Recent publications from PubMed:

[Central Nervous System T-cell immune architecture, and not HIV burden, tracks with cognition under long-term viral suppression](#)

Despite effective antiretroviral therapy, HIV persists in the central nervous system (CNS) and may contribute to neuroinflammation and cognitive impairment. How viral persistence, immune responses, and regional CNS T-cell architecture relate to cognitive functioning remains unclear. We performed a cross-sectional, multi-compartmental immune-genomic study in 12 people with HIV on long-term viral suppression enrolled in the Last Gift rapid autopsy program. Quantitative HIV reservoir measures...

Mon, Jun 15, 2026

[Read more](#)

[Palliative Care Social Work Interventions and Co-occurring Outcomes: A Six-Year Descriptive Cohort](#)

CONCLUSION: Structured PCSW flowsheet documentation captured reproducible patterns of intervention and co-occurring outcome at scale. Several patterns were directionally consistent across teams and within first encounters and merit prospective evaluation as candidate quality indicators or staffing benchmarks. Same-clinician same-source recording and the absence of interrater reliability and construct validity testing constrain inference; future work will require multisite psychometric and...

Thu, Jun 11, 2026

[Read more](#)

[Identification of DNA methylation signatures of smoking in women and associations with cardiovascular disease mortality](#)

Tobacco smoking is critical risk factor for cardiovascular disease (CVD) and mortality, with epigenetics implicated as a key biological mechanism. Smoking disproportionately impacts CVD risk in women; however,

limited research has examined smoking-associated DNA methylation (DNAm) changes in women. We measure whole blood DNAm (EPICv2) and self-reported smoking (three-category, pack-years, and years since cessation) via questionnaires in 6,005 Women's Health Initiative Memory Study participants....

Tue, Jun 09, 2026

[Read more](#)

[Large Language Models for Summarizing Advance Care Planning Information From Goals of Care Notes in the EHR](#)

CONCLUSIONS: LLMs can effectively extract structured ACP information, particularly in well-documented categories, suggesting potential for scalable, data-driven feedback loops that improve the provision of care. However, accuracy challenges remain, and further refinement is needed for nuanced qualitative content categories.

Mon, Jun 08, 2026

[Read more](#)

[Inhibiting glycan degradation prevents HIV-induced inflammaging and cognitive impairment](#)

CONCLUSIONS: These findings implicate glycan degradation as a contributor to inflammation and cognitive impairment in HIV and highlight glycan preservation as a promising strategy to mitigate inflammation, premature aging, and cognitive decline during viral infections.

Fri, Jun 05, 2026

[Read more](#)

We want your feedback!

Did you know that the division has a virtual suggestion box where you can provide anonymous feedback? [You can access that here.](#)

You can also access the virtual suggestion box on the division's [website](#) – scroll to the bottom of the homepage and click on the feedback link.

Not signed up yet? SIGN UP HERE

Please consider donating to our mission. While we continue to make great strides, we are limited on what we can accomplish with existing funds. We encourage you to become involved with the UC San Diego Division of Geriatrics, Gerontology, and Palliative Care. Join us to help older adults live their best lives longer and improve care for individuals with serious illness. By supporting our efforts, you can ensure that our research, education programs, and clinical care keep pace with the needs of our community and remain strong.

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UC San Diego Health

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