

## Winter 2024 Newsletter

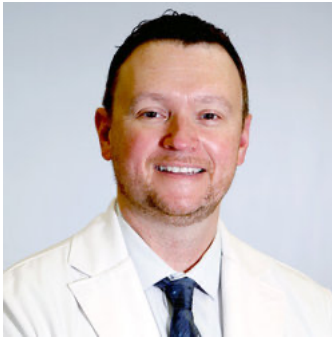
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*The Mary S. Easton Center for Alzheimer's Research and Care at UCLA has very active teams working on basic research, drug discovery, biomarkers for early diagnosis and clinical activity including clinical trials, cognitive testing, and patient care.*

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### Note from Director(s)



**By:** [Jason Hinman, MD, PhD](#), Co-Center Director, Mary S. Easton Center for Alzheimer's Research and Care, and Associate Professor in Residence and Vice Chair of Research, Department of Neurology

Every day the news is filled with information on brain health. From blueberries to yoga to mindfulness as well as new diagnostics and treatments, everyone has a recommendation on how to take care of your brain. Protecting the brain has long been the goal of most neurologists, including those at the Easton Center, but increasingly we have the tools to execute on this goal. With the exciting revolution in Alzheimer's and dementia care happening right now resulting from new drugs and realized treatment options, it is no coincidence that we are seeing an awakening of the importance of valuing one's brain health. The American Academy of Neurology is about to release a paradigm-shifting [policy statement](#) on brain health that will change this challenging topic from something you address with your physician in your 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> decades as symptoms of memory impairment or slowing of motor functions set in, to a topic you address with your child's pediatrician to help take steps to preserve brain health across the lifespan. This seemingly radical idea is driven by the recognized need to take steps much earlier in life to help reduce the risk of cognitive impairment and dementia later in life. The advent, approval, and access to new drugs for Alzheimer's disease (AD) provide a spotlight on this idea as we recognize that not every patient will be eligible for these blockbuster therapies. A variety of conditions combine to drive declines in brain health, some in ways we already understand but many in ways we are just beginning to comprehend. The Easton Center is committed to understanding this diversity of drivers of poor brain health *and* helping everyone realize the best possible brain health for as long as possible.

Later in this newsletter, we highlight some recent work from Easton Center faculty supported by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) aimed at characterizing the diversity of this diversity. How do different racial and ethnic populations in Los Angeles understand the risk factors and new treatment

modalities for Alzheimer’s disease, and how can we improve educational strategies to maximize this understanding? This critical support arises at an equally critical time as we prepare to treat our first patient with Lecanemab at UCLA later this month. Other groundbreaking work in the Center includes the effort of the UCLA Drug Discovery Lab under the leadership of Dr. Varghese John to develop new therapeutic approaches for Alzheimer’s disease. With the pioneering support of the Waxman Family Foundation, Dr. Whitaker Cohn, in the Drug Discovery Lab, will take a promising novel compound developed at UCLA into preclinical animal testing to reduce AD-related neurodegeneration. Also supported by the Waxman Family Foundation, Dr. Jocelyn Soto of the [Khakh Lab](#) will define a role for early changes in astrocytes in an animal model of AD-related neurodegeneration.



**Photo left to right:** Dr. Jeffrey Saver, Ms. Heather Cooper Ortner (AlzLA), Dr. Kacie Deter (2023 Turken Research Award Recipient), Ms. Beth Devermont (Sam and Ida Turken Charitable Foundation), and Dr. Jason Hinman.

In December 2023, the Easton Center and Department of Neurology held the Annual Turken Symposium, highlighting the long-running support of the Sam and Ida Turken Charitable Foundation and Alzheimer’s Los Angeles. The well-attended symposium highlighted the work of the 2022 Turken Award winner, Dr. Eleanor Hayes-Larson, as well as this year’s award winner, [Dr. Kacie Deters](#). Dr. Deters spoke about her identification of important racial differences in the genes that physically border the ApoE risk allele for AD. [Her work](#) has shown that a specific haplotype of the TOMM40 gene adjacent to ApoE is associated with faster cognitive decline in non-Hispanic blacks. This work helps to define the biology that drives the diversity of brain health. Dr. Deters will use the support of being the 2023 Turken Award recipient to expand her research in this area. The Easton Center is proud to support these exciting areas of research and activity in Alzheimer’s disease and looks forward to 2024 filled with more firsts for brain health.

## Profile of Dr. Chang and Colleagues CDPH Grant



Drs. [Timothy Chang, MD PhD](#) (Neurology), Kacie Deters, PhD (Integrative Medicine and Physiology), and Nanibaa' Garrison, PhD (Institute for Society and Genetics) received a four-year Alzheimer's Disease Research Award grant from the California Department Public Health to study how tests used to determine eligibility for new anti-amyloid therapies may vary in different racial and ethnic populations, and develop educational tools for patients and providers that highlight this variability.

Recent FDA-approved anti-amyloid therapies like lecanemab have the promise to reduce the healthcare burden of Alzheimer's disease (AD). These therapies may be particularly beneficial to underrepresented populations disproportionately affected by AD, including Hispanic/Latino, African American, Asian American, Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander, and American Indian or Alaskan Native populations where the prevalence is significantly higher than non-Hispanic white populations. However, the equitable usage of these new anti-amyloid therapies is unlikely due to multiple contributors, including the high cost and the strict inclusion criteria for individuals to receive anti-amyloid therapies.

The main inclusion criteria for anti-amyloid therapies include mild cognitive impairment (MCI) due to AD or early AD, amyloid biomarker positivity using tests such as amyloid brain PET imaging, and recommendations for APOE genetic testing to evaluate the risk of side effects. However, these criteria may vary by racial and ethnic populations. For example, if the amyloid brain PET levels on average are lower in African Americans than in non-Hispanic white populations, then the same cutoff applied to all populations may mean fewer African Americans are eligible for lecanemab. In non-Hispanic white and underrepresented populations, Chang and colleagues aim to (1) develop artificial intelligence models in the electronic health record to identify early Alzheimer's disease; (2) evaluate how family history of Alzheimer's disease and APOE may affect amyloid PET brain results; and (3) evaluate knowledge and develop educational tools on family history and APOE as risk factors for AD and AD therapies from patient, caregivers, and providers. This is important as an improved understanding of how inclusion criteria for anti-amyloid therapies vary by population could lead to inclusion criteria that are adjusted for different populations, ensuring equitable access to these new therapies. Dr. Chang and colleagues' long-term goal is to work toward precision medicine equity, where the right treatment is delivered to the right person at the right time for all populations. The objectives are to assess how the tests used to evaluate inclusion criteria for anti-amyloid therapies may vary by racial and ethnic populations and develop educational tools for patients and providers that highlight this variability.

## New Additions to the Easton Center

Please join us in welcoming new staff members to the Easton Center.



**Photo:** [Brittany Katz, PhD](#), Staff Research Associate III, Vossel Lab

Brittany obtained her doctorate in Neuroscience from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and her B.S. in Biology from Dillard University in New Orleans, where she was a Samuel DuBois Cook Scholar. Her current research goal is to understand how mutations in Tau impact protein interactions, neuronal firing, and network dynamics within the brain.



**Photo:** [Anne Koutures](#), Staff Research Associate, Vossel Lab

Anne has her bachelor's degree in both neuroscience and psychology from Boston University. She previously studied tauopathy and vasculature in chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE) at the Boston University CTE Center. Anne is excited to be continuing her career in neurodegenerative research in the Vossel Lab and Easton Center.

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## Clinical Research Opportunities

If you would like to advance Alzheimer's disease research, please consider being a study participant. Below are the current recruiting trials. For a complete list of enrolling studies, visit our website at <https://eastonad.ucla.edu/>.

### OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES:

- [Alzheimer's Disease Neuroimaging Initiative 4 \(ADNI4\) Protocol](#)
- [Alzheimer's Disease Research Center - Biomarkers in Neurodegenerative Disease \(ADRC-BIND\)](#)
- [ARTFL-LEFFTDS Longitudinal Frontotemporal Lobar Degeneration \(ALLFTD\)](#)
- [Dementia Research, Education, and Advancement in Los Angeles \(DREAM-LA\)](#)
- [The Relationship of Hate to Dehumanization: An Exploration in Neurotypical and Frontotemporal Dementia \(FTD Hate Study\)](#)
- [Modulating Memory with Low-Intensity Focused Ultrasound \(LIFUP-MCIAD\)](#)
- [Biomarkers for Vascular Contributions to Cognitive Impairment and Dementia \(Mark-VCID\)](#)
- [Music Stimulation to Improve Cognition \(MUSIC\)](#)
- [New Imaging Dementia – Evidence for Amyloid Scanning Study \(New IDEAS\)](#)
- [National Institute on Aging Alzheimer's Disease Family Based Study \(NIA-AD-FBS\)](#)
- [UCLA and Harbor-UCLA Discussion Group](#)

## INTERVENTIONAL STUDIES:

- [CELIA Study](#)
- [SUVEN Study](#)

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For more information on our upcoming lectures and events, please visit the Easton Center [Community Calendar](#).

### **Living a Brain-Healthy Lifestyle**

**Date: Tuesday, February 27, 2024**

**Time: 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM (PST)**

**Location: Santa Monica Public Library Main Branch  
601 Santa Monica Boulevard  
Santa Monica, CA 90401**

Did you know that what is good for the body is also good for the brain? Monica Moore, MSG UCLA-Easton Center, will discuss the latest research on what you can do to keep your brain healthy as you age and what we know about ways to reduce your risk of developing dementia. No RSVP. [\[Flyer\]](#)

### **Pacoima Health Fair**

**Date: Saturday, March 2, 2024**

**Time: 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM (PST)**

**Location: Vaughn Next Century Learning Center  
11200 Herrick Avenue  
Pacoima, CA 91331**

ELHA will accompany UCLA's Latino Student Health Project (LSHP) during their annual Winter quarter community health and resource fair at the Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Pacoima, CA. Community members will have the opportunity to receive cost-free health screenings, brain health education, donation items, and more! [\[Flyer\]](#)

### **Alzheimer's Los Angeles Visionary Women's Afternoon Tea**

**Date: Wednesday, March 6, 2024**

**Time: 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM (PST)**

**Location: The London West Hollywood  
1020 N. San Vicente Boulevard  
West Hollywood, CA 90069**

The Mary S. Easton Center for Alzheimer's Research and Care at UCLA is proud to support the Visionary Women's Afternoon Tea, an elegant gathering dedicated to recognizing the unwavering dedication of remarkable women in the fight against Alzheimer's. Join us as we come together to honor extraordinary individuals, share stories of resilience, and make a difference in the lives of those affected by Alzheimer's. To purchase a ticket: <https://www.alzheimersla.org/get-involved/events/visionary-women/>

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### **Update on Alzheimer's Disease Research**

**Date: Thursday, March 14, 2024**

**Time: 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM (PDT)**

**Location: City of Gardena Senior Center**

**1670 West 162<sup>nd</sup> Street**

**Gardena, CA 90247**

Monica Moore, MSG, UCLA Easton Center, will present the latest findings related to the symptoms and causes of dementia and Alzheimer's disease. She will also discuss the latest treatments available, current clinical trials and the research that is being currently conducted to find a cure for this devastating disease. No RSVP.

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### **Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia**

**Date: Thursday, March 28, 2024**

**Time: 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM (PDT)**

**Location: Ahmanson Senior Center**

**3990 Bill Robertson Lane**

**Los Angeles, CA 90037**

In partnership with Alzheimer's Association - Southland Chapter, the Easton Center will provide lunch and education materials, and the Equity for Latinx-Hispanic Healthy Aging (ELHA) Lab will provide additional education/resources in Spanish. Please join the Easton Center and ELHA at this community awareness event with special guest, Congresswoman Sydney Kamlager-Dove. No RSVP.

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### **Macedonia Baptist Church Community Spring Festival**

**Date: Saturday, March 30, 2024**

**Time: 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM (PDT)**

**Location: Macedonia Baptist Church**

**1751 East 114<sup>th</sup> Street**

**Los Angeles, CA 90059**

The Mary S. Easton Center will be supporting community partner, Macedonia Baptist Church in Watts, at their annual Spring Resource and Community Fair. Job resources, health resources, social services information, games, and fun for the whole family! No RSVP.

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## Keiro Caregiver Conference/Japanese American Community Resource Fair

**Date: Saturday, April 13, 2024**

**Time: 8:30 AM – 1:00 AM (PDT)**

**Location: San Fernando Valley Japanese American Community Center**

**12953 Branford Street**

**Pacoima, CA 91331**

The Mary S. Easton Center for Alzheimer's Research and Care at UCLA will be at the Keiro Caregiver Conference/Resource Fair to provide the Japanese American community with educational materials on brain health, dementia, research, clinical trials, and information about where to receive a proper diagnosis and cognitive evaluation. [[Flyer](#)]

Registration is required as capacity will be limited and on a first-come, first-served basis.

Registrations close on Friday, March 29, 2024, 5:00 p.m. PST or before if registrations reach capacity.

Visit: <https://give.keiro.org/event/2024-caregiver-conference/e548021>

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## Brain Health, Alzheimer's, and Community Wellness

**Date: Saturday, April 20, 2024**

**Time: 10:00 AM – 11:00 AM (PDT)**

**Location: Montebello Senior Center**

**115 S. Taylor Avenue**

**Montebello, CA 90640**

The ELHA lab is excited to return to the City of Montebello's Senior Center. The team expects to engage about 60 seniors in a conversation around the latest science for Alzheimer's prevention, brain health education, and community wellness.

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## Newsletter Editorial Team:

Co-Center Directors: [Jason Hinman, MD, PhD](#), and [Jeffrey Saver, MD, FAHA, FAAN, FANA](#)

California Alzheimer's Disease Center (CADC) Director: [Timothy Chang, MD, PhD](#)

Co-Directors of Training and Education Activities: [Monica Moore, MSG](#), [Mirella Díaz-Santos, PhD](#), and [Jennifer Adrissi, MD, MS](#)

Editor: [Nancy Osuch](#)

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## Mailing Address:

Mary S. Easton Center for Alzheimer's Research and Care at UCLA

710 Westwood Plaza, Room C-224

Los Angeles, CA 90095-1769

| <https://eastonad.ucla.edu/> | Center: (310) 794-3665 / Clinic Appointments: (310) 794-1195 |

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