This National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)-funded postdoctoral program is offered by the UCSF Weill Institute for Neuroscience’s Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences. Our program is one of the few that trains scientists in treatment and service research. Scholars work with a preceptor to design and implement studies on treatment of substance use disorders (SUD), including nicotine, cannabis, opioids, and other substances. Scholars also select a specific area of focus for independent research. Current research interests of faculty include trials of efficacy and effectiveness of psychosocial and pharmacologic treatment of substance use disorders, including:

- Substance use disorders including cannabis, tobacco, and opioids
- Innovative methodology, including internet-based studies
- Treatment of complex patients in health care settings
- Diagnostic techniques and research on treatment tailored for HIV-positive substance users with psychiatric and medical disorders
- Research on provision of services to substance-using populations
- Instrument development in substance use treatment
A variety of university-affiliated and community substance use treatment programs are available as research sites. These include inpatient- and outpatient-setting programs that treat a range of problems related to SUD treatment, including dependence on stimulants, cannabis, nicotine, alcohol, and opiates. Our program encourages close research involvement with a preceptor, and involvement in selected classes, seminars, and grant preparation.

The training program is supported in part by the Western States Node of the NIDA Clinical Trials Network. Resources from other significant extramural funding and R01-level grants are also routinely available to scholars.

Our philosophy

Our unifying philosophy is:

1. SUD treatment and services research must be methodologically excellent and clinically relevant.
2. Problems related to substance use are best attacked from a multidisciplinary perspective.
3. Integration of knowledge of various intellectual domains is essential to the development of effective treatment.

Because our philosophy implies that the quality of the postdoctoral program depends on the quality of the scholars, faculty, and environment, rather than on any particular class or activity, we energetically recruit to obtain high-quality applicants into a research environment where they will work under the guidance of research-sophisticated investigators.

Program faculty

Our postdoctoral program is directed by a five-member site directors group, an executive committee, and core faculty, representing psychiatry, public health and policy, behavioral sciences, medicine, and biostatistics. They represent a diverse, but overlapping, range of research interests.

Program faculty are:

- **Program Directors (also Faculty Mentors)**
  - James L. Sorensen, PhD [3] (Zuckerberg San Francisco General Hospital and Trauma Center)
  - Derek Satre, PhD [4] (Langley Porter Psychiatric Hospital and Clinics; Kaiser Permanente Division of Research)

- **Site Directors (also Faculty Mentors)**
  - Steven Batki, MD [5] (San Francisco VA Health Care System)
  - Marina Tolou-Shams, PhD [6] (Zuckerberg San Francisco General)
  - Janice Y. Tsoh, PhD [7] (Langley Porter Psychiatric Hospital and Clinics)

- **Executive Committee Members (also Faculty Mentors)**
Postdoctoral training program

Each year, scholars participate in a core Postdoctoral Research Seminar and the Writers’ Task Force—a group that facilitates, supports, and encourages the publication of manuscripts.
As part of their research training, scholars interact daily with investigators who guide them in responsible conduct of research and in solving the special ethical dilemmas of treatment and clinical research. Most scholars also take one of the several advanced statistics courses offered by the UCSF Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics. Scholars' research projects and those of their mentors are closely tied. As scholars move from Year 1 to Year 2, they progress from a project designed by their mentor to a more independently conceived project, which they lead.

Goals for postdoctoral scholars

At the end of our postdoctoral program, scholars are expected to have acquired the following competencies and completed the following tasks:

1. Gained knowledge of substance use and its treatment
2. Advanced their knowledge of statistical and methodological techniques needed for clinical and services research
3. Understand SUD treatment systems and substance research projects
4. Conducted at least two research projects in a clinical setting (one designed by their preceptor; and one of their own design, for which they have primary responsibility)
5. Made multiple internal presentations
6. Made at least two presentations of their work at national meetings
7. Published one to three journal articles
8. Submitted a small grant application to local funding sources
9. Published additional manuscripts from the work completed as a scholar during the two years following enrollment in our program

Support for postdoctoral scholars

Scholars are funded by multiple sources. Stipend levels are set by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), based on years of related experience. Scholars are provided with other research support, including travel to at least one annual professional meeting and other support required for a useful training experience, including statistical consulting, some administrative and clerical support, and access to computers for writing and data analyses.

Background of former postdoctoral scholars

Our postdoctoral scholars have come from a variety of fields, including clinical psychology, counseling psychology, developmental psychology, neuroscience, nursing, political science, psychiatry, pharmacology, public health, social work, and social psychology. Recent trainee research projects include:

- Studies of social media-based interventions
- Studies of how substance use affects HIV pre-exposure prophylaxis adherence
- Treatment challenges for justice-involved youth
- Research on substance use among sexual and gender minority people
- Development of computerized substance use screening in health care settings
- Vocational issues among methadone outpatients
• Social identities and treatment outcomes among alcohol and cocaine users in private treatment
• The effects of acute nicotine use on cue-induced cocaine craving
• Mood management intervention for injection drug use patients
• Childhood trauma and PTSD in inpatient substance use treatment
• Studies of the relationship of readiness to change and depression to nicotine dependence
• Studies of service utilization and outcome among older adult substance users
• Studies of drug and alcohol treatment within integrated health care systems

Success of our postdoctoral graduates

We admit two to four scholars each year. Graduates of our postdoctoral program have been placed at numerous high-caliber institutions where research is valued.

Application process

Please direct information requests, application packets, and letters of recommendation submissions to Jaime Smith at jaime.smith@ucsf.edu.

For consideration into the postdoctoral program, please send an application packet consisting of your (1) cover letter, (2) curriculum vitae, (3) statement of research interests, and (4) representative work. Statement of research interests should include the following items:

1. History of research projects
2. Current interests
3. What you would like to learn and accomplish during your postdoctoral traineeship at UCSF
4. A list of program faculty with whom you would like to work

Download a copy of the program flyer.

Two letters of reference should be sent directly from the recommenders.
Representative work can include dissertation chapters if no publications are available. Electronic submission of materials (except reference letters) is strongly encouraged. The application period is open until filled.

*All applicants must have completed their doctorate at the time of entry into the program and be a U.S. citizen or have Lawful Permanent Residency (Green Card) status at the time of appointment.*

**Useful resources and links**

- Frequently asked questions about the mentorship process and applying to our program [45]
- UCSF Office for Postdoctoral Scholars [46]
- Postdoctoral appointment and benefits plan information [47]
- UCSF Campus Life Services [48] (information on housing, fitness and recreation, shuttle transportation, and more)

**Current postdoctoral scholars**

**Gabrielle Agin-Liebes, PhD [49]**

Gabby Agin-Liebes received her PhD in clinical psychology from Palo Alto University in 2020. Her doctoral research focused on the clinical applications of psilocybin-assisted therapy and mindful self-compassion-based interventions to treat mood, substance use, and trauma-based disorders. Gabby’s work draws on quantitative and qualitative methodologies to explore underlying psychological and neurobiological mechanisms responsible for catalyzing behavioral changes, including emotion regulation, meta-awareness, and prosociality. During her T32 fellowship at UCSF, Gabby’s research is focused on the use of opioid replacement therapies to treat opioid use disorder and chronic pain. She is also exploring the use of behavioral paradigms (delay discounting) and other therapeutic interventions to help prevent relapse and restructure dysregulated motivational reward systems involved in addiction. She was appointed to the T32 program in September 2020.
**Monique Cano, PhD** [50]

Monique T. Cano received her PhD in clinical psychology from Palo Alto University in 2020. She is now a research postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Psychiatry and Weil Institute for Neurosciences working with Dr. David Pennington and Dr. Steven Batki at the San Francisco VA Health Care System (SFVAHCS). Monique’s primary research interests include adapting and implementing culturally appropriate health-related interventions for underserved populations who suffer from co-occurring disorders. Her work at the SFVAHCS is focused on testing and implementing health-related interventions utilizing technological platforms that are culturally appropriate to address the needs of patients with co-occurring disorders. Monique is also working with Dr. Pennington on outreach efforts to rural communities with a focus on indigenous populations. She was appointed to the Postdoctoral Traineeship in Substance Use Disorders Treatment and Services Research in August 2020.

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**Jennifer Jain, PhD, MPH** [51]

Jennifer Jain, PhD, MPH, is an early stage investigator and substance use researcher with training in epidemiological methods. She completed her doctoral training at UC San Diego, where she examined the behavioral and contextual factors that shape HIV risk environments among people who inject drugs in Mexico. She has experience testing integrative interventions for substance users who are HIV-positive or at high-risk of acquiring HIV, other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and or hepatitis C. Additionally, she has experience measuring behavioral, structural and environmental factors (e.g. limited access to HIV/STI testing and treatment, homelessness, gender-based violence) that exacerbate HIV/STIs and hepatitis C transmission among people who use drugs. Her current research interests involve advancing intervention science for women who use drugs and designing sex-specific interventions to reduce the individual and community level harms associated with drug use. She was appointed to the program on February 1, 2020.
Caravella McCuistian, PhD

Caravella McCuistian received her doctoral degree in psychology from the University of Cincinnati in August 2019. Her research interests include addressing health disparities among underserved populations including racial/ethnic minorities, women, individuals living with HIV, and substance-using populations. She has conducted research that utilizes community-engaged methodology, including community-based participatory research, to develop behavioral interventions to improve sexual health. These interventions target HIV prevention and sexual risk reduction in a culturally informed way for women who use substances as well as women engaged in transactional sex. Dr. McCuistian is also interested in addressing health disparities in novel ways and has contributed to research aimed at developing interventions for individuals within substance use treatment facilities as well as leveraging technology to provide interventions to underserved communities.

Recent graduates

Alexis Cooke, PhD

Alexis Cooke received her PhD in public health from UCLA in 2017 and is now a postdoctoral fellow in substance use disorders treatment and services research in the Department of Psychiatry working with Kelly Knight, PhD. Alexis’ research interests are related to understanding the social ecology of urban life through substance use. Her research and professional interests revolve around examining the behaviors, activities, and relationships that communities engage in to deal with the impacts of poverty and inequitable social structures. Alexis’ work is focused on examining the implementation of programs, interventions and policies developed to address these issues and identifying leverage points that are the most impactful to health. She was appointed to the program on August 1, 2017.
Thibaut Davy-Mendez, PhD

Thibaut Davy-Mendez received his PhD in epidemiology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2020. He previously obtained an MS in public health at UNC Chapel Hill and a BA in political science at McGill University. Thibaut’s research focuses on leveraging electronic health databases and clinical cohorts to inform the clinical care of persons living with HIV. His work has included studies on antiretroviral regimens, drug resistance, opioid misuse, and hospitalizations. Thibaut joined UCSF as a postdoctoral fellow in August 2020. During his fellowship, he led two studies among persons receiving HIV care in Kaiser Permanente Northern California. One study compared rates of behavioral and pharmacologic treatment for alcohol use disorder between patients with and without HIV. The second study examined demographics and comorbidities associated with different patterns of unhealthy alcohol use in patients with HIV, and longitudinal outcomes such as alcohol use reduction and progression to alcohol use disorder. Thibaut also led an analysis of non-fatal stimulant overdose rates in a study of unstably housed women in San Francisco. After the fellowship, Thibaut will start a faculty position in the UNC Chapel Hill School of Medicine, where he will continue to conduct research on HIV, comorbidities, and substance use.

J. Konadu Fokuo, PhD

J. Konadu Fokuo (pronounced: Koonaydoo Foecuoh) was a postdoctoral fellow at UCSF in the substance use and minority health cluster at Zuckerberg San Francisco General. She completed her doctoral education in clinical and rehabilitation psychology at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Konadu’s research interest is primarily in reducing stigma (structural, public, and self) as a barrier to health service utilization for stigmatized populations such as patients with severe mental illness and patients with substance use disorders. Her research explores ethics, educational curricula, and health equity to develop and assess culturally sensitive anti-stigma programs.
Carlo Hojilla, RN, PhD

Carlo Hojilla received his doctoral degree in nursing at UCSF in May 2017. Carlo?s primary research focus is on biomedical HIV prevention strategies that reach marginalized subgroups most at risk for HIV. In particular, he is interested in examining the psychosocial determinants of sub-optimal PrEP use, stimulant and alcohol use, and behavioral changes in the context of PrEP use. Carlo is the principal investigator on an NIDA R36 Drug Abuse Dissertation Grant, investigating and identifying risk factors for suboptimal PrEP use in the iPrEx Open Label Extension using biomarker-confirmed drug and alcohol use and medication adherence. He completed the program on Amy 31, 2021.

Anna Harrison, PhD

Anna Harrison received her PhD in clinical psychology from Northwestern University in 2016, where she studied the effects of incarceration on mental health and substance use. She completed her predoctoral clinical internship at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. During her time in the postdoctoral fellowship program, Dr. Harrison worked to disseminate substance use treatments to youth involved in the justice system. Her current research interests include developing digital health interventions to improve substance use treatment for justice-involved populations. Dr. Harrison will be working as a suicide prevention psychologist in the San Francisco VA Health Care System.
Meredith Meacham, PhD, MPH

Meredith Meacham, PhD, MPH, is an epidemiologist who uses multidisciplinary analytic methods to understand patterns of polysubstance use and related health conditions (e.g., substance use disorders, overdose, mental illness, HIV). As a postdoctoral fellow, she contributes to development and analysis of tailored smoking cessation interventions delivered through social media with Danielle Ramo, PhD; works on cohort studies examining the health of unstably housed women with Elise Riley, PhD; and designs text analysis projects to explore how people who use cannabis use social media and online communities to seek and share health information. She earned her PhD in public health (global health) from the University of California San Diego/San Diego State University Joint Doctoral Program, with a dissertation on polydrug use and risk of HIV and overdose in the U.S.-Mexico border region. Meredith also has an MPH from the University of Washington and an AB from the University of Chicago. She completed the program on December 31, 2018.

Erin Vogel, PhD

Erin Vogel is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Stanford Prevention Research Center, where her current lines of research involve adolescent e-cigarette use, social media and digital health, and tobacco use disparities in the LGBTQ+ community. During her time as a postdoctoral fellow at UCSF, she was funded by an individual fellowship award through the Tobacco-Related Diseases Research Program and a member of the Research on Addictions and Digital Interventions lab (principal investigator: Danielle Ramo, PhD). Dr. Vogel completed her PhD in experimental (social) psychology at the University of Toledo (Toledo, Ohio) in May 2017. Her personal website can be found at erin-vogel.com.
Juliet Yonek, PhD

Juliet Yonek received her PhD in health services and outcomes research from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in September 2016. She also holds an MPH in epidemiology and biostatistics from San Diego State University. She was appointed to the fellowship in October 2018, under the mentorship of Marina Tolou-Shams, PhD. Juliet’s primary research focuses on the integration of substance use and mental health services in pediatric primary care settings that serve vulnerable youth. In particular, she is interested in how digital health technologies can facilitate implementation of integrated services in these settings. She also contributes to research focused on improving substance use and mental health treatment initiation, engagement and outcomes among justice-involved youth.