



## OUR FOUNDATION

By Barbara J. Zarowitz, PharmD, FCCP, BCGP, BCPS, FASCP

### Advancing Clinical Resources, Education, and Workforce Sustainability Through Research in Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine

This year marks a historic time for post-acute and long-term care clinicians and facilities who have long wished for funding to improve the quality of care for older adults in post-acute and long-term care (PALTC) settings. In response, the Foundation for PALTC Medicine budgeted funds to support high-quality research that aligns with the Foundation's goals and vision. These studies can represent a pilot project, a small-in-scope research question, or a small aim within a larger research program.

The Foundation's mission is to support the advancement of education, clinical resources, workforce, and research. The 2022–2024 Foundation Strategic Plan outlines a number of areas to increase clinical resources; identify and fill gaps in educational needs for PALTC clinicians; and promote workforce programs in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Studies toward these ends underwent rigorous review this year.

The Foundation is delighted to announce the winning proposal, "The Impact of Indoor Ventilation on COVID-19 Outcomes in U.S.

Nursing Homes," from the University of Rochester Medical Center. Brian E. McGarry, PT, PhD, and Ashvin D. Gandhi, PhD, co-principal investigators, have a well-established research program. Together, they are tackling environmental factors such as air quality and how air filtration systems can improve the safety of residents in nursing homes. Drs. McGarry and Gandhi have an excellent track record of producing high-quality, impactful research on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on U.S. nursing homes. To learn more about this study, please watch Dr. McGarry's brief video discussing his research at [www.paltc-foundation.org](http://www.paltc-foundation.org).

#### Research Application and Review Process

The application process is a two-step procedure. First, we request that you provide basic descriptive information in a brief "Letter of Inquiry." Second, if your project is selected for a full review, we ask that you submit an extensive protocol, similar to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) format. This year we

received 26 Letters of Inquiry reflecting a wide range of topics and research methods. Some proposals were descriptive in nature; others proposed to test hypothesis-driven research questions in a randomized, controlled process.

The Foundation's process allows for funding of one to two larger grants (up to \$25,000) or several smaller grants (up to \$10,000). The submitted grant budgets must specify how the funds will be allocated, outline the existing funding, and indicate that the research grant can be completed with the awarded and existing funds over 12 months. Indirect costs are not covered.

The Proposal Review Committee members reviewed the proposals and used a ranking system to select 11 Letters of Inquiry (42%) for the next step of the process. The investigators of these selected proposals then submitted their full protocols and we reviewed and graded them using the NIH format. Although each proposal was assigned a primary and secondary reviewer, all committee members voted to select the "winning" proposals, and those with

a potential conflict of interest recused themselves from voting on that proposal.

The committee evaluated each proposal to determine:

- Significance of the work;
- Alignment with stakeholder priorities;
- Investigator(s) capabilities;
- Innovation;
- Methodological approach — scientific and technical merit;
- Environment of the research — support of the investigator(s);
- Health equity, diversity, and inclusion; and
- Budget.

The Foundation selected the highest quality winning project for funding. The award was granted on September 1, 2022, and the funds must be spent and the research project completed by September 1, 2023.

#### Special Projects and Initiatives

In addition to funding research proposals, the Foundation cosponsors special

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## Winner of 2022 Cowles Award Draws Attention to a COVID-19 Injustice

By Tess Bird, DPhil

The 2022 Carey Cowles Award goes to Alan Horowitz, JD, RN, for "The Long and Winding Road: Life Care Center–Kirkland's Journey for Justice" (*Caring for the Ages* 2021;23[2]:16). The award recognizes the author of the most read/downloaded article of the year and was established in memory of Carey Cowles, *Caring's* managing editor for four years, who passed away in 2018.

Mr. Horowitz writes on legal issues for *Caring* as well as other long-term care publications. He has worked in law for 32 years and is currently Of Counsel at Arnall Golden Gregory LLP. His practice involves regulatory compliance concerning skilled nursing facilities, hospices, and home health agencies. He previously served as assistant regional counsel at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and has represented the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. Earlier in his career, he was employed as a registered respiratory therapist and a registered nurse.

The winning article addresses the adverse publicity around Life Care Center–Kirkland (LCCK), which was the first reported nursing home to have an outbreak of COVID-19 and was issued a citation by CMS at the

"immediate jeopardy" level, resulting in a civil money penalty of \$611,325. The state of Washington also imposed "conditions" on LCCK's license and a "Stop Admissions" order.

Mr. Horowitz told *Caring* that he wrote this article after being privy to the facts of this particular case. "It appeared to me that the folks at LCCK were really heroes," he said. At the time of the outbreak, "there were mixed messages in terms of what CMS, the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention], and the state departments of health were recommending." Nevertheless, the staff at LCCK "were being very proactive, they did everything appropriately, and they really got slammed. I thought it was unfair for CMS to find immediate jeopardy level deficiencies and impose a civil money penalty."

Mr. Horowitz expressed there was a shared responsibility in this case and heaping the blame on LCCK was not helpful. "We learned a lot of lessons from COVID-19," he said, "and I don't believe the blame game is the most effective way to improve patient safety."

This theme is echoed in another Legal Issues column published in the June/July 2022 issue of *Caring*, in which Mr. Horowitz argued that we need to address

systemic flaws rather than blame individual health care practitioners if we want to encourage patient safety. His article, "Medication Errors and Homicide: When Law and Medicine Collide," was another of *Caring's* most-read articles of 2022. Mr. Horowitz also recently presented on the "Legal Aspects of Medical Errors: To Disclose or Not to Disclose" at the EDGE conference.

In conversation with *Caring*, Mr. Horowitz said, "Through COVID-19 we saw heroic acts in nursing homes on a daily basis — and while lip service is often paid, it has always troubled me when I see the system or individual entities pointing a finger and engaging in the blame and shame game rather than trying to find constructive solutions. That's why I write these articles."

Mr. Horowitz also feels that all staff in long-term care "are not given the recognition that they so richly deserve," particularly as they are caring for individuals with multiple comorbidities, cognitive impairment, distressed families, staffing challenges, and other less-than-perfect circumstances. "I think it takes a very special person to want to do that."

*Caring's* editor in chief Elizabeth Galik writes that "Alan's knowledge

and personal experience with health care makes him well prepared to analyze and provide guidance on complex legal issues that impact [post-acute and long-term care] communities. Alan's article obviously struck a chord with so many readers and helped to validate the challenging circumstances that were encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic."

On winning the Carey Cowles Award, Mr. Horowitz said, "I am truly humbled by this honor. I was introduced to AMDA more than ten years ago, and in getting to know some of the AMDA members over the years, I'm just so impressed with what they do. It's a genuine privilege and an honor to be involved."

Stay tuned for Mr. Horowitz's presentation with Karl E. Steinberg, MD, CMD, HMDC, and Patricia L. Bach, PsyD, MS, RN, at AMDA – The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine's Annual Conference in March 2023, entitled "Medical, Legal and Ethical Aspects of Medical Aid In Dying (MAID)." 

Tess Bird, DPhil, is the current managing editor of *Caring for the Ages*.