



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.

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*.

NEWS FROM THE SOCIETY

Foundation Grant Funds Innovative Project on Indoor Air Quality

Before the pandemic, air quality and the possibility of infrastructure changes to improve it were low on the list of priorities for nursing home leaders. However, after COVID hit, it garnered more interest and attention. “We used to think about this as a quality-of-life issue at best, but it has significant health implications,” said Brian McGarry, PhD, assistant professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of Rochester Medical Center. He and his colleague Ashvin Gandhi, PhD, at the Anderson School at UCLA, recently received a \$25,000 grant from the Foundation for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Medicine for their proposed project, The Impact of Indoor Air Quality in U.S. Nursing Homes on COVID-19 Outbreaks and Resident Outcomes. (Watch the interview with Dr. McGarry here: https://youtu.be/Rwo2E_EMdL0)

This project will investigate and oversee the development and distribution of a survey and the implementation of 20 wireless air-quality monitors at 10 partnering nursing homes to analyze data, prepare a manuscript, and disseminate the results. “There is general interest in this topic in all sorts of workplace settings. However, having good indoor air quality is critically important for the long-term care population because they spend the majority of their time in their facilities,” Dr. McGarry said.

The idea for this project rose out of the pandemic. As Dr. McGarry explained, “My colleagues and I have done a number of studies throughout the pandemic about what was happening in real time. As we shifted away from crisis mode, we have looked at what worked and what could have been done differently. Air quality came up in many conversations we had [with clinicians and other facility team leaders],” he recalls. Nursing homes were being bombarded with ads about air filters and HVAC system upgrades, he explains. Facility leaders want to improve air quality but want to know: What costs will be involved? What are the most effective changes or

upgrade to make? How do we determine the best investment in these efforts?

“If we are to answer these questions, we need really strong data, and we need to know about what nursing homes have done to improve air quality. Such studies involve some expense, and the AMDA Foundation grant will be a great help,” said Dr. McGarry. “We feel very aligned between the goals of the Foundation regarding research and what we wanted to do. We are delighted to get this award, and it will be very helpful in terms of primary data collection. We hope to have some results soon.”

Dr. McGarry noted, “We have had to do a crash course on air quality. We’ve talked to many people who are experts. We’ve learned that air quality—even temperature—can have an impact on health issues such as cognitive performance and mood.”

Based on early conversations with a small number of nursing homes, Dr. McGarry said, “We’ve found that facilities tried many things to improve air quality during the pandemic, including upgrading filters and opening windows. The next piece will be looking at what worked and what didn’t. This isn’t just a watershed moment in nursing homes. It’s an opportunity to learn more about how to care for and keep residents safe in communal environments.”

The Foundation grant, Dr. McGarry explained, enables him and Dr. Gandhi to get started on their project right away. “Often with research projects, there is a lag between applying for a grant and availability of funding. Having smaller mechanisms such as this is so important, and we appreciate that the Foundation is willing to invest in innovative ideas,” he said. He looks forward to presenting some preliminary results at PALTC23 in Tampa, FL. He explained, “The AMDA conference is an excellent venue to present our results, and it’s important to address the role of the medical director in this. Often, AMDA members are my eyes and ears into how things are working in nursing homes.”

JAMDA Goes E-Only in 2023

Beginning in 2023, the *Journal of the American Medical Directors Association (JAMDA)* will become an online-only publication. Most academic journals have ceased print publication in recent years, and after 23 years of publishing in print, it is now time for *JAMDA* to also make the move to online-only.

AMDA - The Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care members will

automatically receive a monthly electronic Table of Contents alert that includes direct links to the articles available online on www.JAMDA.com. You do not have to do anything to sign up for this if you are already a Society member.

Please do not hesitate to contact Ellen Mullally at emullally@paltc.org with questions.

DON'T MISS THESE EVENTS

November 3-6, 2022

FMDA: Best Care Practices in the PALTC Continuum

Website: <https://www.bestcarepractices.org/>

November 9, 2022

Webinar: Medicare Billing and Coding Update

Website: <https://bit.ly/3rxrmRr>

November 11, 2022

NYMDA Fall Education Meeting

Website: <https://www.nymda.org/education-meeting>

November 17, 2022

AMDA Drive to Deprescribe Meeting

Website: <https://bit.ly/3zq5Ket>

November 18-19, 2022

Mid-Atlantic Society for Post-Acute and Long-Term Care Conference

Hanover, MD

Website: <https://bit.ly/3xtNxeK>

November 18-20, 2022

AMDA Virtual Fall Core Synthesis

Website: <https://bit.ly/3yYr2OM>

December 15, 2022

AMDA Drive to Deprescribe Meeting

Website: <https://bit.ly/3zq5Ket>

January 28, 2023

ALMDA Mid-Winter Conference Birmingham, AL

Website: <https://bit.ly/3T3FeP6>

March 9-12, 2023

PALTC23

Tampa, FL

Website: <https://bit.ly/3QXC1iE>

April 28, 2023

CMDA Annual Conference

Website: <https://cmda.us/event-4819273>

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projects or initiatives for AMDA – The Society for PALTC Medicine. Similar to the process for submission of research proposals, funds for special projects can be requested through the Society.

In 2021, the Foundation cofunded the national Drive to Deprescribe (D2D) initiative and sponsored the addition of four clinical assessment tools to the AMDA Mobile App. Both projects resulted in products and services that have been very well received by the Society’s members and others in the PALTC community. This year, five proposals have been submitted by the Society for consideration of funding by the Foundation. A decision will be made in the fourth quarter of 2022.

Funding for research proposals and special projects comes from donations made by individual and corporate donors dedicated to advancing the field and the Foundation’s mission. For further information on our grant process, please visit our site (<https://paltcfoundation.org/paltc-grants/>) or attend my roundtable session at the PALTC23 Annual Conference in Tampa in March 2023, where I will be sharing more information on how to structure a grant submission.

Appreciation

The Foundation and the Society would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Proposal Review Committee for their dedicated efforts.

The 2022–2024 Proposal Review Committee consists of representatives from the Society’s boards as well as independent research investigators with a broad set of skills and experience in public health, healthy policy, and clinical management of older adults.

We would also like to thank the individual and corporate donors who make the Foundation a priority in their annual philanthropic plans because these donations make it possible for us to conduct this national effort in support of innovation and excellence in PALTC. Together we are making a better PALTC world.

Your Support

For more information on how to support the Foundation now during its “Giving Thanks for PALTC Campaign” and to honor someone this holiday season with your donation please visit <https://paltcfoundation.org>. Those honored will receive a seasonal themed notice of their gift and will be listed on the 2022–2023 Wall of Caring & Honor. Donations can be designated to fund Education and Training, Workforce Development, Clinical Resources, or Research, or they can be unrestricted to serve the Foundation’s response to needs as they arise.

Dr. Zarowitz is the Senior Advisor for the Peter Lamy Center on Drug Therapy and Aging at the University of Maryland. She serves on the Foundation for PALTC Medicine and chairs the Proposal Review Committee.