

Message from the Director

We all are seeking to define a “new normal” during the COVID19 pandemic. Not only in our personal lives, such as the impact to schools, travel, and social functions, but also how we deliver medicine and conduct research. Even greater impact is the social justice movement throughout the country. While all these issues have introduced new stressors, we can also appreciate the embedded benefits. We are seeing incredible innovation around how we deliver care, keeping quality and safety at the forefront. We can ensure such innovations create a platform for healthcare equity. Most important, we are having those crucial conversations to take the next actionable steps to ensure respect for all, equality, and equity. We all hold a meaningful piece to our own solutions.

This past summer has seen incredible innovation at UK Division of Population Medicine. We welcomed Dr. Gipson-Reichardt to our faculty, whose research surrounding the neurobiological mechanisms of substance use has already revealed promising options for developing therapies and improving outcomes. Additionally, our research teams at both the Turfland and Hazard clinics were awarded a grant aimed at expanding and improving residency training in rural areas.

We remain committed to quality in our service to our communities, especially during these trying times.

Roberto Cardarelli, DO, MHA, MPH



Population Medicine New Faculty



Cassandra Gipson-Reichardt, PhD joined the Department of Family & Community Medicine in the summer of 2020. Her lab focuses on glutamatergic, dopaminergic, neuroimmune, and ovarian hormone mechanisms underlying addiction to various drugs of abuse during young adulthood and during the female reproductive transition

of menopause. Dr. Gipson-Reichardt's projects focus on nicotine, heroin, and oxycodone/cocaine co-use, utilizing both in vivo and in vitro methodologies to study rapid alterations in synaptic plasticity (measured as changes in dendritic spines or AMPA/NMDA current ratios using whole cell patch clamp electrophysiology) during or immediately following behavior (specifically, during reinstatement of drug seeking in a preclinical rodent model of relapse). To date, her work has revealed novel neurobiological mechanisms of nicotine addiction, and has the potential to contribute to the development of novel therapeutic options aimed at reversing nicotine-induced alterations and thus improve smoking cessation outcomes. This work has resulted in translational collaborations to examine clinical efficacy of pharmacotherapeutics in promoting smoking cessation.

UK Research Teams awarded grant to enhance rural residency program

Continuing the Department of Family & Community Medicine's long-standing history of funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Dr. Carol Hustedde in the Division of Population Medicine will be leading a five-year HRSA-funded project aimed at enhancing the DFCM's residency program in Hazard through recruitment and training of family medicine physicians to practice in the underserved Appalachian regions of Kentucky.

The residents will participate in focused training to mitigate the critical health problems that are characteristic of the area: opioid use disorders, scarcity of mental health services, and lack of access to primary care.

These kinds of opportunities are more important now than ever, and offer a chance to truly re-evaluate and reimagine how different types of care are delivered in areas where it's needed the most.

