

Keck School of Medicine promotes patient diversity in cardiac surgery clinical trials

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Michael Bowdish, MD, MS, principal investigator and recipient of the \$4.5 million grant from the NHLBI Credit: Ricardo Carrasco III, Keck Medicine of USC

A highly competitive \$4.5 million grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) will support Keck School of Medicine of USC efforts to recruit patients

from underrepresented populations into cardiac surgery clinical trials. The seven-year grant funds the Keck School's ongoing research contributions to the Cardiothoracic Surgical Trials Network (CTSN), the formal NIH infrastructure for conducting major clinical trials in cardiac surgery. The grant also establishes an implementation science training program to address the critical need to develop methods to translate clinical research findings into clinical practice.

Clinical trials provide researchers with insight into how people are likely to respond to medical interventions, including surgery. Factors such as age, weight, genetics, ethnic origin and geographic location all play a role in how a person may react to different treatments. For that reason, representation of diverse patient populations in clinical trials enables researchers to better address public health concerns.

"Nearly half of Los Angeles residents are Hispanic, making the Keck School uniquely positioned to recruit a large, underrepresented population in [cardiac surgery](#) trials," says principal investigator Michael Bowdish, MD, MS, associate professor of surgery and preventive medicine at the Keck School. "By increasing patient diversity in cardiac surgery [clinical trials](#), we are better suited to address [cardiovascular disease](#), the No. 1 cause of mortality in the United States."

The Keck School, through relationships with the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, will recruit potential patients from areas with a large Hispanic presence, according to Bowdish. Potential patients also will be identified through the Southern California Clinical and Translational Science Institute (SC CTSI), which provides outreach and education to more than 30 predominantly Hispanic community health organizations in Los Angeles.

"Addressing the cardiovascular needs of our community is top priority," says Vaughn A. Starnes, MD, Chair and Distinguished Professor of

Surgery and H. Russell Smith Foundation Chair for Stem Cell and Cardiovascular Thoracic Research at the Keck School. "This [prestigious award](#) provides us with valuable resources to discover novel and innovative therapies to improve the [health](#) of our Los Angeles community and beyond."

The Keck School will collaborate with Saint Luke's Mid America Heart Institute in Kansas City, Missouri, as Linked Clinical Research Centers. This expands the patient pool for gathering and assessing data, enabling researchers to achieve stronger and more definitive research results, according to Bowdish.

In addition, the implementation science training program, under the leadership of Cecilia Patino-Sutton, MD, Ph.D., MEd, associate professor of preventive medicine at the Keck School, will explore novel ways to translate findings from clinical research in cardiac surgery into clinical practice. The program also will leverage collaborative relationships between the Keck School, SC CTSI, the USC Gehr Family Center for Health Systems Science, and the USC Leonard D. Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics, as well as the Mid America Heart Institute Cardiovascular Research Fellowship.

Provided by University of Southern California

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