RESEARCH ROUNDUP

Floyd School of Medicine **University of South Carolina**

Research Newsletter

By the Floyd School of Medicine Office of Research ● Nov 12, 2026

Smart Brevity® count: 4 mins...1012 words

👋 Welcome to the November 2026 edition of the Research Roundup where we share important updates and research news to keep you in the know.

In this edition, celebrate exciting research accomplishments from Floyd School of Medicine students and faculty, explore funding opportunities, and discover upcoming meetings and symposia to support your research interests!

Research Spotlights

PRISMA
Prisma Health
Outstanding Medical Student Research
PRISMA HEALTH

Drs. Desmond Kelly, MD (left) and Alain Litwin, MD (right) present the Outstanding Medical Student Research Award to Brady Cawthon (middle).

🏆 SOAR Student Earns Two Research Awards at PHERI Showcase

Congratulations to **Brady Cawthon**, second-year medical student and SOAR participant at the Floyd School of Medicine, who received both **Outstanding Medical Student Research** and **Best Overall Research** at the October 30 PHERI Showcase! 👏

Brady's project, *"Pan-Cancer Analysis of JAK3 Variants Identifies Significant Racial Differences in a Regionally Representative Cancer Cohort,"* examined racial differences in genetic variant frequencies across multiple cancer types. His findings highlight important patterns that may help address the underrepresentation of Black patients in cancer genomics research.

This research reflects a true collaborative effort involving Brady's SOAR mentor, Dr. Anna Blenda of the School of Medicine Greenville, our Floyd School of Medicine statistician, an undergraduate student from Davidson College, and researchers from the Prisma Health Cancer Institute.

We are incredibly proud of Brady's accomplishments and grateful to Dr. Blenda and her research team for their mentorship and collaboration! 🎉

PRISMA HEALTH
ACADEMIC PARTNER RESEARCH AWARD
Lisa Knight, MD
PRISMA HEALTH

Dr. Alain Litwin, MD (left) and Eboni Martez, MBA, MSW, CMPE (right) present the Prisma Health Academic Partner Research Award to Lisa Knight, MD (middle).

🏆 Dr. Lisa Knight Receives Academic Partner Research Award

Congratulations to Lisa Marie Knight, M.D., Clinical Assistant Professor at the Floyd School of Medicine, who received the **Prisma Health Academic Partner Research Award** at the October 30 PHERI Showcase! 👏

Dr. Knight, a pediatric endocrinologist and Director of Research for the Department of Pediatrics at Prisma Health Midlands, was recognized for her excellence in research, leadership, and commitment to advancing pediatric health. **Her accomplishments include securing competitive NIH funding for pediatric obesity research, expanding clinical research opportunities, and fostering collaboration among investigators.**

Through her research and leadership, Dr. Knight continues to strengthen the academic partnership between the Floyd School of Medicine and Prisma Health. 🎉

Leonardo Bonilha, M.D., Ph.D. (left), Kasie Roark (middle) and Homayoun Valafar, Ph.D. (right)

🤖 New Grant to Expand AI Education at the Floyd School of Medicine

Leonardo Bonilha, M.D., Ph.D., Dorothea Krebs Professor of Neurology at the Floyd School of Medicine, and Homayoun Valafar, Ph.D., Bank of America Professor and Chair at the Molinaroli College of Engineering and Computing, have received funding to expand AI education for medical students and researchers at USC! 🎉

This project is supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) through the South Carolina AI-Ready Healthcare Workforce ADAPT in SC initiative.

With support from USC's AI Institute, the grant will build upon the Floyd School of Medicine's AI in Medicine Extracurricular Track, led by Program Director Kasie Roark, and introduce specialized training in AI applications for brain health research.

The initiative aims to equip future physicians and researchers with the skills to effectively use emerging AI technologies in medical research and clinical practice. 💪 👩‍⚕️

More Funding Wins 💸

- **Sam Walther**, and his mentor **Ana Pocivavsek, Ph.D.**, (PPN) received a highly competitive American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) Foundation 2026 Rising Investigator Supplement Grant. This project entitled "*Adolescent Sleep Loss, Kynurenic Acid, and Fear Extinction: Implications for PTSD*" provides two years of stipend support from the AASM Foundation.
- The National Institutes of Health **awarded $21.3 million for the renewal of the South Carolina IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence**. SC INBRE is celebrating its 25th year of funding; since its inception, it has been awarded over $88 million to support biomedical research, education and workforce development.
- **Raoni dos Santos, Ph.D.**, (PPN) has received an NIH-funded Specialized Centers of Research Excellence on Sex Differences (SCORE) Pilot Grant entitled *"Sex-differences in the norepinephrine modulation of sickness-related pain and stress responses."*
- **Norma Frizzell, PhD**, (PPN) and **Leonardo Bonilha, M.D., Ph.D.**, received new funding as Co-Investigators on a project entitled: *"Brain-specific Renin-angiotensin pathway as a therapeutic target for prevention and treatment of age-associated NeuroHIV."*

Funding Opportunities

💰 ASPIRE Internal Funding Opportunity

The Office of the Vice President for Research is now accepting applications for the **Advanced Support for Innovative Research Excellence (ASPIRE)** internal funding program.

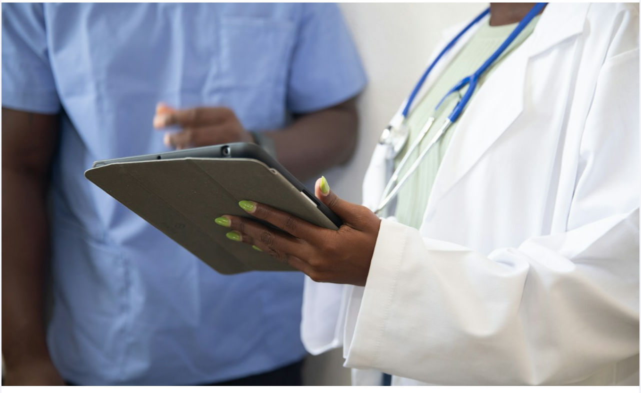
📅 **Application Deadline:** February 1, 2027, at 5 p.m.

👉 Learn more and apply!

💸 Not seeing any funding opportunities that apply to you? 💸

👉 Check out the Limited Submissions page for the latest listing of limited funding opportunities.

Upcoming Meetings & Events



Interested in Advancing Women’s Health Research?

The new **ClinTrUSC Women’s Health Research Affinity Group**, aims to bring together investigators from across disciplines who share an interest in advancing clinical and translational research in women’s health.

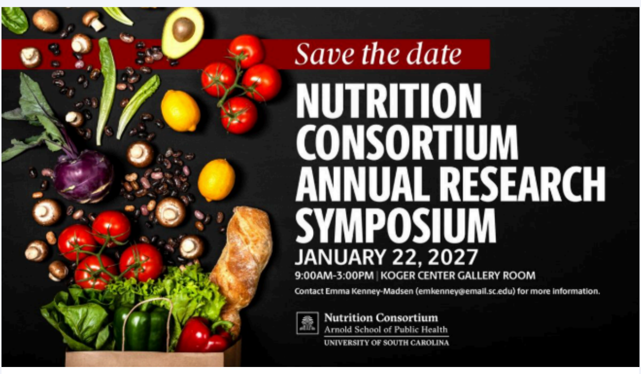
The first meeting will introduce the group, highlight ongoing women’s health research, and begin identifying opportunities for collaboration.

📅 November 20, 2026

🕦 11:30 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.

📍 Coker Life Sciences Building (lunch provided) & Online via Microsoft Teams

👉 Register here by November 16.

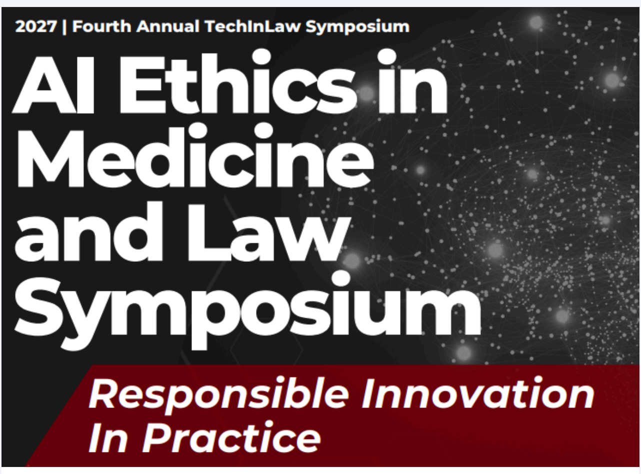

Save the date
NUTRITION CONSORTIUM ANNUAL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM
JANUARY 22, 2027
9:00AM-3:00PM | KOGER CENTER GALLERY ROOM
Contact Emma Kenney-Madsen (emkenney@email.sc.edu) for more information.
Nutrition Consortium
Arnold School of Public Health
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

🥗 Nutrition Consortium Annual Research Symposium – Call for Abstracts

The USC Nutrition Consortium invites students, postdocs, and trainees to submit abstracts for poster and rapid-fire oral presentations at its upcoming Annual Research Symposium!

📅 January 22, 2027
📍 Koger Center
⏰ **Abstract Deadline:** December 1, 2026, at 5 p.m.

👉 Students, postdocs, and trainees can submit an abstract here!


2027 | Fourth Annual TechInLaw Symposium
AI Ethics in Medicine and Law Symposium
Responsible Innovation In Practice

REGISTER NOW - AI Ethics in Medicine and Law 👩‍⚕️🧑‍⚖️

For the second consecutive year, the University of South Carolina Rice School of Law and Floyd School of Medicine are partnering to bring together experts from medicine, law, technology, and academia for a day of interdisciplinary discussion surrounding the ethical implications of emerging technologies.

📅 Friday, January 8, 2027

🕘 9:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

📍 USC Rice School of Law, Karen J. Williams Courtyard

👉 Register here.

Complimentary lunch will be provided to the first 100 attendees who register for in-person attendance.

Thank you for reading this month’s issue of the *Research Roundup*! We hope you found it helpful. If you have any suggestions for future issues or would like to share research news or opportunities, please let us know!

Were you forwarded this email and want to subscribe to future editions? Contact us, and we’d be happy to add you to our mailing list!

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Was this edition useful?

👍 👎

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