

# IU GERIATRICS e-news September 2009

A newsletter from [IU Geriatrics](#) and the [IU Center for Aging Research](#)

## Alexia Torke to Advance Research with K23 Surrogate Decision Making Study

The National Institute on Aging has awarded a five-year K23 to **Alexia M. Torke, MD, MS** for Surrogate Decision Making for Hospitalized Older Adults. The purpose of the K23 program is to support the career development of investigators who have made a commitment to focus their research endeavors on patient-oriented research.

Dr. Torke began her medical career as a clinician educator in general internal medicine with a focus on medical ethics. After five years as a faculty member at Emory University, she went back into training to complete a fellowship in ethics and primary care. Her research now focuses on both medical and ethical aspects of decision making for older adults.

"My long term goal is to improve the medical care of hospitalized older adults who are unable to make their own decisions," notes Dr. Torke. "This award provides the training and re-

search time needed to bring about a crucial step toward my goal—characterizing the decision making process as it occurs for these patients."

In her K23 research, Dr. Torke will conduct a prospective, observational study of older adults and their surrogate decision makers. The specific aims of this study are to describe the frequency, characteristics, and clinical context of surrogate decisions, and to identify important determinants of successful communication and high quality decision making from the surro-

gate's perspective. These results will serve as the basis for future interventions to improve the care of older adults who are unable to make their own medical decisions.

Dr. Torke has also designed an educational plan focusing on areas that will further her development as an independent investigator. Her career award mentors are **Chris Callahan, MD, Greg Sachs, MD**, Sandra Petronio, PhD, and Paul Helft, MD.

Dr. Torke is an assistant professor of medicine at Indiana University and is a research scientist at the Indiana University Center for Aging Research and at the Regenstrief Institute. She also is the associate director of the Fairbanks Fellowship in Clinical Ethics.



Alexia M. Torke, MD, MS

## Chris Callahan Receives Federal Stimulus Funding for ADCAT R01

Principal investigator **Chris Callahan, MD**, has been awarded an R01 by the National Institute on Aging for Alzheimer Disease Costs and Transitions (ADCAT). The funding is part of more than [\\$12 million awarded to IU School of Medicine](#) researchers from the federal economic stimulus legislation.

In previous work, Dr. Callahan and research colleagues completed a clinical trial testing the effectiveness of a care management program within primary care for older adults with Alzheimer's disease. Based on that trial, which demonstrated the effectiveness of collaborative care, they identified the need for more comprehensive care models that address the fragmentation of care across multiple sites and providers beyond the primary care setting.



Chris Callahan, MD

"To provide a more accurate picture of the entirety of care across the continuum of care, we must link data across multiple providers, health care systems, and payors," notes Dr. Callahan. "ADCAT is the next step in establishing a comprehensive database that will link our clinical trial and local electronic medical record system data with data from Medicare claims, Medicaid claims, and the Minimum Data Set."

The long-range goal of this research is to help design the next generation of care management interventions for older adults with Alzheimer's disease. ADCAT will allow the researchers to identify targets for quality improvement and cost savings—a progression from descriptive epidemiologic to intervention studies that is a hallmark of their past research.

### **ADCAT's specific aims:**

- build a comprehensive longitudinal dataset across the continuum of care (home, ambulatory, inpatient, nursing home) for a large sample of vulnerable elders;
- describe and compare the frequency and timing of transitions in care among older adults with dementia, cognitive impairment-no dementia, or normal;
- describe and compare the costs of care across the continuum of care among older adults with dementia, cognitive impairment-no dementia, or normal; and
- compare the findings from this cohort of urban poor older adults with findings from the nationally representative [Health and Retirement Study](#).

ADCAT co-investigators are **Greg Arling, PhD, Steve Counsell, MD, Wanzhu Tu, PhD, Michael Weiner, MD, MPH**, and Marc Rosenman, MD.

### Publications

**Callahan CM, Boustani M, Sachs GA, Hendrie HC.** [Integrating care for older adults with cognitive impairment.](#) *Curr Alzheimer Res.* 2009 Aug;6(4):368-74.

**Torke AM,** Siegler M, Abalos A, Moloney RM, Alexander GC. [Physicians' Experience with Surrogate Decision Making for Hospitalized Adults.](#) *J Gen Intern Med.* 2009 Sep;24(9):1023-8.

Campbell N, **Boustani M,** Limbil T, Ott C, Fox C, Maidment I, **Schubert CC, Munger S,** Fick D, **Miller D,** Gulati R. [The cognitive impact of anticholinergics: A clinical review.](#) *Clin Interv Aging.* 2009;4(1):225-33.

Fox C, **Boustani M,** Moniz-Cook E. [Treatment of dementia: where is it going?](#) *Br J Hosp Med (Lond).* 2009 Aug;70(8):450-5.

Sutherland JM, **Castelluccio P,** Schwarz CJ. [A Multilevel Model for Continuous Time Population Estimation.](#) *Biometrics.* 2009 Sep;65(3):841-9.

Lu YF, **Austrom MG,** Perkins SM, **Bakas T, Farlow MR,** He F, Jin S, Gamst A. [Depressed mood in informal caregivers of individuals with mild cognitive impairment.](#) *Am J Alzheimers Dis Other Demen.* 2007 Aug-Sep;22(4):273-85.

Tsivgoulis G, Alexandrov AV, Wadley VG, **Unverzagt FW,** Go RC, Moy CS, Kissela B, Howard G. [Association of higher diastolic blood pressure levels with cognitive impairment.](#) *Neurology.* 2009 Aug 25;73(8):589-95.

**Farlow MR.** [Treatment of mild cognitive impairment \(MCI\).](#) *Curr Alzheimer Res.* 2009 Aug;6(4):362-7.

### Presentations and Professional Activities

**Kevin Terrell, DO, MS,** presented "Prescribing Safely to Seniors" at the IU Department of Emergency Medicine Grand Rounds on August 26, 2009.

**Mary Guerriero Austrom, PhD,** has been selected by Brock University in Ontario, Canada, to receive their Distinguished Alumna Award for 2009. Dr. Austrom was recognized for her work with people with Alzheimer's disease and related disorders and their families at Brock's Homecoming Weekend. She is the Wesley P Martin Professor of Alzheimer's Disease Education, director of faculty development in the Department of Psychiatry and the director of education for the Indiana Alzheimer Disease Center at IUSM.

**Jessica Brown, MS,** received third place in the clinical category for "Risk of Coronary Heart Disease Events among Elderly Adults with Depressive Symptoms: A 15-year Prospective Study" at the 2009 IUSM and Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute Scientific Poster Session on September 16, 2009. Senior author **Chris Callahan, MD,** mentored Ms. Brown, an MSTAR Medical Student Training in Aging Research scholar this past summer. Ms. Brown is a second year IU medical student at the Terre Haute campus.

**Michael Weiner, MD, MPH** and **Malaz Boustani, MD, MPH** presented "Enhancing Medical Records for Aging Brain Care" at the Regenstrief Institute Work in Progress on Wednesday, September 16, 2009.

### News Headlines

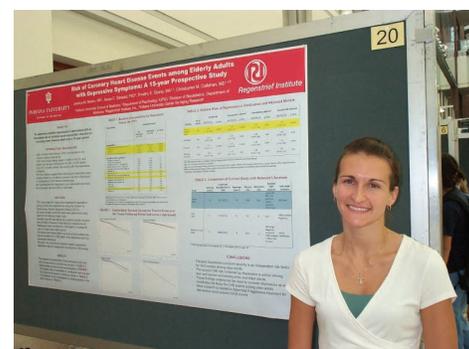
#### ***How Do Doctors Feel About Surrogate Decision Making?***



According to an IU School of Medicine [news release](#), a growing number of hospitalized adults are incapable of making their own health decisions, but little research has explored how doctors feel about making medical decisions with a patient's surrogate decision maker.

What did a survey of physicians, primarily internists, family practice doctors, intensive care unit physicians and hospitalists, reveal?

Lead author **Alexia Torke, MD, MS** and research colleagues cover the results in the September 2009 issue of the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*.



Jessica Brown, MS