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# IN TRANSLATION

## Message from the Director



The Connecticut Institute for Clinical and Translational Science (CICATS) is committed to providing services and programs to investigators that lead to advancement in research and career development, and continues to be an integral partner with community

organizations in reducing health disparities. In this issue of *In Translation*, we feature Dr. Miranda Lynch, a new biostatistician and statistical consultant for the Biostatistics Center; the success of our K12 program that has led Dr. Katie Martin, a K12 scholar, to a new position at the University of Saint Joseph; and our partnership with the REACH Coalition to examine what changes are needed to mitigate obesity and nutrition-based health disparities within Hartford communities.

We hope that you enjoy this issue and please visit our [website](#) for more information about CICATS' programs and services.

- Cato T. Laurencin, M.D., Ph.D. ♦

## CICATS Welcomes Miranda Lynch, Ph.D.



We are pleased to announce that Dr. Miranda Lynch is the newly-appointed biostatistician and statistical consultant for the CICATS Biostatistics Center and assistant professor in the Department of Community

Medicine and Health at the UConn Health Center.

Dr. Lynch holds an M.A. and Ph.D. in statistics from the University of Rochester. She completed her postdoctoral research position in the Department of

Biostatistics at the Harvard School of Public Health. Prior to arriving at the UConn Health Center, she held a faculty position in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Minnesota Duluth where she taught statistics. It is Dr. Lynch's broad mathematical and clinical experience, as well as her academic background, that made her such an attractive candidate and the top pick for this position.

As part of the CICATS Biostatistics Center, Dr. Lynch will provide expertise in innovative study designs, which is essential to conducting successful, cutting-edge clinical and translational research. Besides her own research interests, Dr. Lynch will spend the majority of her time working closely with CICATS investigators on NIH grant applications, manuscript developments, and providing statistical consultations. She will assist investigators with recognition of specific methodological and statistical issues; provide guidance as to the best strategies to address them; and assist with the interpretation of findings. Dr. Lynch will also offer mentoring services to assist investigators in developing ideas into concrete projects through the [Gateway Design Laboratory](#).

"We are very pleased that Miranda has joined our group. Miranda has extensive experience as a statistician working in collaborative environments and I know her background and wealth of knowledge will contribute to the success of the CICATS Biostatistics Center," said Dr. James Grady, Director of the CICATS Biostatistics Center. Dr. Lynch looks forward to collaborative research projects with

*Dr. Miranda Lynch continued next page...*

### In This Issue

- CICATS Welcomes Miranda Lynch, Ph.D.
- CICATS Congratulates Katie Martin, Ph.D.
- CICATS Teams Up with the REACH Coalition

*Dr. Miranda Lynch continued ...*

CICATS. “In an environment that encourages collective and interdisciplinary efforts, we can tackle important, wide-ranging questions in both public health and biomedical research,” said Dr. Lynch.

For an appointment with Dr. Miranda Lynch, please contact the CICATS Biostatistics Center at 860-679-7039. To learn more about the CICATS Biostatistics Center and service offerings, please visit [here](#). ♦

## CICATS Congratulates Katie Martin, Ph.D.



Dr. Katie Martin, a CICATS K12 scholar and assistant research professor in the Department of Allied Health Sciences at UCONN, has announced her recent

acceptance of a tenure-track position as an assistant professor and director in the Department of Nutrition and Public Health at the University of Saint Joseph in West Hartford. She begins her new position this month.

Dr. Martin, who holds an M.S. and Ph.D. in Nutrition Science and Policy from Tufts University, has been a CICATS K12 scholar since 2009. Her research has focused on access to healthy food, as well as the link between food insecurity and obesity among disadvantaged communities.

During her research, Dr. Martin worked with three community agencies to conduct a randomized, control trial of a novel program called [Freshplace](#).



Freshplace brings an innovative approach to improving nutrition among low-income families by giving them access to more affordable and healthy food options. Her results have been promising and she hopes to create an evidence-based model that will be replicated in other communities. “I’ve made every effort to take full advantage of the opportunities my K12 award has provided to me such as mentoring, training, and

designated time to work on publications and grants. This research would not have been possible without my CICATS K12 award and mentors, for which I am very grateful,” said Dr. Martin.

The K12 program provides career development awards to junior faculty to conduct research in their area of interest. The goal of the K12 program is to train investigators to become independently-funded scientists in clinical and/or translational research. Scholars are assigned mentors who are recognized as accomplished investigators in clinical and translational research, and have successful track records in training students, postdoctoral scholars, and new investigators. Mentors work closely with their scholar by providing guidance, encouraging growth, reinforcing progress, and suggesting ways to advance their research and career. Given the opportunity to work with more than one mentor, scholars are provided alternative perspectives and ideas regarding their career development.

Dr. Martin’s mentors - Dr. Victor Hesselbrock, Chief Scientific Officer (CSO) of CICATS and Professor for the Department of Psychiatry; and Dr. Judith Fifield, Professor of Family Medicine, Director of the Ethel Donaghue TRIPP Center, and Interim Co-Director of the UConn Health Disparities Institute - are very pleased with her progress and contributions to addressing nutrition and food insecurity. “Katie was a pleasure to have as a student and as an advisee in the K12 program. Her academic background in nutrition and her interest in conducting research in community settings has a strong translational appeal, and made her an attractive candidate as a K12 scholar for CICATS,” said Dr. Hesselbrock. “Katie has a unique ‘practical benefit’ approach to reducing disparities around access to healthy food that involves not only the access component, but also training in life skills needed to sustain a healthy lifestyle,” said Dr. Fifield.

Dr. Martin is very appreciative of CICATS’ generous support in helping to launch her career. “The dedicated time for research, mentorship and training helped me to become recognized as a regional leader in the field of food security and food system work,” said Dr. Martin.

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CICATS is proud of Dr. Martin's achievements and wish her success for the next stage of her career.

To learn more about the CICATS' K12 program and our other education and training programs, please visit our [website](#) or [contact](#) Trisha Donaldson, Administrator of CICATS. ♦

## CICATS Teams Up with the REACH Coalition



CICATS has teamed up with the REACH (Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health) Coalition to address various health disparities within the Hartford community.

CICATS joins several notable agencies, hospitals and local community organizations; such as the Greater Hartford YMCA, the NAACP, and Aetna to name a few; in the formation of the REACH Coalition. The Centers for Disease Control provided a \$150,000 grant to the Greater Hartford YMCA in partnership with the REACH Coalition, to focus on disparities affecting obesity and nutritional options in Hartford communities.

In a recent press release by the Greater Hartford YMCA, Dr. Cato Laurencin was cited stating, "The Connecticut Institute for Clinical and Translational Science (CICATS) is steadfast in its dedication to eliminating health disparities with the development and promotion of several health initiatives focused on addressing this issue on local, regional and national levels. CICATS is proud to be a partner in the REACH Coalition, working with other dedicated organizations to effect meaningful change and health equity in the Hartford community."

For this initiative, CICATS is working with the REACH Coalition to examine existing policies, systems, and environmental conditions to determine

**\*For more information about CICATS sponsored events or if you are interested in being added to our Listserv, please contact Yvonne Barber at [ybarber@uchc.edu](mailto:ybarber@uchc.edu).**

what changes are needed to mitigate obesity and nutrition-based health disparities within several Hartford neighborhoods. At the REACH Coalition's press conference held on July 31, it was noted that specific disparities will be closely examined, as well as addressing "accessibility" issues. For example, farmers markets, which now accept federally subsidized food vouchers, may not be accessible for people with low incomes due to transportation limitations, notes Dr. Linda Barry, Assistant Director and Chief Operating Officer of CICATS. Certain neighborhoods may not have full grocery stores within an accessible radius; thus, forcing people to use local stores with limited and often unhealthy food selections. These limited selections often include canned food, which has higher amounts of preservatives and oftentimes, are high in both salt and sugar. The consequence of such options is increased risk of obesity, diabetes and other major health conditions.

The most recent report on obesity predicts that the percentage of Connecticut residents affected with this condition will double from 25% to almost 50% by 2030. The imperative to address and reverse this trend is clear. CICATS looks forward to this multifaceted collaboration with the REACH Coalition and the pursuit of health equity for all.

To learn more about the Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH) program, visit [www.cdc.gov/reach](http://www.cdc.gov/reach) or [contact](#) Trisha Donaldson, Administrator of CICATS. ♦

Stay up-to-date on what is happening in CICATS by visiting our [Events & Media](#) page.

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