



Valerie Ahanonu

MCPAB Meeting
15 July 2025



HEALTH
UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

CMCR

CENTER FOR
MEDICAL CANNABIS RESEARCH

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CMCR Research Committee Overview

CMCR LEADERSHIP



Gerald Cochran, MSW, PhD

Interim Director, CMCR
Professor, Dept. of Internal Medicine
Division of Epidemiology



Valerie Ahanonu, BS

Senior Manager
SVPHS Research Unit

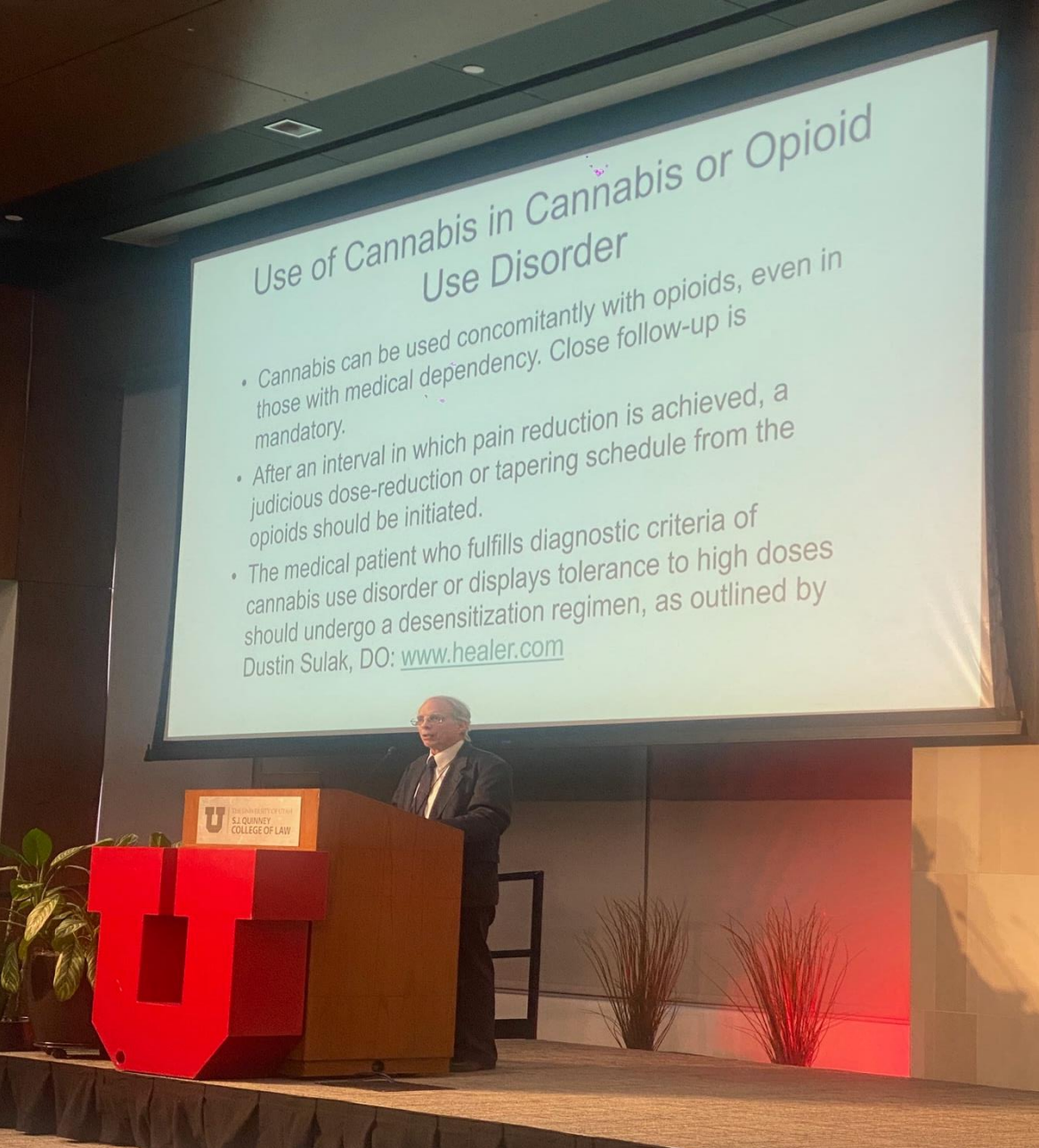
CMCR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Karen Wilcox, PhD
- Guangzhen Wu, PhD
- Ray Merrill, PhD (BYU)
- Eric Bottleberghe, MSN, RN, CARN (WSU)
- Bruce Bugbee, PhD (USU)
- Perry Fine, MD
- Meeyoung Min, PhD, MSW
- Michael Moss, MD, FAACT
- Misty Smith, PhD
- Deborah Yurgelun-Todd, PhD
- Rico Del Sesto, PhD (UT Tech)

EXTERNAL ADVISORY BOARD

- Rich Oborn (DHHS)
- Jennifer Daily-Provost (Rep.)
- Russ Cashin (UT Educator)
- Ethan Russo (Cannabis Expert)



MISSION

The mission of the center for medical cannabis research (CMCR) is to **promote methodologically sound research** evaluating the **safety and efficacy** of cannabis and cannabis **products** used with **therapeutic intent**.

ACTION

By **cultivating research opportunities** for experts within the University of Utah faculty and other academic and research institutions, external collaborators, and community stakeholders; we aim to foster a research-based approach that **impacts public health and educates** stakeholders on the **therapeutic benefits and safe use** of medical cannabis and cannabinoid products.

CMCR FACULTY RECRUITMENT UPDATE

CURRENTLY SEEKING PERMANENT DIRECTOR TO LEAD CMCR

PARTNERED WITH 7 COLLEGES/DEPTS.
TO SUPPORT FACULTY FUNDING FOR THE
POSITION:

- School of Medicine Internal Medicine (Epidemiology)
- Anesthesiology
- Population Health Sciences
- Family & Preventative Medicine
- Obstetrics/Gynecology
- College of Pharmacy
- College of Nursing

CMCR posted the position in 13 different locations

CURRENT HIRING PROGRESS

- Received 18 candidate applications to date.
- Conducted 8 candidate interviews.
- 1 offer made in partnership with Anesthesiology – not accepted.
- Pharm. & Tox. potential candidate hire, CMCR presentation in May.
- Fam. & Prev. Med potential candidate hire, CMCR presentation in June.

CMCR SYMPOSIUM UPDATE

Hosted 2nd Annual Cannabis Research Symposium on January 21, 2025



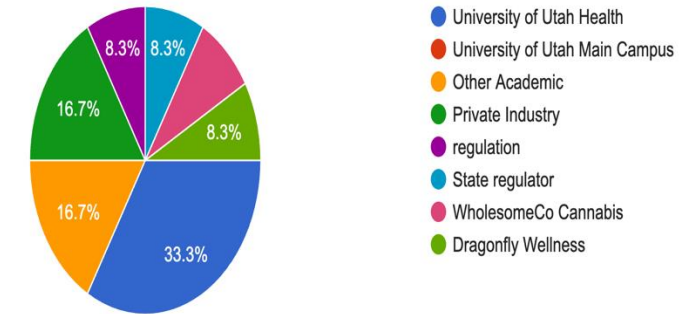
- 87 attendees, including researchers, state employees, and community stakeholders
- Hosted 2 keynote speakers:
 - Ryan Vandrey, PhD, Johns Hopkins University
 - Behavioral Pharmacology
 - Rosalie Pacula, PhD, USC
 - Health Policy
- Heather L. Kimmel, PhD, Health Scientist Administrator and Director of the PATH Study at NIH presented on “Cannabis Research at the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)”
- Highlighted seed grant awardees along with speakers from:
 - UofU
 - BYU
 - USU
 - Colorado State University's Institute for Cannabis Research

CMCR SYMPOSIUM OVERVIEW

- 87 attendees out of 105 registrants
- Symposium Survey Feedback:
 - 58.3% very satisfied with the event
 - 100% would attend another symposium and recommend attending to colleagues/trainees
 - High ratings for:
 - Content Relevance
 - Keynote speakers
 - Quality of research presentations
 - Food/Beverage
 - Venue
 - Areas for improvement
 - Structure of symposium
 - Question and answer organization
 - Collaborative group discussion
 - Suggested Future Topics
 - How can cannabis patients support the programs/research better/ more? Did cannabis contribute to the 41% decrease in opiates use in Utah from 2017 to 2025?
 - Include more humanities and diverse perspectives
 - More around compliance, comparative between states, Utah program specific info.

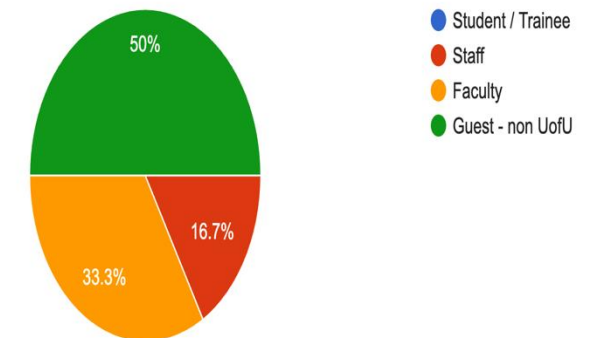
Tell us about yourself

12 responses



Please select your career level

12 responses



CMCR NIH GRANT APPLICATION

Applied for the NIH Resource Center for Cannabis and Cannabinoid Research U24 grant.

- Highly competitive as it offered \$4.25M in funding over a 5-year granting period. It would also solidify the awardee as a national resource for all cannabis centers.
- Multi-PI grant submission requiring 3 cores (Reg., Standards, Policy)
- Grant was awarded to Univ. of MS, Washington State, and US Pharmacopeia
- NIH feedback provided confirmation of the potential success of our strategic plans when applied locally
- Additional feedback focused on the need for additional cannabis experts to support application nationally.
- 3 NIH Grant applications from CMCR researchers



CMCR SEED GRANTS UPDATES

Distributed \$150K in seed grant awards to 3 researchers (50K ea.)



➤ **Cameron Metcalf (UoU)**

Associate Director, Anticonvulsant Drug Development Program, College of Pharmacy; Research Assistant Professor, Dept. Pharmacology & Toxicology, College of Pharmacy

Evaluation of Minor Cannabinoids in as Novel Therapies for Epilepsy



➤ **Anhong Zhou (USU)**

Professor, Biological Engineering

Imaging Cannabinoid Receptors at Single-Cell Level

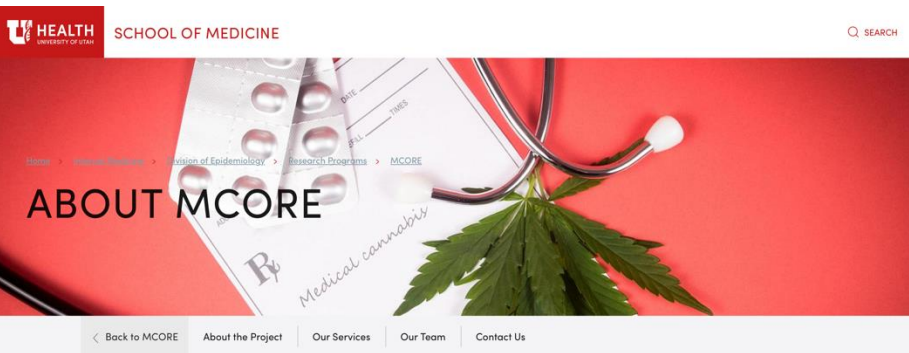


➤ **Jonathan Constance (UoU)**

Assistant Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Clinical Pharmacology; Associate Member, Huntsman Cancer Institute; Adjunct, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology; Adjunct, Department of Molecular Pharmaceutics

Δ 9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) trends of prescribing and pharmacokinetics (PK) in children, adolescents, and young adults with cancer (CAYA)

CMCR/MCORE COLLABORATIVE GRANT



OUR GOALS

- Establish an Evaluation Advisory Board that includes community members and health care providers who will work with our research/evaluation expert team.
- Answer immediate critical questions of program effectiveness and patient benefit using a mixed methods prospective evaluation framework.
- Topics of interest include methods of medical/non-medical cannabis acquisition, patient use characteristics, provider characteristics, monthly product costs, barriers to MC access, effects of medical treatment over time, reasons for discontinuation, patient experiences in the program, and recommendations for program improvement.
- Identify barriers and facilitators of long-term prospective cohort utilization following the initial evaluation period—which will lay the groundwork for continued evaluation and research of the Utah MC program into the future.



- Initiated a **collaborative project with the Medical Cannabis Outcomes Research Evaluation (MCORE) team**, which evaluates patient experiences within the Utah State Medical Cannabis Program.

- MCORE's current study evaluation is supported by DHHS funding with \$580K provided to extend the program.
- Received \$85K in grant funds from the Ben B. and Iris M. Margolis Foundation's Transformational Research Project.

- **Phase 1 of the MCORE team's project** is designed with two aims:

- (A1) Create a database of novel data linkage of medical cannabis (MC) patient health outcomes, MC use, MC characteristics, and information from medical records.
- (A2) Analyze the effect of MC products used and specific patient outcomes.

CMCR/USU DEA SUBMISSION UPDATES

DEA Manufacturing Licensee Business Planning



- Initiated a marketing analysis and business planning project with USU's Jon M. Huntsman School of Business Analytics Solution Center:
 - Phase 1: Data Collection and Data Engineering
 - Phase 2: Feasibility Analysis
 - Phase 3: Forecasting Model Development
- Currently working with Dr. Bugbee and Dr. McCarty, USU Economic Analyst, to continue analyzing full scope of potential risks/outcomes to a DEA licensing facility.
 - Creating survey to disseminate to +1000 published cannabis researchers to evaluate production pipeline and market potential
 - Awaiting UT state lab license review for THC manufacturing and production
 - In discussions USU chemistry lab to serve as potential processor for specific cannabis product requests.

CMCR EDUCATION UPDATES



Released 3 educational videos with the Genetics Science Learning Center which are hosted on the CMCR and DHHS websites

- How to Talk to Your Patient About Medical Cannabis
- How to Talk to Your Provider About Medical Cannabis
- How to Talk to a Medical Cannabis Pharmacist
- Each video features local experts that work with patients, offering insightful tips and information to support patients newly entering into the UMCP.

You can view them here - <https://uofuhealth.utah.edu/cmcr-education>



CMCR EDUCATION UPDATES

GSLC 2025 Education Plan

GSLC developed preliminary guidance based on current DHHS pain guidelines

- Plan to incorporate Dr. Franks recent clinical literature review on pain
 - Provide to DHHS for confirmation
 - Develop guidance into educational short video
- Develop a research specific video focused on myths within cannabis research
 - Researcher support for frequent topics and areas of focus to highlight

WSU Mentor/Training Program

Plan to work with Dr. Matthew Nicholaou, Professor & Chair of Medical Laboratory Sciences to develop a mentor/training program

- Focus on providing internships and small scholarships to students/faculty interested in working within cannabis sciences
- Faculty interested in participating can provide details on potential projects

Nursing Curriculum Development

Working with Eric Bottelberghe, MSN, RN, CARN, a Nursing Instructor from WSU on expanding prior curriculum developed to support nurses working with cannabis patients

- Supportive tool for QMP/LMP training
- Potential CEU credit and webinar/training series

CMCR RESEARCH COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

Committee Structure & Process Planning

- 7–9-member research committee, including current CRRB members
 - 3–4-member expert groups guided by the current indication being reviewed.
- No additional funding was provided
 - CMCR to pay small stipend to committee members.
- Clinical literature review process currently being developed
 - Lauren Heath provided reference support

Committee Goals

- Contribute to updating current guidance's (as applicable)
- Develop public facing educational materials and medical guidance's
- Generate publications when relevant

Identifying Conditions

- Conditions for review will be determined by research committee. Areas for consideration will be obtained through the following mechanisms:
 - Current conditions list (when relevant info is identified)
 - Comparison of other state lists
 - PCP, QMP, Community Stakeholders, and Patient outreach



THANK YOU

CMCR

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