



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

May 2026



Jannette Berkley-Patton, PhD

Margaret Irwin

Dontá Morrison, PhD

Stephen Hale

Ellen Armour, PhD



Some recent invited speakers at our monthly Inter-CFAR Faith & Spirituality Research Collaborative Working Group Meetings



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THE INTER-CFAR FAITH & SPIRITUALITY RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE - BUILDING STRONG PARTNERSHIPS TO ADVANCE HIV-RELATED RESEARCH RELEVANT TO FAITH COMMUNITIES.

The **Inter-CFAR Faith & Spirituality Research Collaborative** (FSRC) connects individuals at CFARs across the country as well as individuals in the broader community. The FSRC is dedicated to fostering meaningful dialogue, nurturing interdisciplinary collaborations, and building strong partnerships within academic and community settings to advance HIV-related research relevant to faith communities. Guided by a shared commitment to scientific inquiry, the FSRC seeks to explore the ways in which faith and spirituality may enhance HIV prevention, case detection, engagement in care, viral suppression, and ultimately efforts toward a cure and ending the HIV epidemic.

Since its inception, the FSRC has coordinated a series of highly interactive virtual working group meetings (recently on the third Thursday of each month at 2PM Central Time) that bring together investigators, community partners, and faith leaders both nationwide and internationally. These have helped shape shared research priorities, spark new cross-site collaborations, and elevate diverse perspectives at the intersection of faith, spirituality, and HIV science. The momentum generated through these sessions underscores both the scientific promise and the collective enthusiasm for continuing this work. So far, this year's meetings have included...

January 2026

Los Angeles-based filmmakers Margaret Irwin and Stephen Hale discussed their forthcoming documentary, *“The Body of Christ has AIDS” A Documentary Film about Church Responses to HIV and AIDS*, which explores the complex and often untold story of how faith communities – particularly American Protestant Churches – responded during the early years of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Drawing on interviews from more than 40 individuals in cities across the country, the film explores compassion, conflict, and the often-missing stories of Black and Brown communities. Now entering post-production, the documentary aims to spark reflection on justice, leadership, and faith’s role in public health, then and now.

February 2026

Dr. Ellen Armour, Professor and Chair of Religion, Gender, and Sexuality at Vanderbilt Divinity School, presented on *“Understanding Responses to the HIV Epidemic: A Feminist Theological Analysis.”* The session explored the theological roots of Christian purity culture and its enduring role in shaping stigma related to gender, sexuality, and HIV and how the theological narratives contribute to shame, racism, homophobia, and barriers to HIV prevention — particularly for Black women, queer individuals, and people living with HIV — while offering pathways for dialogue and healing within faith-based spaces.

March 2026

Dr. Dontá Morrison, based at UCLA, presented on *“Faithful and Forgotten: The Impact of Faith-Based Rejection on the Health of Black Gay Christian Men”*, drawing from his research and his recent book to explore how faith-based sexual stigma, historical white Christian influence, and misinterpretations of Scripture shape the lived experiences of Black gay men in traditional Black church spaces.

This session examined the intersection of race, sexuality, and spirituality, the health and identity impacts of exclusion, and pathways toward creating more inclusive, affirming faith environments that support healing and wellness.

April 2026

Tamara Taggart, PhD, MPH (Associate Professor of Urban-Global Public Health at Rutgers University School of Public Health) and Khadijah Abdullah, MPH (founder of RAHMA, Reaching All HIV+ Muslims in America) presented on a study they led which focused on understanding religion/spirituality and HIV-related intersectional stigma among Black women living with HIV in Washington, DC to improve antiretroviral treatment of HIV.

Coming in May 2026

Dr. Jannette Berkley-Patton, Distinguished Curator's Professor in the Department of Biomedical and Health Informatics at University of Missouri-Kansas City, will share details of the design, performance, and completion of a research study which she led entitled "*Taking it to the Pews: A Randomized Trial to Increase HIV Testing in African American Churches*". Over the past 20 years, Dr. Berkley-Patton's community-based research has focused on reducing health disparities among underserved populations through large-scale, multilevel, culturally-tailored prevention intervention trials.

As the Inter-CFAR Faith & Spirituality Research Collaborative continues to move forward, we invite researchers, clinicians, community partners, faith leaders, and trainees to engage with us. We also welcome suggestions for topics and speakers. If you are interested in attending a meeting or future workshop, please [Contact Us!](#)

TENNESSEE CFAR **EVENTS**

CFAR-Wide Seminar Series presented by Tennessee CFAR

Leading by Igniting Faith and Education to Tackle Stigma

Wednesday, May 13th, 2026 | 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm CST



Scan to Register

Latrice C. Pichon, PhD, MPH, CHES

Professor
The School of Public Health
Division of Social and Behavioral Sciences
The University of Memphis
she/her/hers

Andrea Williams Stubbs, PhD, MPA

Administrative Director, HPV Cancer Prevention Program
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital



tn-cfar.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

Inter-CFAR Faith & Spirituality Research Collaborative
Monthly Working Group Meeting

Taking It to the Pews: A Randomized Trial to Increase HIV Testing in African American Churches

Thursday, May 21st, 2026 | 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm CST



Jannette Berkley-Patton, PhD

Distinguished Curator's Professor
Department of Biomedical and Health Informatics
University of Missouri-Kansas City

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 249 764 264 720

Passcode: Sr2Bp9TH



Dial in by phone

[+1 615-601-3460](tel:+16156013460), [942701068#](tel:+16156013460) United States, Nashville

Phone conference ID: 942 701 068#



Sponsored in part by:



EXTERNAL EVENTS



EXTERNAL EVENTS



SAVE THE DATE

**SATURDAY
JUNE 27, 2026**

**BICENTENNIAL
CAPITOL MALL
STATE PARK**

RECENT FINDINGS & DISCOVERIES

Our CFAR researchers are all kinds of HIV experts like physicians, nurses, mental health professionals, epidemiologists, mathematicians, community members, and scientists. We study a range of HIV topics spanning all the way from how cells and the virus work to how communities can improve their support for people living with HIV.



IMPORTANT and THANK YOU!

Our work isn't possible without our volunteers: People living with HIV throughout Tennessee. THANK YOU to our research participants and community advisors. We appreciate you.

Optimizing HIV Pre-exposure Prophylaxis Use: Does Your Pharmacy Matter?

Pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP, is a medication that can prevent HIV when taken as prescribed. It is highly effective, reducing the risk of sexually transmitted HIV by about 99%. Despite this strong protection, many people who start PrEP stop taking it within their first year.

A study led by members of the Tennessee Center for AIDS Research examined whether the type of pharmacy people use affects how long they stay on PrEP. Researchers compared patients who filled their prescriptions at a health system specialty pharmacy—where pharmacists are closely connected to the healthcare team—with those who used standard, outside pharmacies. The goal was to determine whether more coordinated pharmacy care could help patients remain on PrEP and stay protected from HIV.

The study followed 103 people receiving PrEP at a single clinic in Nashville, Tennessee. Most participants were men in their 30s, and many reported behaviors that increased their risk for HIV. Results showed a clear difference between the two groups. After 12 months, about 75% of patients using the specialty pharmacy were still taking PrEP, compared to 41% of those using

outside pharmacies. By 18 months, the difference was even greater, with patients using outside pharmacies nearly three times more likely to stop PrEP. These findings highlight how medication delivery and support can strongly influence long-term HIV prevention.

One likely reason for this difference is the added support provided by specialty pharmacies. These teams do more than dispense medications. They help patients navigate insurance issues, reduce or eliminate out-of-pocket costs, ensure medications are available on time, check in regularly, help manage side effects, and provide reminders for lab tests and clinic visits. This ongoing support can make it easier for people—especially those with busy lives or who may otherwise fall out of care—to stay on PrEP.

These findings have important implications for people at risk for HIV. Consistent PrEP use is essential for preventing new infections, yet many individuals face barriers to long-term use. This study shows that stronger support systems, such as specialty pharmacies, can help people stay on PrEP and remain protected. Dr. Sean Kelly, Medical Director of the Vanderbilt Comprehensive Care Clinic and a study author, notes: “Maximal utilization of pharmacy resources is critical for a successful PrEP program; the Vanderbilt Health PrEP Program uses an integrated specialty pharmacy, which we’ve found keeps patients engaged in care far longer than programs without this model.” Expanding access to these pharmacy services could meaningfully reduce new HIV infections and improve health outcomes in affected communities.



Sean Kelly, MD

Associate Professor of Medicine
Division of Infectious Diseases
Medical Director, VCCC Clinic

MAY HIV AWARENESS DAYS



National Institutes of Health's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) leads this observance.

This day is a chance to thank the volunteers, community members, health professionals, and scientists working together to find a safe and effective preventive HIV vaccine. It is also a time to educate communities about the importance of preventive HIV vaccine research.



Sunday, May 19 marks National Asian & Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day (NAPIHAAD). NAPIHAAD is a day to raise awareness and promote action against HIV and AIDS within Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities. It also emphasizes the importance of education, quality care, and addressing stigma and related health conditions.

According to the CDC, in 2021, Asian people over the age of 13 represented 2% of all new HIV diagnoses in the United States. America's HIV Epidemic Analysis Dashboard (AHEAD) shows national HIV data for the broader API community across six EHE indicators, HIV diagnosis, linkage to HIV medical care, incidence, knowledge of status, PrEP coverage, and viral suppression.

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENROLL INTO RESEARCH STUDIES

Local CFAR investigators lead studies to improve the lives of people living with HIV, to protect people from acquiring HIV, and other important issues.

Studies are looking for:

- people living with HIV and depression, to study treatment
- people living with or without HIV, to study gum disease
- Black or multiracial women who are sexually active
- people living with HIV who regularly drink alcohol
- people without HIV, to find a vaccine against HIV
- men without HIV, to study long-acting PrEP to prevent HIV

Studies typically provide compensation to participants.

If you know of studies that we missed, please let us know at: tn-cfar@vumc.org



Do you find it hard to enjoy the things you used to love?

If you are living with HIV and are experiencing depression, you may qualify for a new study.

A research team at Vanderbilt is doing a study to find a better way to treat depression in people living with HIV. The study will compare two different medications. Half of the people who sign up will take a medication that's already commonly used for depression. The other half will take a medication that is used to treat a different condition but that may help with depression in people living with HIV. Our researchers want to learn if the medications improve symptoms of depression without having too many side effects.

Total Compensation for
completing this trial is \$775



Ready to get started?

Scan the QR CODE to see if
you are eligible

Approved by Meharry IRB
Expires on 10/13/2026

MEHARRY MEDICAL COLLEGE SCHOOL OF DENTISTRY

Volunteers needed for research project:

Effect of dental care treatment on gum disease with and without HIV

The purpose of the study is to determine the best way to remove bad bacteria from the mouth and provide better dental treatment

Who Is Eligible To Participate?

-Adults that are not pregnant, with or without gum disease

Participants will receive \$50 for each visit

(5 visits): total \$250

Interested?
Scan QR Code

Complete short survey,
and the research team will
contact you



If you have questions, please contact

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Email: eharris@mmc.edu

Are you a Black woman living in Middle Tennessee?

Researchers at Vanderbilt University Medical Center are exploring HIV prevention among Black women in Middle Tennessee. Participation includes one brief survey and a one-time interview at a time chosen by you.

We would love to hear from you if:

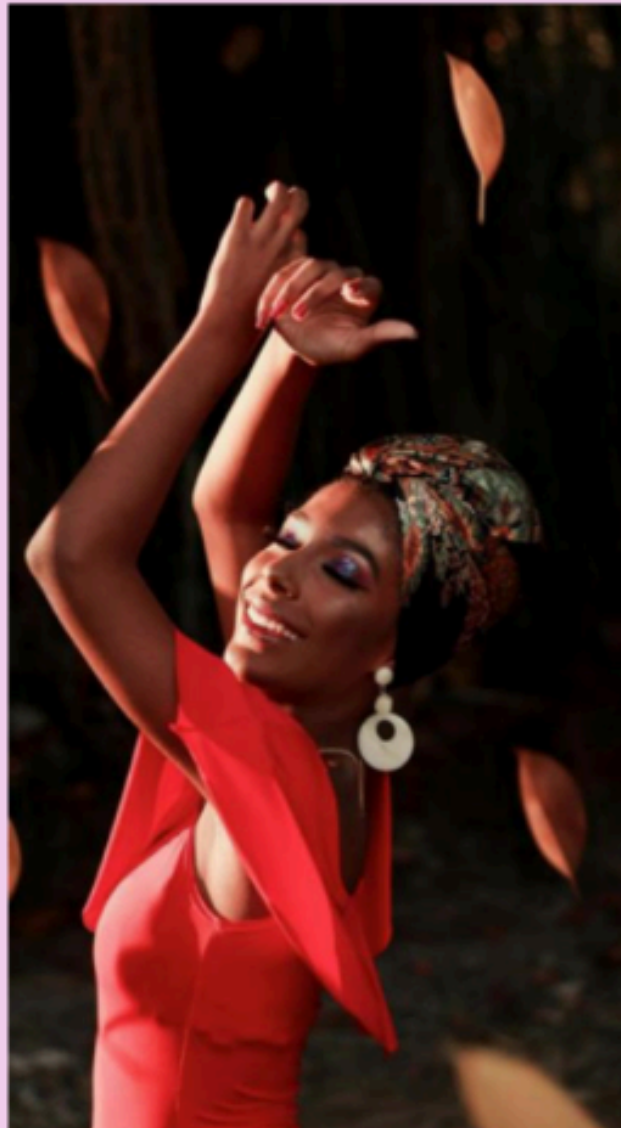
- You are aged 18 years and over
- You are a woman
- You are Black, including multi-racial
- You are or have been sexually active with a man in the past year

Participants are compensated with up to \$50 in e-gift cards for their time and contribution to better understanding preventing HIV in our community.

If you are interested in participating, scan the QR code below for more information!



Date of IRB Approval: 10/14/2025





**META
HIV CVD**

IF YOU HAVE HIV, THIS STUDY MAY BE FOR YOU!

MICROBIOME, METABOLITES, AND ALCOHOL IN HIV TO REDUCE CVD



We're looking for adults ages 18 and older who drink alcohol regularly, are HIV+, and take antiretroviral therapy. We want to see whether taking a supplement called a probiotic can help with some of the gut-related health problems related to alcohol use and HIV.



Participants will be asked to:

- Come to 5 study visits at Vanderbilt over 1 year
- Complete study phone calls about once a month
- Have their blood drawn
- Provide stool samples

Total compensation for
completing the entire
study is \$675

Take our survey to see if you are eligible!

<https://redcap.link/metastudy>

HIV VACCINE STUDIES, TO DISCOVER A VACCINE THAT PROTECTS PEOPLE FROM ACQUIRING HIV



In the United States HIV disproportionately affects certain groups and populations; however, HIV can affect anyone. Worldwide there are currently over 40 million people living with HIV. That number is growing.

The Vanderbilt HIV Vaccine Program is looking for healthy adults (ages 18-55) from all walks of life who are not living with HIV to participate in an HIV prevention study.

You cannot get HIV from participating in the study.

Volunteers must be available locally for approximately 12 months. Volunteers will be compensated. You can help fight the HIV/AIDS epidemic

Call 615-936-7327 or email vic.sorrell@vumc.org for more information.

In order to develop HIV prevention methods that will work for everyone, we need help from everyone!

ALL RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS ARE ENCOURAGED TO CONTACT OUR PROGRAM.

EXPi·ESSIVE

OUR STUDY

- HIV prevention research
- One daily vs. one monthly pill for two years
- Monthly visits
- Compensation for each visit
- Your protection is always our priority

**SCAN QR CODE
FOR MORE
INFORMATION**



CONTACT

- **Principal Investigator :**
 - Dr. Vladimir Berthaud
- **Research Staff | 615-327-6353**

Clinical Research Team, 4th Floor, Old Hospital Building



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Thank you to everyone who has collaborated with us on this issue of the Tennessee CFAR Community newsletter. Your contributions and insights have enriched our content and helped us highlight the incredible work being done across our community. We are grateful for your support and dedication to advancing research and education.

Contact Us!

Website tn-cfar.org

Email tn-cfar@vumc.org

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