

Title of Program: Principles of Contemporary Clinical and Translational Research in Liver, Digestive, and Metabolic Disorders

Dept/Center/Lab: [The Liver-Digestive Disease and Transplantation Center](#)
Departments of Medicine and Surgery

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Summary Description:

Our group is actively involved in investigator-initiated and industry-sponsored clinical and translational studies of GI, Liver, Pancreatic and Metabolic Disorders. Current studies include

development and expansion of a subject and specimen repository, NIH-sponsored registries of subjects with Drug-Induced Liver Injury and Porphyrrias, several trials of newer therapies for viral hepatitis and liver cancer, studies of treatments for hepatic encephalopathy and non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, and studies in inflammatory bowel disease. We also do studies of subjects with end-stage liver disease before and after liver transplantation.

One active clinical study, on which summer scholars will work, will be to assess iron absorption and reasons why subjects with a genetic disorder of normal heme synthesis called erythropoietic protoporphyria (EPP) so often are iron-deficient despite having no history of unusual blood loss or other reason.

Another study will be to characterize subjects with hepatocellular carcinoma who have been cared for within CHS and to assess whether there are gender or ethnic differences in their management or outcomes.

Another study will be to help assess the levels and importance of liver fatty acid binding protein [L-FABP] in non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. This disease is emerging as one of the most prevalent and important liver disorders that lead to cirrhosis, liver cancer, and the need for liver transplantation. L-FABP is an abundant small cytosolic protein in hepatocytes. Initial studies performed by Dr. Wang have suggested that decreased levels of L-FABP are associated with greater risk of progression of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. The student will help to test this hypothesis.

Expectations and Roles of Students:

The successful students will be expected to bring enthusiasm, inquisitiveness, hard work, and passion. The students will become active members of the clinical research team, providing assistance to the investigators and coordinators by handling and processing samples, providing data entry, record review and abstraction. The students will be expected to understand in considerable depth at least one of the active clinical studies or trials, their rationale, design, and plans for data analysis. The students will learn and adhere to all contemporary principles that govern clinical research. The students will take active roles in regular (monthly) meetings of the clinical research team, will present oral and written summaries of research, and will help prepare and present abstracts and papers summarizing findings.