

United Cerebral Palsy announces \$40,000 in grants to fund two cerebral palsy-related research projects

The grant program part of UCP's growing effort to support of research into the causes and treatments of cerebral palsy and related neurodevelopmental disorders.

VIENNA, VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES, September 7, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- VIENNA, VA — [United Cerebral Palsy](#) has announced it will award grants totaling \$40,000 for two new early detection studies into cerebral palsy.

[The UCP Research Committee](#) (URC) awards grants of up to \$20,000 each to advance clinical and translational research designed to transform the lives of children with cerebral palsy (CP) and related neurodevelopmental disabilities by bridging the gap between scientific investigation and real-world care.



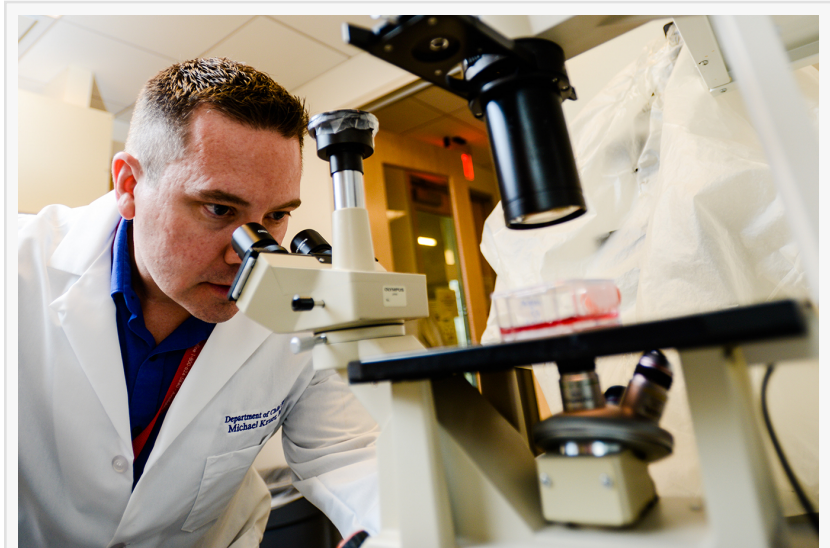
UCP President and CEO Armando Contreras

“United Cerebral Palsy is proud to mark the second year of our annual research grant program, created as part of our national association’s revitalized research initiative,” said UCP President and CEO Armando Contreras. “Our commitment to support promising advances in this field reflects our mission and the wide breadth of expertise of the UCP Research Committee, whose membership includes some of the top cerebral palsy scholars, researchers and practitioners in the country.”

The UCP Research Committee is co-chaired by Dr. Michael Kruer, director of the Pediatric Movement Disorders Program at the Barrow Neurological Institute at Phoenix Children’s, and Valerie Pieraccini, executive director of Therapy and Early Learning Center at UCP of Central

Arizona. Pieraccini and Kruer recently appeared on the UCP podcast, Life Without Limits, to discuss the accomplishments and goals of the URC. [Click to hear the interview.](#)

Cerebral palsy is an umbrella term that refers to a group of neurodevelopmental disorders that impair a person's body movement, muscle control, muscle coordination, muscle tone, reflex, posture, and balance, according to the Cerebral Palsy Alliance. In most cases, CP is caused by disturbances to the developing brain during pregnancy or soon after birth. The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that approximately 1 in 345 children in the U.S. are diagnosed with cerebral palsy.



Dr. Michael Kruer is a pediatric movement disorders neurologist and director of the Pediatric Movement Disorders Program at Phoenix Children's. He's also an associate professor at University of Arizona College of Medicine - Phoenix

UCP grant applications are accepted between March and June each year from researchers and clinicians across the U.S. and Canada. Proposed research

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*UCP President and CEO
Armando Contreras*

can concentrate on virtually any facet of cerebral palsy and related neurodevelopmental disabilities, but preference goes to studies that focus on early diagnosis and early treatment of cerebral palsy. Biomedical and therapy-focused studies are accepted under the grant program.

The following research projects were picked to receive a 2023 UCP Research Grant:

Project #1

Title: “Developing an Automated General Movement Assessment and Outcome Prediction Tool for Infants Using a Clinician-Centered Approach”

Investigators: Principal investigator, Weiyang Deng, PT, PhD. Key personnel: Arun Jayaraman, PT, PhD; Megan O’Brian, PhD; Colleen Peyton, PT, DPT; Gabriela Marquez, PT, DPT; Rachel Anderson, BS; Joseph Mifsud, MS.

Site of Investigation: Shirley Ryan AbilityLab; Northwestern University

Summary (abbreviated for this press release): To create a 3D video-based tool for automated general movement assessment (GMA) analysis to identify infants with abnormal general movements (GMs) during early infancy (1 & 3 months) and to predict their 12-month developmental outcomes. The central hypothesis is that state-of-the-art computer vision paired with intelligent machine-learning algorithms can capture biomarkers of normal and abnormal GMs for infants at risk of cerebral palsy and other developmental disabilities and, moreover, predict future neuromotor development. To receive a copy of the full application, email James Garcia at jgarcia@ucp.org.

Type of Grant: This initial solicitation is for small pilot grants to provide preliminary data for larger scale future projects or to perform novel analyses on existing data sets.

Grant Amount: \$20,000



Valerie Pieraccini is an an occupational therapist and Director of Clinic and Homebased Therapy Program & Early Learning Center at UCP of Central Arizona

Project #2

Title: Understanding and enhancing everyday positioning experience in infants at risk for cerebral palsy.

Investigator: Kari Kretch, PT, DPT, PhD, Division of Biokinesiology and Physical Therapy

Site of Investigation: University of Southern California

Summary (abbreviated for this press release): This proposal seeks to resolve two gaps in the evidence base for early intervention in cerebral palsy (CP). First, the investigator seeks to characterize everyday experience in infants at risk for CP, and to quantify the disparities between infants at risk for CP and their typically developing peers. Second, we seek to assess the potential of in-home use of dynamic body weight support to alleviate these disparities. This pilot project will inform the development of a novel intervention to improve motor, cognitive, and language development in infants with CP. Email James Garcia for a copy of the full grant application. To receive a copy of the full application, email James Garcia at jgarcia@ucp.org.

Type of Grant: Pilot grant

Grant Amount: \$20,000

The UCP Research Initiative has also awarded \$10,000 —thanks to a grant from The MENTOR Network Charitable Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Sevitá—to support the 2023 Alabama Early Intervention and Preschool Conference organized by UCP of Alabama and other local sponsors. The funds will provide ten \$500 travel stipends for attendees and \$5,000 toward the cost of an expert speaker for the conference.

About United Cerebral Palsy

The mission of United Cerebral Palsy is to be an indispensable resource for people with cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, and other neurodevelopmental disabilities.

Founded in 1949, UCP has 55 affiliates (53 in the U.S. and two in Canada) that provide a wide range of services annually to more than 150,000 children and adults, including resources and referrals, advocacy, research, educational instruction, early intervention, physical therapy, job training, integrated employment, home and community-based services, recreational opportunities, and housing assistance. UCP also advocates for direct support professionals (DSPs) and other direct care workers.

We believe all people with disabilities should be treated as equal members of an inclusive society so they can “live life without limits.”

James Garcia

United Cerebral Palsy Association

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