October 2026 vol. 40

TRAC Newsletter

Tuberculosis Research Advancement Center
Emory/Georgia



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The annual Emory-Georgia TB Research Training Program (EGTB-RTP) in-country conference was held in beautiful Tsinandali (birthplace of classical Georgian winemaking), Georgia from October 14-16, 2026, and was a great success all round. EGTB-RTP leadership from Emory and partner Georgian institutions also had the opportunity to meet with Ministry of Health officials to highlight the work and impact of the EGTB-RTP. The meeting included discussions of how potentially the foundation laid by the Program could be leveraged to support clinical and research training beyond TB.



THINCR Site Visit

Emory-CDC Clinical Trials Unit (CTU) Co-Directors Colleen Kelly and Moises Huaman just completed a visit to the TB HIV Innovations and Clinical Research Foundation (THINCR) in Cavite, Philipinnes. THINCR has been a TRAC collaborating institution through its affiliation with De La Salle, and now as an independent non-profit research organization. THINCR is also a valued partner within the NIH-funded Advancing Clinical Therapeutics Globally (ACTG) CTU network. The visit was very productive and included broad discussions regarding opportunities for furthering collaborative HIV and TB research in the future. We are excited to continue and build on Emory-THINCR collaborations.



TRAC Fall Symposium



Thank you to the speakers who shared overviews of their research portfolios and to everyone who attended and made the Symposium engaging and inspiring. We look forward to next year's event!





Welcome



Welcome Liam Guerin, who joined the Emory Epidemiology department as a Project Coordinator in October. He is supporting Drs. Sara Auld's and Gregory Bisson's projects in South Africa and Botswana. He joins us from Children's Healthcare of Atlanta where he was a Senior Research Coordinator. Liam also has experience as a a public health researcher in global health through contracting with the CDC's Division of Global Health Protection. Liam is excited to join the TRAC, and contribute to advaning TB research.

Belatedly, we also welcome McKenna Howell to the TRAC. McKenna is a Lead Research Specialist in Cheryl Day's lab where she primarily studies T cell responses using single cell RNA sequencing and flow cytometry, with a focus on how those responses change over time. She earned her B.S. in Public Health from the University of South Carolina and M.S. in Tropical Medicine from Tulane University where her research focused on host immune responses to mosquito salivary peptides. Welcome McKenna!





We welcome Meenakshi Kar who joined Cheryl Day lab's in October as an Assistant Academic Research Scientist. Meenakshi is a translational immunologist and virologist. Her PhD research was on dengue at the Translational Health Science and Technology Institute in India, where she showed that platelets take up dengue virus without supporting its replication, and that a host cell's zinc and redox state gates viral replication. She then completed her postdoctoral training in Mehul Suthar's lab at the Emory Vaccine Center, where she studied $CD4^+$ and $CD8^+$ T cell requirements for SARS-CoV-2 clearance, and why influenza is more severe after recovery from SARS-CoV-2. Meenakshi is excited to work with the Day lab and is looking forward to working with the TB and HIV cohorts.

Publication Highlights



Congratulations to **Cheryl Day** and collaborators at University of Washington, Emory and several Kenyan research institutions on their paper in the Journal of Infectious Diseases titled '***Maternal HIV Exposure Is Associated With Transient Transcriptional Changes in Monocytes and Natural Killer Cells in Early Infancy'.*** They hypothesized that maternal HIV exposure modifies the transcriptome and epigenome of innate immune cells in children exposed to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) but uninfected (CHEU) and may contribute to dysregulation of antimicrobial immune responses. Maternal HIV exposure modified the transcriptome of monocytes and NK cells in early infancy, with differential expression of genes involved in antimicrobial immune response pathways that largely resolved by 12 months. Future studies are warranted to determine whether these transient transcriptional modifications of innate immune cells in early infancy are associated with increased risk of infectious disease in CHEU.



Congratulations to **Khai Tram** on his highly collaborative publication in Lancet HIV titled '***Epidemiological trends of HIV among individuals aged 15-54 years in South Africa from 2004 to 2025: a population-based, longitudinal cohort study***'. The study aimed to evaluate progress towards HIV epidemic control in South Africa by quantifying long-term trends in key epidemic control metrics in a large population-based cohort in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The study concludes that progress towards HIV epidemic control is faltering in KwaZulu-Natal. Although the tools to reverse the trend are available, the challenge is to ensure their sustained and effective implementation through coordinated action across research, policy, government, civil society, and international funding partners. Action should be taken now now to achieve an AIDS-free generation in South Africa and the world.





Congrats to **Argita Salindri** and **Matthew Magee**, and collaborators on their paper titled '***Weight Gain During Successful Tuberculosis Treatment Increases the Risk of Post-tuberculosis Metabolic Syndrome***'. The study found that a body mass index increase of at least 5% during TB treatment was associated with increased post-TB risk of metabolic syndrome and elevated blood glucose levels among participants who were successfully treated and followed for 1 year after TB treatment. These findings highlight the importance of following individuals after TB treatment and the need for clinicians to screen for cardiometabolic risks.

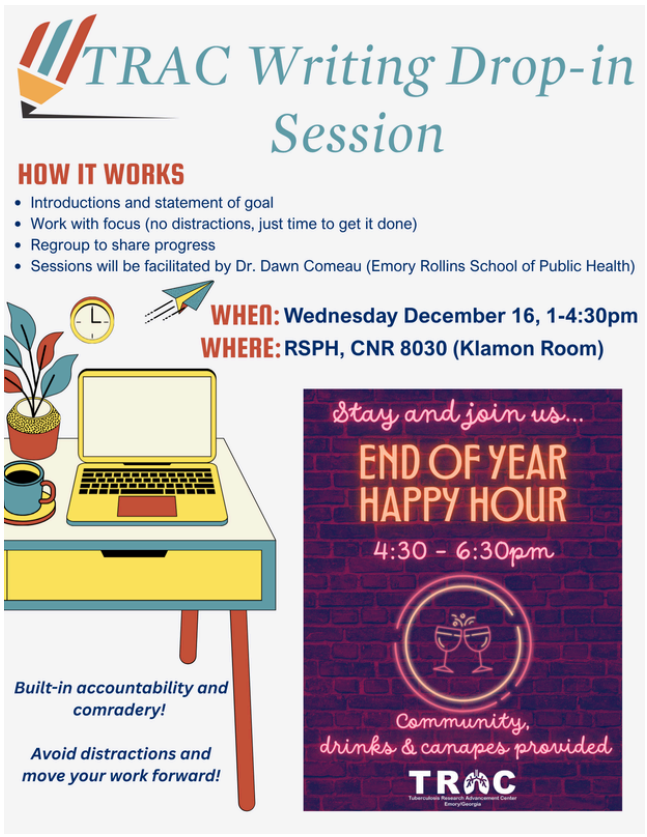


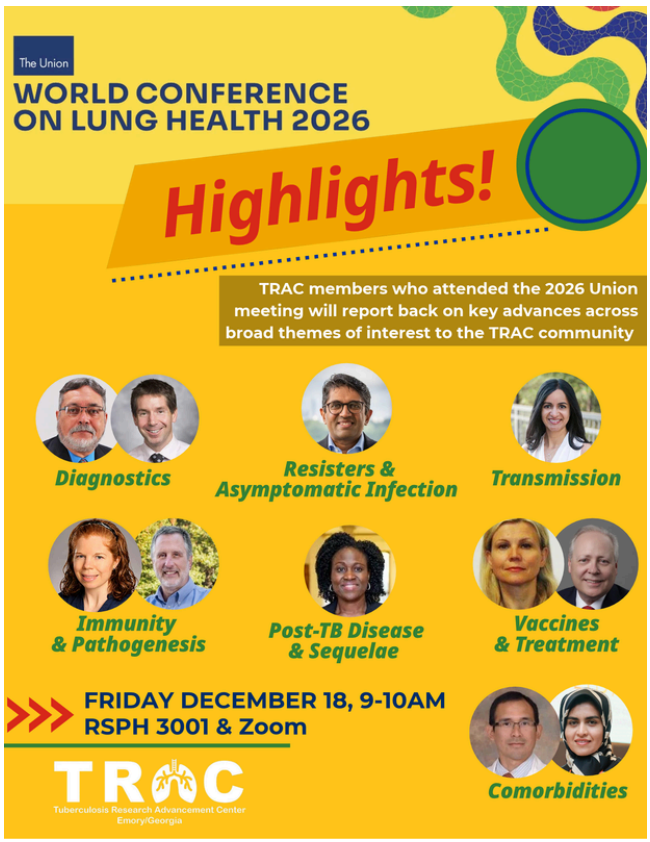


Congrats to **Ana Tsutsunava** and **Nino Maghradze** at the National Center for Lung Health in Tbilisi, Georgia on their publication titled ***Associating Mycobacterium tuberculosis genomic variants with minimum inhibitory concentrations to delamanid and pretomanid***. Through a collaboration with TRAC Developmental Core Co-Director **Russell Kempker** and several investigators at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute, the study explored the correlation between minimum inhibitory concentrations and genomic variants of delamanid (DLM) and pretomanid (Pa) resistance using MTb samples from the National Reference Laboratory biobank in Tbilisi, Georgia. Findings support DLM and Pa resistance in association with W88* and W678G mutations in ddn and fbiC genes respectively. Additionally, the study identified previously undescribed mutations exclusively within genes linked to DLM/Pa susceptibility, prompting further investigation of their role in resistance.

Upcoming Events









Bulletin Board

4th International Post-Tuberculosis Symposium (iPTBS) 2027



The International Post-Tuberculosis Symposium Steering Committee have announced the opening of the **online registration** and **abstract submission portals**, together with the official launch of the **2027 Symposium website**. The symposium will be held at the Hoam Faculty House (Samsung Convention Center), **Seoul National University, South Korea, 12-15 April 2027**.Visit the symposium website for full event details.

K12 CLINICAL & TRANSLATIONAL RESEARCH CAREER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Georgia CTSA
Georgia Clinical & Translational Science Alliance

The goal of the Georgia Clinical & Translational Science Alliance (Georgia CTSA) K12 Program is to enhance career development for junior faculty committed to a career in clinical and translational research. The K12 program provides innovative personalized didactic and mentored research training. Early-career faculty from a wide variety of disciplines at the Georgia CTSA partner institutions - **Emory University, Morehouse School of Medicine, Georgia Tech, and the University of Georgia - are eligible to apply.** More info **here** and full announcement **here**.

NIH Notices and Updates

- **NIH Expands Opportunities for International Research Collaborations**
  - Learn more: Submitting Applications with International Collaborations | Grants & Funding
  - Participating opportunities: Specialized NOFOs Participating in the Collaborative International Research Project (PF5) | Grants & Funding
- **NIH Publication Funding Acknowledgment Requirements**
  - Emory RCRA website.
- **Notice of NIH Updates to Career Development (K) Award Programs**, NOT-OD-26-098, August 12, 2026
- **Updated NIH Policy on Foreign Subawards,** NOT-OD-25-104, May 1, 2025
- **New Application Structure for NIH-Funded International Collaborations,** NOT-OD-25-155, September 12, 2025
- **Updated NIH Processes for No-Cost Extensions,** NOT-OD-25-110, May 7, 2025
- **Update: No-Cost Extension Functionality in eRA,** NOT-OD-25-142, August 7, 2025
- **Early-Stage Investigator (ESI) Eligibility Extension and Reinstatement**. See **FAQs**
- **Supporting Fairness and Originality in NIH Research Applications**, NOT-OF-25-132, July 15, 2025 - NIH will only accept six new, renewal or revision applications from a PD/PI for all council rounds in a calendar year. See updated **FAQs**.
- **NIH Will Stop Posting Notices of Funding Opportunities in the NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts in FY2026**, NOT-0D-25-143, August 14, 2025
- **NIH Director Statement: Advancing NIH's Mission Through a Unified Strategy - NIH Priorities**, August 15, 2025
- **NIH's Implementation of Common Forms for Biographical Sketch and Current and Pending (Other) Support for Due Dates on or after January 25, 2026**, December 2, 2025

October Publications

Tsutsunava A, **Tukvadze N**, Avaliani Z, Goig GA, Jugheli L, Gagneux S, **Kempker RR**, **Maghradze N**. *Associating Mycobacterium tuberculosis genomic variants with minimum inhibitory concentrations to delamanid and pretomanid.* PLoS One. 2026;21(10):e0359717. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0359717.

Brown TS, **Nelson K,** Kissler S, Martinez L, Horsburgh CR, White LF, Mathema B, Jacobson KR. *Understanding and exploiting superspreading to disrupt Mycobacterium tuberculosis transmission.* Lancet Infect Dis. 2026;26(10):e423-e32. DOI: 10.1016/s1473-3099(26)00168-4.

Salindri AD, Avaliani T, Gujabidze M, Goginashvili L, Vashakidze S, Avaliani Z, **Auld SC, Collins JM**, Andrews JR, **Kempker RR,** Kornfeld H, **Kipiani M, Magee MJ.** *Weight Gain During Successful Tuberculosis Treatment Increases the Risk of Post-tuberculosis Metabolic Syndrome*. Open Forum Infect Dis. 2026;13(10):ofag620. DOI: 10.1093/ofid/ofag620.

Shah NS, Mishara F, Zissette S, Mesidor RN, Ssevvume S, Riabokon S, Mushangwe B, Motoku J, Balogun S, Kashmiri N, Bello M, Augustin GM, Lukoye D, Barzilay EJ, Maphosa T, Weyenga H, Oladipo A, Ferroussier-Davis O, Silva JD, Ershova J, Ajiboye AS, Gleason BL, Valles JS, Jean-Charles K, Achia T, **Benkeser D**, Charles M. *Programmatic effectiveness of tuberculosis preventive treatment for people with HIV in six high-tuberculosis-burden countries (PROTECT): a prospective cohort study and meta-analysis*. Lancet HIV. 2026;13(10):e723-e34. DOI: 10.1016/s2352-3018(26)00140-2.

Liu C, **Collins JM, Gyorfy MF**, Pereira MA, Mave V, Prakash S, Devalraju KP, Martinson NA, **Willis F**, Figueiredo MC, Cordeiro-Santos M, de Queiroz ATL, Neela VSK, Karyakarte R, Sterling TR, Ellner JJ, **Brust JCM**, Gupta A, Andrade BB, **Sun YV, Gandhi NR.** *Metabolic Signatures of Resistance to Mycobacterium Tuberculosis Infection: Insights from a Multi-Country Plasma Metabolomics Study.* medRxiv. 2026. DOI: 10.64898/2026.09.29.26364337.

Adane K, **Kempker RR**, **Bobosha K**, **Meaza A, Blumberg HM.** Tongue swab Xpert MTB/RIF Ultra for tuberculosis diagnosis in Ethiopian prisons. Microbiol Spectr. 2026;14(10):e0084026. DOI: 10.1128/spectrum.00840-26.

Kang YJ, Wang N, Malik AA, Lu P, Grossman A, Njuguna I, Maleche-Obimbo E, LaCourse SM, Slyker J, Wamalwa D, John-Stewart GC, Wang C, **Cranmer LM**, Lu LL. *An Fc Receptor and IgA Functional Signature Identifies TB Disease in Children Living With HIV.* J Pediatric Infect Dis Soc. 2026;15(10). DOI: 10.1093/jpids/piag101.

Ekwebelem LC, Bury MR, Prophete EJ, Duverger K, Bircher PM, **Spaulding AC**. *Measuring depression, and its association with substance use, during an adherence study of patients treated for tuberculosis in Haitian prisons.* Int J Prison Health (2024). 2026;22(3):317-34. DOI: 10.1108/ijoph-09-2023-0062.

Murthy AK, Goodman RA, Moore MA, **Castro KG**. *A low-resource tracking workflow improves documentation and localizes the latent tuberculosis infection care gap in college student health.* J Am Coll Health. 2026:1-8. DOI: 10.1080/07448481.2026.2739594.

Hadley L, Brown TS, **Nelson K**, Kissler SM. *Can identifying recent Mycobacterium tuberculosis infection support faster tuberculosis vaccine trials?* medRxiv. 2026. DOI: 10.64898/2026.10.19.26365122.

Rothman JE, Castro KG, Lopman BA, **Gandhi NR, Nelson KN.** *Targeted tuberculosis vaccination strategies in the United States: A modeling study.* Vaccine. 2026;92:129174. DOI: 10.1016/j.vaccine.2026.129174.

Yang H, Yao A, Quach THT, **Zalwango S,** Kakaire R, Kiwanuka N, **Whalen CC**. Mobility as a proxy for exposure to Mycobacterium tuberculosis in an African city with endemic tuberculosis. Epidemics. 2026;57:100958. DOI: 10.1016/j.epidem.2026.100958.

Have items to include in a future newsletter?

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