

TITLE: Research to improve health outcomes for persons living with HIV/AIDS in Florida

Faculty Mentor: Robert L. Cook, MD, MPH; cookrl@ufl.edu; 352-273-5869

Faculty Mentor Department: Department of Medicine, Division of General Internal Medicine, College of Medicine AND Department of Epidemiology, College of Public Health and Health Professions and College of Medicine, University of Florida

Research Project Description.

Florida has the highest number of newly diagnosed HIV infections in the US, and is characterized by incredible diversity in terms of race, gender, age, geography, and sexual orientation. The national HIV strategy seeks to help all persons with HIV to be engaged in healthcare, to receive treatment, and to achieve HIV viral load suppression. However, only about 35% successfully accomplish this goal.

We are the Southern HIV Alcohol Research Consortium (SHARC), a multidisciplinary team seeking to improve HIV-related health outcome. SHARC is currently enrolling persons in the Florida Cohort, a new prospective study that seeks to enroll 1500 HIV+ persons and 200 HIV- persons by end of 2016. Participants complete questionnaires that assess use of healthcare services, substance use patterns (detailed alcohol and marijuana assessments), health behaviors, mental health conditions, sexual risk behavior, use of digital technology, etc. We also abstract information from medical records (health conditions, medications, laboratory results including hepatitis C virus), and link to statewide HIV surveillance data.

To date, over 460 persons have completed the survey. A medical student would identify measures of interest within the cohort, and work with SHARC to discover the answer to a relevant research question. Students will complete a scholarly work such as a first-authored abstract or research paper, and will also participate in a formal SHARC internship where they would gain additional skills and collaborative experiences with students in other fields. Students may continue their collaboration throughout medical school. See our website for more details about other projects, recent presentations, etc (www.sharc-research.org).