

## **Navigator to Guide Clinical Researchers**

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newwave@tulane.edu

Clinical research faculty and trainees in health sciences at Tulane and Louisiana State universities now have a partner to assist in the development of innovative, investigator-initiated clinical trials. Barbara E. Kurth, new clinical research navigator, will facilitate the progress of clinical research at both institutions from conception to analysis and publication of data.

"The navigator will be the first point of contact for trainees and junior faculty interested in pursuing investigator-initiated clinical research," said Dr. Roy S. Weiner, associate dean for clinical research and training, "and she will help guide the clinical investigator throughout the life of the study."

Kurth's arrival fulfills one of the goals of the Clinical and Translational Research Education and Commercialization Program, funded by a \$6 million grant from the Louisiana Board of Regents.

The program is a partnership initiative directed by coprincipal investigators Dr. Alan Miller, associate senior vice president for health sciences at Tulane University, and Dr. Steve Nelson, dean of LSU Health Sciences Center's School of Medicine. The program will provide infrastructure in the New Orleans area to support a comprehensive plan for conducting clinical and translational research, training the next generation of clinical research professionals, and for the commercialization of their discoveries.

Kurth will work with researchers as they draft studies and will assist in their use of biostatistics, bioinformatics and electronic protocol management as well as be a liaison with intellectual property officers, contract officers, scientific review committee members and data and safety monitoring personnel.

She also will be familiar with Institutional Review Board policies and procedures and other regulatory issues that might accelerate a protocol's implementation. Once a study begins to accrue patients, Kurth will troubleshoot a variety of protocol issues. She will be a critical resource to the established investigators who serve as mentors

at both institutions.

"My first goal is to become more familiar with the resources that are currently available at both Tulane and LSU," said Kurth.

Kurth's assistance will be targeted to and especially beneficial to the clinical research trainees enrolled in the mentored CTRECP Training Core. This core is codirected by Roy Weiner at Tulane and Paula Gregory, associate professor of genetics at LSU. The training core is designed to prepare the next generation of researchers and to transform Louisiana into a "destination" for clinical research for both patients and the pharmaceutical industry.

Kurth, who received her doctorate in 1988 from the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, comes to this new position from the University of Virginia Cancer Center, where she was a clinical trials scientist and assistant professor of research.

Applications for Kurth's assistance will flow through Weiner and Gregory, with priority given to junior faculty and trainees.

"Access to the navigator will be prioritized, with the clinical and translational research scholars and their mentors having preferred access," said Weiner. Tulane affiliates can apply for clinical research navigator assistance by e-mailing [Weiner](#) or calling 504-988-6061.

*Melanie Cross is manager of communications for the Tulane Cancer Center.*