

AFAA member update:

Prof S. Mark Tompkins, Ph.D.

Director, Center for Influenza Disease and Emergence Research

Professor of Infectious Diseases, University of Georgia USA.



In 2020, just as the SARS-CoV-2 was emerging, I submitted an application in response to a broad agency announcement by the National Institutes of Health to establish a Center of Excellence for Influenza Research and Response (CEIRR). The submission was a herculean effort in its own right, and I was proud to have led the team that assembled a responsive application. Many of us then shifted our focus to the emerging pandemic, and while we did not forget about the application, had little time to think about it. Late in 2020, we were notified that our application was competitive, and we began formal negotiations for the contract. Ultimately, we (UGA) and five other institutions were awarded contracts to establish the CEIRRs and the CEIRR Network. The contract was awarded April 1, 2021.

I am the director of the Center for Influenza Disease and Emergence Research (CIDER), based at UGA. We have investigators at several institutions, including:

- St Jude Children's Research Hospital, Memphis, TN
- University of Rochester, Rochester, NY
- Boston Children's Hospital, Boston, MA
- University of Melbourne, Melbourne, Victoria

The CIDER is an international consortium of experts with a shared goal of furthering our understanding of seasonal and emerging influenza viruses, with a focus on elucidating the drivers of severe disease in healthy and at-risk populations, as well as how infection drives virus evolution. CIDER also has programs for pandemic preparedness and capacity building, training future scientists to address current and emerging infectious disease threats.

As I am sharing details of CIDER with the AFAA, I will tell you a bit more about our collaboration in Melbourne. One CIDER project is led by Professor Katherine Kedzierska at the Peter Doherty Institute. Her project involves understanding influenza infection in humans and has collaborations with investigators at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne and Menzies in Darwin.

As a final note, while the application and ultimate award of the CEIRR contract were not directly connected to my Fulbright experience, my time in Victoria and relationships I built during my extended stay enabled this important collaboration with Prof Kedzierska, which is a key component in the CIDER program.

I am happy to share more about CIDER and answer any questions. The links below provide extensive details on the center and CEIRR network.

Best wishes,
Mark

<https://cider.uga.edu/>

<https://news.uga.edu/uga-establish-nih-funded-center-to-fight-flu/>

<https://www.avma.org/javma-news/2021-07-01/uga-joins-federal-influenza-research-network>

<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/research/centers-excellence-influenza-research-response>

S. Mark Tompkins, Ph.D.

Director, Center for Influenza Disease and Emergence Research
Professor of Infectious Diseases

501 D.W. Brooks Drive
Center for Vaccines and Immunology, Rm 1506
Athens, GA 30602

p: [706-542-4716](tel:706-542-4716)

e: smt@uga.edu

<https://zoom.us/my/smtompkins>



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