Staff Spotlight: Q&A with Janet Cowan

Behind many of the UCSF Department of Urology's impactful research publications is a powerful force: Janet Cowan, statistical programmer and manager of the UCATS Stats Group in Clinical and Translational Sciences. With deep expertise in prostate cancer outcomes research and years of collaboration with faculty, fellows, residents and students, Janet helps transform complex clinical questions into meaningful evidence that shapes patient care, treatment guidelines and scientific discovery.

What is your favorite part of your job?

The best part of my job is working with and learning from our brilliant Urologic Oncology fellows, residents and students. It is always fun and rewarding to work together, share new ideas, analyze our data, and publish the results.

What are some of the key duties of your position?

I'm a statistical programmer focused on research in prostate and bladder cancer. My main areas of work are to manage the department's Urology Outcomes Database (UODB) and analyze this data to support our health outcomes studies with Peter Carroll, MD, MPH, other faculty, and our trainee investigators. We present our findings at professional meetings and publish results in a wide array of medical journals. Many of our prostate cancer papers address topics related to survival after radical prostatectomy, intensity of disease monitoring for patients on active surveillance, treatment-related quality of life, and validation of biomarkers to predict recurrence after treatment.

If someone shadowed you for a day, what would surprise them about what you do?

My work and focus extend beyond data management and statistics to the actual clinical questions from our investigators. They study very practical, nuanced issues that relate directly to treatment guidelines and patient care. With their guidance throughout my many years in the Department of Urology I've built up an understanding of clinical and treatment topics. I think the combination of my analytic skills and prostate cancer knowledge enhance my contributions to our projects and make me a more effective mentor to our trainees.

What do you like to do outside of work?

I love music, art and baseball - all wonderful things in San Francisco!