



CESAR CASTRO, MD

*Director, Cancer Program, MGH Center for Systems Biology,
Attending Physician, MGH Cancer Center, Associate Professor
of Medicine, Harvard Medical School*

What can you tell us about your work?

I conduct high-tech and low-tech cancer research inspired by nanotechnology and systems biology principles. While advances in state-of-the-art technologies generally benefit already empowered institutions and those with access to them, I reconcile this disconnect by also focusing on devising cancer diagnostic and profiling strategies for use in remote or resource limited settings domestically and abroad. I have been closely involved with CDI since 2008!

What excites you most about your new roles?

My own academic trajectory has been punctuated by dedicated and invested mentors and collaborators. The current paradigm of scientific and clinical innovation occurs at the interfaces between disciplines. Seventeen years ago, NIH Director Elias Zerhouni spearheaded the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research to transform biomedical research. This included a vision for the “teams of the future”, notably strong interconnectedness between multidisciplinary investigators. The future is now! I am honored and thrilled about the opportunity to further propel the investigative trajectories of UiM trainees and faculty through this high visibility platform. It is also very telling for me to witness the ardent MGH leadership support for this role. As such, the opportunity to provide sustained UiM researcher advocacy here at MGH greatly excites me! Working alongside Professor Julie Price is icing on the cake.

What impact are you hoping to have?

I seek to help expand the network reach of UiM investigators. The MGH research ecosystem is highly dynamic, innovative, and vast. Studies have noted that faculty promotion and retention at Harvard Medical School (HMS) are a function of how interconnected they are with other investigators. Not surprisingly, UiM investigators had lower network reach at HMS and at risk of feeling disconnected and moving elsewhere. This role offers me an opportunity to help each individual adjust or rewrite their career narratives. Through my longstanding and fruitful research experiences and interactions with myriad MGH investigators, I hope to catalyze research interactions however disparate they may initially seem.

What advice would you give to UiM trainees and faculty in research?

Effective investigators are not myopic; they see around corners. Moreover, they do not react to their futures - they shape them. Maintain an open mind and instead of always seeking predictable routes and opportunities, be on the look out for that potential unexpected collaboration that will catapult you into other exciting directions. And please do pay it forward!

Is there anything fun you'd like to share with our readers?

Despite years of personal resistance, I recently caved in and purchased our family's first mini-van. I now call it my “mid-life crisis car” because it's so enjoyable and convenient. This example also underscores that maintaining an open mind also applies to modes of transportation!



JULIE PRICE, PhD

*Director, PET Pharmacokinetics, Athinoula A. Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging, Investigator, Department of Radiology,
Professor of Radiology, Harvard Medical School*

What were you involved in prior to joining CDI as Faculty co-Director for Research?

I have helped to establish neuroimaging methods for translational research studies of protein targets in the living brain to better understand healthy brain function, neuropsychiatric disorders, and neurodegeneration. For this position, I will draw from my personal experience as a recipient of NIH minority supplements and career development grants and from my experience as a research mentor to high school students, undergraduates, graduate students, medical students, postdoctoral fellows, research associates, and faculty across numerous medical school departments; this includes long-term commitment to and support of diversity and UIM training initiatives across career levels.

What excites you most about your new roles?

Working to improve research opportunities and advance research careers through collaborative partnerships with colleagues at MGH-HMS and external colleagues at UIM-rich institutions and in so doing further promote research excellence in a diversity-rich environment that is stronger in its sense of community, inclusion, innovation, and productivity.

What impact are you hoping to have?

I hope to further promote research excellence by accomplishing CDI goals of furthering the recruitment and support of UIM career development paths for research trainees and faculty and by strengthening guidance and mentoring offered to UIM research trainees - improving UIM retention and opportunity for advancement at MGH-HMS.

What advice would you give to UIM trainees and faculty in research?

Pursue research that you are passionate about, try your best and persevere, develop effective communication and listening skills, practice diligence and value patience, work to identify good mentors for you at every career stage, work to be a good mentor to others, and remember work/life balance.

What do you like to do for fun?

Fun for me is being outdoors - gardening - long walks and spending time with fun people!



Amanda Pickett

Student Project Coordinator, CDI

What excites you most about your new role?

The brilliant people I'm going to be working with -students, medical professionals, fellow staff, everyone!- all working together toward realizing a more diverse and inclusive health care field.

What impact are you hoping to have?

I hope to have a positive impact on building community for identities historically underrepresented in medicine. I'm also aspiring to be integral in increasing equity in representation of who shows up for sustaining a more diverse and inclusive MGH.

What brings you joy?

I love wondering about the beauty of the natural world, dancing, reading by the Boston harbor, vegan baking, going to art museums, and exploring the neighborhoods in and around Boston.