

We're Excited to Announce the Dartmouth CTSI Year 2 Pilot Award

Below are important dates for those interested in applying. For more details, including application guidelines and eligibility requirements, please visit this [link](#).

Mandatory LOI Due: 9/5/25
Invitation for Full Applications: 10/8/25
Full Applications Due: 12/15/25
IRB Submissions Due: 2/2/26
Anticipated Award Start: 7/1/26

Survey: How Can SYNERGY Support You?

SYNERGY offers Dartmouth clinicians, trainees, faculty, research staff, and investigators a wide range of free research services, trainings, and guidance to "turn biomedical research discoveries into health solutions" through [translational science \[ncats.nih.gov\]](https://translational.science/ncats.nih.gov).

Please take this 5-minute [SYNERGY Survey](#) to share what support or training programs would be most useful for you, and encourage your colleagues to give their input too. Your feedback will directly influence where we invest our resources.

SYNERGY Publications

[Examining rural health equity and impact through the translational science benefits model: outcomes from the CTSA Consortium of Rural States \(CORES\)](#). Padek M, **Butcher R**, deLacerda Allen R, Surratt HL, Subramain M, Tigges B, Eggleston AG, Presley JH, Matheson T, Sharareh N. Front Public Health. 2025 Apr 28;13:1538494. doi: 10.3389/fpubh.2025.1538494. PMID: 40356836; PMCID: PMC12066754.

Quick Links

[SYNERGY Website](#)
[Dartmouth CTSI Pilot Award](#)
[Upcoming Training Programs](#)



(l to r) Keith Paulsen, Anna Tosteson, Steven Bernstein

Message from the SYNERGY PIs

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the Dartmouth SYNERGY Newsletter. This July marks one year since Dartmouth was awarded an over \$4 million CTSA grant, launching our collective efforts to accelerate the translation of scientific discoveries into meaningful health solutions. We are excited to share updates, highlight milestones, and celebrate the inspiring work happening across our community.

In this issue, you'll meet our first cohort of Pilot Grant awardees—nine talented investigators whose innovative projects span disciplines from immunotherapy and digital health to equitable recruitment strategies and pediatric care. These initiatives embody SYNERGY's mission to foster collaborative, impactful research that addresses real-world challenges.

Earlier this month, the SYNERGY Inaugural Translational Science Symposium brought together researchers, clinicians, and community partners to advance our shared vision. The event featured dynamic discussions and a keynote address by Dr. Joni L. Rutter, Director of NCATS, underscoring the importance of partnership in driving translational science forward.

Looking ahead, our second year promises to build on this momentum. We will launch new funding opportunities, expand training and support for early-career investigators, and deepen engagement with our communities.

We invite you to share your ideas, accomplishments, and feedback as we continue to grow this vibrant, collaborative network. This newsletter is your space as much as ours—a place to showcase the collective progress that makes SYNERGY possible.

Thank you for being part of this important work.

Warmly,

Steven L. Bernstein, MD, Lead Principal Investigator and Director of SYNERGY
Anna N.A. Tosteson, ScD, Principal Investigator, Director, Research Program, SYNERGY
Keith D. Paulsen, PhD, Principal Investigator, SYNERGY

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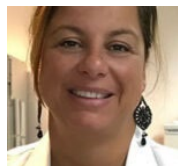
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Dartmouth CTSI Pilot Award Grant Highlights



Alka Dev, DrPH, MHS, Assistant Professor, Institute for Health Policy and Clinical Practice

Dr. Dev received a SYNERGY Pilot Grant for her project focused on developing a composite risk score using fair machine learning methods. The model will integrate social determinants of health, mental health, substance use, and rural status, while addressing algorithmic and historical biases. This innovative approach aims to predict adverse outcomes such as severe maternal morbidity, preterm birth, or low birthweight.



Francesca Gilli, PhD, MS, Associate Professor, Departments of Neurology, Microbiology, and Immunology

Dr. Gilli received a SYNERGY Pilot Grant for her project aimed at improving early risk stratification for patients with Clinically Isolated Syndrome (CIS), a precursor to multiple sclerosis (MS). By using Honeycomb Bio's HIVE scRNAseq technology to analyze cerebrospinal fluid, her research seeks to uncover novel biomarkers that signal early CNS damage and disease progression, potentially enabling more timely and personalized interventions.



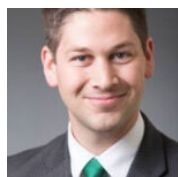
Caitlin Howe, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology

Dr. Howe received a SYNERGY Pilot Grant to develop and test inclusive recruitment strategies for clinical trials targeting underserved and rural populations, especially those affected by arsenic exposure. Her project will engage community members through targeted studios to identify barriers and refine enrollment methods beyond online patient portals. Insights gained will guide a more equitable recruitment framework for future, large-scale research.



Hung V.-T. Nguyen, PhD, Assistant Professor, Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth

Dr. Nguyen received a SYNERGY Pilot Grant to develop an innovative, 3D-printed scaffold platform designed to combine engineered mechanical properties with targeted biological cues to optimize T cell activation and proliferation, aiming to advance cell therapy protocols and support the development of a translational cell program at Dartmouth. This work holds promise for expanding access to advanced treatments in rural New Hampshire.



Joseph Phillips, MD, Associate Professor, Department of Surgery

Dr. Phillips received a SYNERGY Pilot Grant to investigate tissue-resident memory, T cells, and stem-like T cells from tumor-draining lymph nodes as potent precursors for adoptive cell therapy (ACT) in non-small cell lung cancer. His study aims to compare the functionality, exhaustion levels, and expansion capacity of these cells versus those from tumors, with the goal of enhancing personalized immunotherapy strategies and improving patient outcomes.



Catherine Saunders, PhD, MPH, Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine

Dr. Saunders received a SYNERGY Pilot Grant to develop and pilot a structured agenda-setting (SAS) intervention for multidisciplinary family meetings in pediatric inpatient settings at Dartmouth Health Children's. The study will co-design the intervention with patients, care partners, and clinicians, implement it using evidence-based frameworks, and assess its feasibility and acceptability through a small pilot trial.



Jessica Sin, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Radiology

Dr. Sin received a SYNERGY Pilot Grant to investigate how patients and primary care providers use a digital health app for body composition and bone mineral density, incorporating community feedback to refine the app. The study will also validate and enhance the Kino Health app's AI algorithm by analyzing imaging data and patient information to improve predictive accuracy.



Todd Morrell, MD, Assistant Professor of Emergency Medicine, Geisel, Dartmouth Institute

Dr. Todd has received CORES Pilot funding for the PRECISION study, which aims to improve traditional randomized clinical trials by automating the extraction of EHR data from EPIC into research-grade databases. The project will develop validated pipelines to clean, standardize, and integrate data, addressing key gaps like adverse event capture. This work will lay the groundwork for a multi-institutional strategy and future federal grant proposals.



Kris Strohbehn, MD, FACS, FACOG, Professor of OB GYN, Geisel, Dartmouth Institute & Dept. of Urogynecology

Dr. Strohbehn received CORES Pilot funding for a prospective trial evaluating the impact of converting rural patients with stage 2 pelvic organ prolapse from office-based pessary care to self-care using the new Reia collapsible pessary. The study will assess patient satisfaction, treatment burden, and factors influencing this transition, with the aim of improving chronic condition management in rural populations.

Past Events

June 4, 2025: The SYNERGY Inaugural Translational Science Symposium convened a distinguished group of researchers, clinicians, and community leaders to advance collaborative translational science efforts. The day featured insightful speakers and panel discussions, including a keynote address by Joni L. Rutter, PhD, Director, National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), NIH, a talk on the impact of the CTSA program by Harry P. Selker, MD, MSPH, and a panel on bridging research with community impact. Additional details and photos of the event can be found on the [SYNERGY](#) website.

Upcoming Events and CTSA Networking Opportunities

If you have an event or training that you would like advertised, please submit it here: [Training Submission Form](#).

Upcoming Events and CTSA Networking Opportunities					
Date	Time	Meeting Topic	Location	Host Department	Details and Registration
7/15/2025	12:00–12:45 pm	How to do a Literature Review in the Health Sciences	Online	Dartmouth Libraries	How To Do A Literature Review in the Health Sciences
8/26/2025	12:00-1:00 pm	Get Engaged ECHO: An ECHO to Increase Skills for Community Engaged Research	Online	SYNERGY	Get Engaged Echo

SYNERGY-Hosted Event

Event hosted by our partners

Keep an eye out for an upcoming SYNERGY training series for Early Career Researchers! Dates and topics will be available in the next SYNERGY newsletter.

Trials Innovation Network (TIN)

The vision for the Trial Innovation Network is to address critical roadblocks in clinical trials and to accelerate the translation of novel interventions into life-saving therapies. The network will focus on operational innovation, operational excellence, and collaboration while leveraging the expertise, diversity, and broad reach of the CTSA Program. Features will include a single institutional review board system, master contracting agreements, quality-by-design approaches, and a focus on evidence-based strategies for recruitment and patient engagement. To read more about the TIN, go to: trialinnovationnetwork.org

If you have questions about ongoing opportunities within the Trials Innovation Network (TIN) at Dartmouth, please contact our Hub Liaison at Elizabeth.M.Repash@hitchcock.org.

Citing SYNERGY

Please acknowledge NIH Grant Support in each publication, press release, or other documents about research that benefited from SYNERGY, Dartmouth Clinical and Translation Science Institute, and Translational Science Award (CTSA) **UM1TR004772**. Find out how at: [Citing SYNERGY – Dartmouth SYNERGY](#)



One Medical Center Drive

Lebanon, NH, 03756

[Dartmouth SYNERGY – Clinical and Translational Science Institute](#)

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