TV CORE

October 2025 *Monthly Newsletter*

PINYI DU

This month, we're delighted to celebrate Pinyi, whose dedication and expertise have enriched our lab for an incredible 27 years.

Born in China, Pinyi earned her bachelor's degree in Biology from Northeast Normal University before coming to the United States in the late 1980s. Her scientific career has spanned multiple disciplines from biology to physiology, virology, and immunology. After working at the University of Michigan, a family relocation brought her to UC San Diego, where she has since become a cornerstone of our lab community.

Beyond the bench, Pinyi finds joy in the natural world. She proudly recalls hiking the Grand Canyon, Mount Whitney, and Rainbow Mountain in Peru. She loves "listening to the songs of birds and insects, the murmur of streams, and the whisper of trees." For her, hiking is a way to melt into nature and let both body and soul find true relaxation.

Cooking also holds a deep meaning for her, especially being so far away from her homeland. Pinyi put her feelings beautifully: "All my memory now dwells in my cooking pot. Each dish I prepare seems to carry the echoes of my longing," she reflects. "With every stir of the spatula, I move through the rhythm of my life." She also enjoys reading and writing, seeing them as ways to meet "different souls," understand diverse lives, and express her own.

Her favorite movies are the Jason Bourne series—fitting for someone so quietly resilient and adventurous. When asked what new activities she hopes to try, she simply says, "Anything I have the capability to try."

Reflecting on her long tenure, Pinyi shares, "I've learned so much and tried many kinds of experiments, and I really enjoy the atmosphere here. It's an honor for me."

The honor is truly ours, Pinyi. Thank you for your years of dedication, curiosity, and kindness—you continue to inspire everyone in our lab community.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT PMID: 40757930

The study **Relationship Between Opioid Use, Depression, and Quality of Life Among Persons With HIV at End of Life** was conducted through the Last Gift cohort and explored how opioid use, depression, and quality of life (QOL) interact among people with HIV (PWH) nearing the end of life (EOL). The researchers analyzed 11 participants who had completed QOL and Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) surveys within a year of death and had documented opioid use data for the 30 days prior. Opioid exposure was quantified using morphine milligram equivalents (MME-30). The primary goal was to assess correlations between opioid use, depressive symptoms, and QOL in this unique EOL cohort.

Results showed that most participants (91%) received opioids, commonly morphine, fentanyl, or hydromorphone. Higher opioid use was significantly associated with higher depression scores and lower QOL. Participants with probable depression (BDI ≥14) had a median MME-30 nearly 13 times higher than those without depression. A clear threshold emerged: all individuals with MME-30 above 2,908 had clinically significant depression. These findings indicate that, contrary to expectations, higher opioid doses did not correlate with better comfort or life quality. Instead, they were linked to worsened psychological well-being.

The authors emphasize that while opioids are essential for pain control in palliative care, greater opioid exposure among PWH at the EOL may reflect more severe underlying distress or may itself exacerbate depression and lower QOL. They call for integrated care models that address both physical and mental health in EOL HIV populations. Despite limitations such as small sample size and cross-sectional design, this study provides rare quantitative evidence on the complex interplay between opioid management, mood, and QOL at life's end.

QUOTES FROM "THE COST OF SILENCE: A CALL TO PROTECT THE FUTURE OF HIV RESEARCH AND CARE"

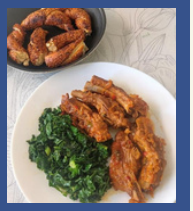
"We no longer see a future—we only reflect on yesterday." – **Benedict Sandile Khumalo,** Long-Term Survivor and Community Advocate for South Africa Advocate

"AIDS is harder than you can imagine. I have lived with an AIDS diagnosis for over 30 years, being judged for my morality. Removing the funding sources that have curbed the epidemic is a poor public health approach. To end the HIV epidemic, it must be made a funding priority. Removing funding for HIV and AIDS services will make what has become a chronic manageable condition back to a dreaded, death sentence." — **Waheedah Shabazz-El**, Long-Term Survivor and Community Advocate

WELCOMING OUR NEW VISITING SCHOLAR!

Hello everyone! My name is Nan Xu, but please feel free to call me Nan. I've been an infectious disease doctor for over 14 years.

I have joined the lab as a visiting scholar for two years to learn and collaborate. I'd also like to introduce my son and my cat to you all—they are the loves of my life. Outside of work, I enjoy cooking, traveling, swimming, and playing tennis. Hope I get the chance to cook some Chinese food for you all!



Pictured below: Davey with his birthday cake at the LG event!

LAST GIFT GRATITUDE EVENT

The last gift: Jim's Courage, Our Hope Video: https://vimeo.com/1128096432

SHOUTOUT!

Upcoming birthdays:
Pinyi (11/5)
Aleks (11/7)

Additionally, a huge congratulations to Vanessa on her new position as a Lab Coordinator! In this position she will help lead our lab operations and safety efforts, oversee facilities and equipment, and coordinate volunteers in collaboration with Rita.