

# Forging the Association for Clinical and Translational Science (ACTS)

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The disciplines contributing to Clinical and Translational Science encompass a broad spectrum of research, connecting basic discoveries that ultimately improve human health to community-based epidemiologic, and health services studies (Figure 1). The relationships and flow of knowledge are reciprocal among the translational areas. Translational Science's unifying hallmark theme is commitment to apply scientific methodologies efficiently and to improve human health rapidly. Therefore, Clinical and Translational Science encompass cross-cutting disciplines that embrace multi- and interdisciplinary investigative teams from many professions and multiple subspecialty areas. Moreover, advances in Clinical and Translational Science commonly requires constructive partnerships with industry, granting agencies, public health, and regulatory agencies. Thus, many thousands of individuals in the United States are actively engaged in and support, clinical and translational research.

Many organizations promote and support the full spectrum of translational research as well as training new generations of clinical and translational research scientists in the United States and globally. To increase their effectiveness in these missions, the Association for Patient Oriented Research (APOR), the Association for Clinical Research Training (ACRT), the Society for Clinical and Translational Science (SCTS), the American Federation for Medical Research (AFMR), and the Clinical Research Forum (CR Forum) now jointly conduct an annual meeting—Translational Science 2012. The evolving partnership has been in place since 2009 and continues to strengthen as the organizations see the rewards of working with each other.

For example, APOR, ACRT, CR Forum, and SCTS formed a Joint Advocacy Committee (JAC) to champion clinical and translational science at the national level working with Congress and other policy decision makers. As we worked together, we realized that we could be more effective, more efficient, and improve the value to our members, if our overlapping efforts were coalesced into one organization. After full frank discussions, with input from multiple members, three organizations (ACRT, APOR, and SCTS) have decided that now is the time to merge into a single new entity, the Association for Clinical and Translational Science (ACTS). ACTS will continue to work with CR Forum and the AFMR going forward with the intention to further strengthen our alliances.

Organizations arise when particular needs, times, and circumstances warrant—the ACTS bylaws acknowledges and validates the needs and circumstances that gave rise to each component organization and will assure that each organization's mission and purpose is embedded in the new governance structures. APOR was founded in 1998 as an international organization to champion patient oriented clinical research. It

focuses attention on the centrality of the patient to the enterprise of medical research, and promotes patient-oriented research as a core discipline of the medical profession. APOR seeks to ensure the vitality of patient-oriented research in academic medical centers by strengthening the education of clinical investigators, increasing the recognition of patient-oriented investigators in their own institutions and in the scientific enterprise at large, and advocating support for the clinical research enterprise.

ACRT was established in 2002 (in conjunction with the NIH Clinical Research Curriculum Awards) with a mission to expand and continually improve clinical research training. Training future clinical and translational scientists will increase the amount and quality of evidence based knowledge that can improve the health of the public. ACRT seeks to foster the training of clinical and translational investigators in the United States and abroad, provide a forum to discuss new developments in clinical and translational research training advancements, promote the academic discipline of research education, and advocate for federal support for clinical and translational research education and training programs. Partnering with APOR, SCTS, CR Forum, and AFMR, ACRT organizes the national annual meeting elements that focus on career development, skill building relevant to scholars, mentoring, and evaluation and management of translational and clinical research training programs.

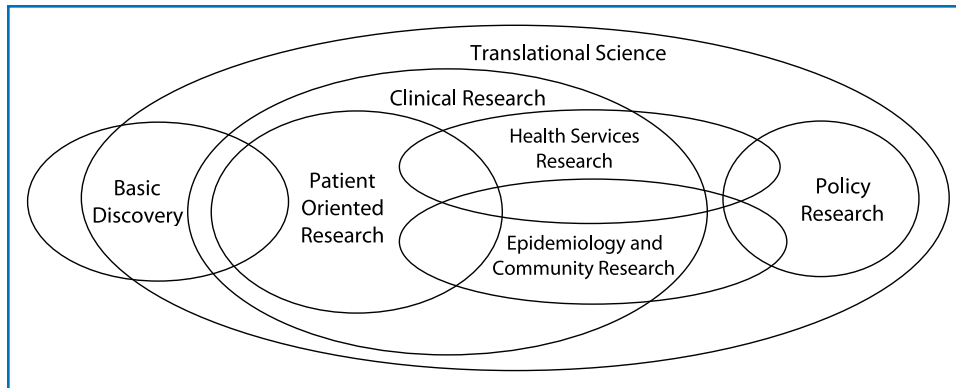
SCTS was created in 2008 with the mission to advance research and education in Clinical and Translational Science so as to improve human health. The creation of the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) by the NIH in 2006 dramatically heightened awareness of the disciplines of Clinical and Translational Science in academic institutions, industry, and philanthropy, as well as among the broader public and governmental leaders at the local, state, and national levels. With its focus on creating, augmenting, and evaluating advanced degree-granting programs in clinical and translational science, the CTSA program provides encouragement and new resources to create imaginative educational experiences for individuals who seek careers in clinical and translational research. SCTS was formed to help create a cultural identity for the emerging disciplines of Clinical and Translational Science for all those who participate in or support the process. One of its first actions was to partner with ACRT and APOR to promote the national meeting—SCTS leads the development of sessions that highlight the best that Clinical and Translational Science has to offer— attracting top investigators to share their work and vision of how their science is positively affecting lives of individual patients, communities, and the public.

The evolving science of translational research requires that APOR, ACRT, and SCTS, with complementary missions, unify

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**Figure 1.** The interconnecting research domains of translational science.

into a single entity that will better serve investigators dedicated to improving the human condition. ACTS's missions promote research, education, advocacy, and mentoring to improve human health (Table 1):

#### (1) Research

ACTS's goal is to improve the efficiency with which health needs inform research and new therapies reach the public. ACTS will support and promote investigations that continually improve individual, collaborative and team science, integrating multiple disciplines across the full translational science spectrum: from population based and policy research, through patient oriented and human subject

**RESEARCH:** ACTS supports investigations that continually improve individual, collaborative and team science, integrating multiple disciplines across the full translational science spectrum: from population based and policy research, through patient oriented and human subject clinical research, to basic discovery. Our goal is to improve the efficiency with which health needs inform research and new therapies reach the public.

**EDUCATION:** ACTS is the academic home for the disciplines of research education, training, and career development for the full spectrum of translational scientists. Through meetings, publications, and collaborative efforts, ACTS will provide a forum for members to develop, implement, and evaluate the impact of research education programs.

**ADVOCACY:** ACTS provides a strong voice to advocate for translational science, clinical research, patient oriented research, and research education support. We will engage at the local, state, and federal levels and coordinate efforts with other professional organizations.

**MENTORING:** ACTS will promote investigations and dissemination of effective models for mentoring future generations of translational scientists. Through collaborative efforts, ACTS will provide a forum for members to share studies, promote best practices, and optimize professional relationships among trainees and mentors.

**Table 1.** The Association for Clinical and Translational Science (ACTS) promotes research, education, advocacy, and mentoring to improve human health.

clinical research, to basic discovery. There is an ongoing and compelling need to encourage the creation of multi- and interdisciplinary teams of investigators and professionals from contributing fields who have an appreciation of each other's roles and the contributions each can make as a collective unit. ACTS also recognizes the need to create and sustain institutional infrastructures to support clinical and translational research by professionals from related disciplines.

#### (2) Education

ACTS will assist trainees in developing the knowledge and skills of Clinical and Translational Science, including leadership and team building skills. It will provide a forum for them to present their research findings to peers and more senior investigators. ACTS will provide an academic home for the disciplines of research education, training, and career development for the full spectrum of translational scientists. Through meetings, publications, and collaborative efforts, ACTS will provide a forum for members to develop, implement, and evaluate the impact of research education programs.

#### (3) Advocacy

ACTS recognizes the need to articulate a unified voice on public policy issues and the public and private funding of clinical and translational science. As such, ACTS provides a strong voice to advocate for translational science, clinical research, patient oriented research, and research education support. Building on the current JAC, we will engage at the local, state, and federal levels and coordinate efforts with other professional organizations.

#### (4) Mentoring

ACTS recognizes the continued need for mentoring beyond classic education and training years. Investigators benefit when they have access to assistance in planning their career development. ACTS, therefore, will promote investigations and dissemination of effective models for mentoring new generations of translational scientists. Through collaborative efforts, ACTS will provide a forum for members to share studies, promote best practices, and optimize professional relationships among trainees and mentors.

As the presidents of APOR, ACRT, and SCTS, we are thrilled to be taking this merger step. We look forward to our memberships forging ahead with us into this new venture—the goal is to be mutually supportive, welcoming, and to create the professional organization that effectively promotes translation of scientific knowledge across disciplines, diseases, and communities.