



MOUNTAIN WEST CTR-IN

2026 ANNUAL MEETING

Bench to Bedside to Community:

Accelerating Impact Across
the Translational Research Spectrum

March 16-17, 2026

Vdara Hotel | Las Vegas, Nevada

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March 16-17, 2026
MW CTR-IN
ANNUAL MEETING



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WELCOME MESSAGE

March 16-17, 2026
MW CTR-IN
ANNUAL MEETING



On behalf of the Mountain West Clinical & Translational Research Infrastructure Network (MW CTR-IN), it is my great pleasure to welcome you to the 2026 MW CTR-IN Annual Meeting, held March 16–17, 2026, at the Vdara Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada.

This year's theme, *"Bench to Bedside to Community: Accelerating Impact Across the Translational Research Spectrum,"* highlights the essential pathway through which scientific discovery advances into meaningful improvements in health. Translational research thrives when collaboration bridges disciplines, institutions, and communities, ensuring that innovations developed in laboratories ultimately benefit patients and populations across our region.

The MW CTR-IN continues to play a critical role in strengthening clinical and translational research capacity throughout the Mountain West. By supporting pilot projects, fostering mentorship, and building collaborative partnerships among institutions, we are working to advance discoveries that address pressing health challenges in our diverse communities.

Our annual meeting provides an important opportunity for investigators, trainees, and partners to share their research, exchange ideas, and build collaborations that will drive the next generation of scientific progress. This year's program features distinguished speakers, including our keynote lecturer, Dr. Katalin Karikó, 2023 Nobel Laureate in Physiology or Medicine, whose groundbreaking work in mRNA technology has led to COVID-19 vaccine developments, transformed medicine and public health and saved millions of lives worldwide.

We are also proud to showcase the innovative work of our pilot project investigators and the ongoing contributions of our partner institutions across the region. Their efforts exemplify the spirit of collaboration and scientific excellence that defines the MW CTR-IN.

Thank you for your continued engagement and commitment to advancing translational research. We look forward to two days of inspiring presentations, meaningful dialogue, and strengthened partnerships and networking as we work together to accelerate the impact of research from bench to bedside to community.

Welcome to the 2026 MW CTR-IN Annual Meeting, and thank you for being part of this important gathering.

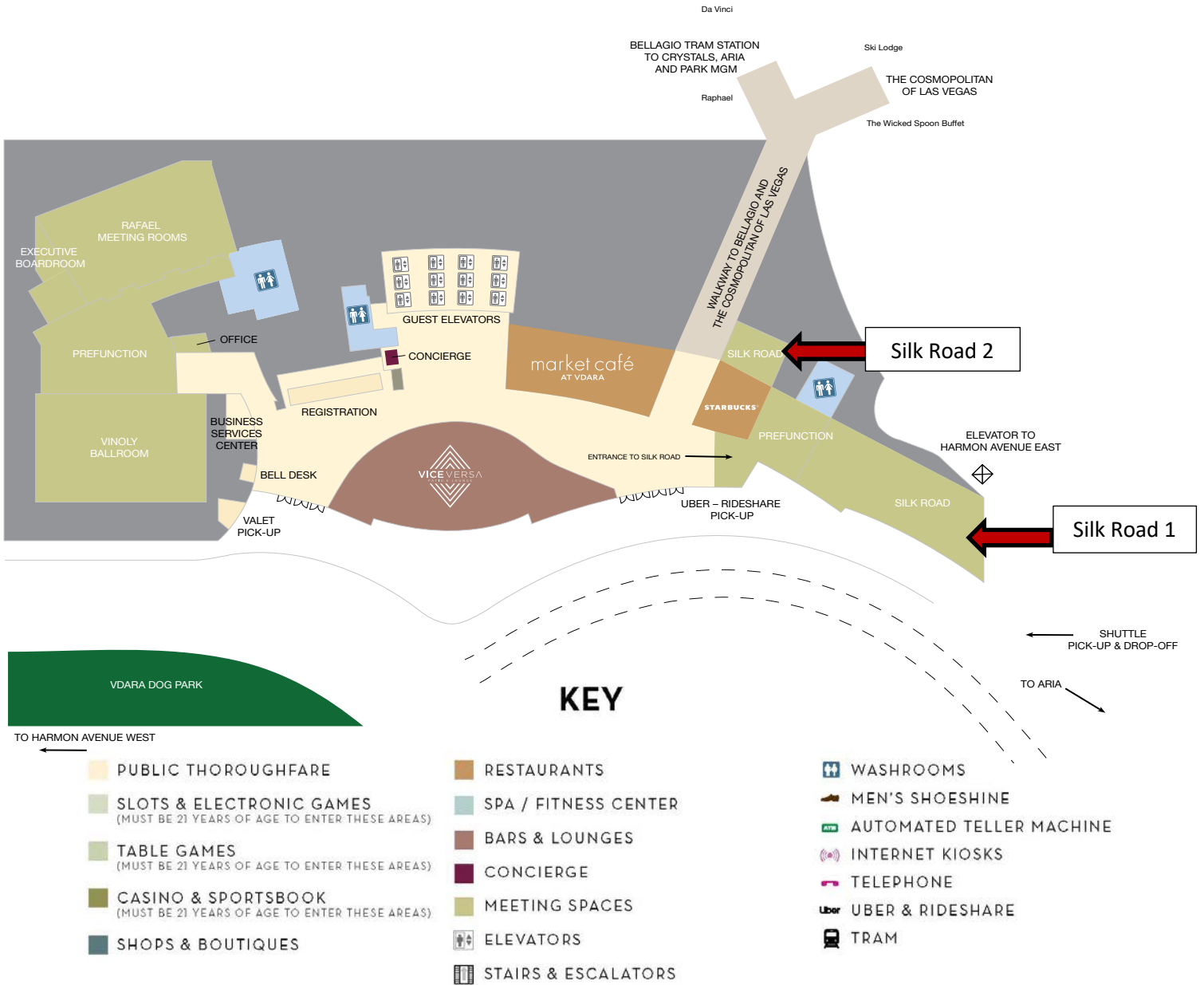
Sincerely,

Francisco S. Sy, MD, MS, DrPH

Principal Investigator, MW CTR-IN
Professor of Environmental and Global Health
University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV)
School of Public Health

VENUE MAP: VDARA 1st Level


March 16-17, 2026
MW CTR-IN
ANNUAL MEETING



LOCATION DETAILS

VDARA HOTEL
 2600 W Harmon Ave,
 Las Vegas, NV 89158
 866-745-7767
 (General Number)
 Or
 702-509-7757
 (Front Desk)

GETTING AROUND



QUESTIONS?
 Please contact the
 Mountain West CTR-IN
 Program
 Administrative Office
 at
CTRIN@UNLV.edu

2026 ANNUAL MEETING WEBPAGE



Scan Me

For more information, please scan the QR code above

DAY ONE - AGENDA

Monday: March 16, 2026

March 16-17, 2026
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ANNUAL MEETING

7:00 am – 8:00 am **Breakfast** — *For Grant Writing Workshop Attendees*

8:00 am – 12:00 pm **Grant Writing Workshop**

Silk Road 2
Conference Room

Moderator:

Ruben K. Dagda, PhD (Chair of the Grant Writing Workshop Program)
Associate Director, Professional Development (PD) Core, MW CTR-IN Program
Program Director, GWW and ATF Program(s), MW CTR-IN Program
Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacology
School of Medicine
University of Nevada, Reno

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm **Lunch**

Silk Road 1
Conference Room

PLENARY SESSION 1

Silk Road 1
Conference Room

Moderator:

Francisco S. Sy, MD, MS, DrPH
Principal Investigator, Mountain West Clinical & Translational
Research Infrastructure Network (MW CTR-IN)
Professor, Department of Environmental and Global Health
School of Public Health
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

1:00 pm – 1:10 m

Welcome Remarks

Shawn Gerstenberger, PhD
Dean of School of Public Health
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

1:10 pm – 1:35 pm

Mountain West Clinical & Translational Research Infrastructure Network: Accomplishments and Future Plans

Francisco S. Sy, MD, MS, DrPH
Principal Investigator, Mountain West Clinical & Translational
Research Infrastructure Network (MW CTR-IN)
Professor, Department of Environmental and Global Health
School of Public Health
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

1:35 pm – 2:15 pm

Keynote Lecture: "Developing mRNA for Therapy: My Journey"

Katalin Kariko, PhD
2023 Nobel Laureate in Physiology & Medicine
Professor, University of Szeged, Hungary, &
University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine

2:15 pm – 2:45 pm *Montana Clinical and Translational Research Center*
Tony Ward, PhD
Professor and Director
Montana Clinical and Translational Research Center
University of Montana School of Public and Community Health Sciences

2:45 pm – 3:15 pm *Healthy Idaho CTR-D*
Cheryl L. Jorcyk, PhD
Professor and Administrative Director
Healthy Idaho CTR-D
Boise State University

3:15 pm – 3:30 pm **Break**

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm *Center for Pacific Innovations, Knowledge, and Opportunities (PIKO)*
Neal A. Palafox, MD, MPH
Professor
Department of Family Medicine and Community Health
John A. Burns School of Medicine
University of Hawaii at Manoa

**PILOT GRANTEES’
PRESENTATIONS
GROUP 1**
Silk Road 1
Conference Room

Moderator:
Jesus Ramirez-Valles, PhD, MPH
Professor and Chief
Division of Prevention Science
School of Medicine
University of California, San Francisco

4:00 pm – 4:25 pm *Household Wood-burning, Macrophage Carbon Load, and Effect Biomarkers: A Multi-Site Pilot Panel Study in the Mountain West*
Shuguang Leng, MBBS, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Internal Medicine
Division of Epidemiology, Biostatistics, and Preventive Medicine
University of New Mexico

4:25 pm – 4:50 pm *Isoform-Level Transcriptomic Dysregulation in Alzheimer’s Disease by Long-Read RNA Sequencing*
Jingchun Chen, MD, PhD
Associate professor
Nevada Institute of Personalized Medicine (NIPM)
Interdisciplinary Program in Neuroscience
School of Life Sciences
College of Sciences
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

4:50 pm – 5:15 pm

From Community Voices to Action: Translating Community Knowledge into a Culturally Responsive Maternal Mental Health Strategy for Latina Mothers in Nevada

Clariana Ramos de Oliveira, PhD, MSC, RN

Assistant Professor

Department of Nursing

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

5:45 pm

Silk Road I
Conference Room

Group Photo

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Silk Road I
Conference Room

Welcome Reception & Network Dinner

Awarding of Certificates

DAY TWO - AGENDA

Tuesday: March 17, 2026

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ANNUAL MEETING

6:30 am – 7:30 am **Breakfast**

PLENARY SESSION 2

Silk Road 1
Conference Room

Moderator:

Francisco S. Sy, MD, DrPH

Principal Investigator, Mountain West Clinical & Translational Research Infrastructure Network (MW CTR-IN)
Professor, Department of Environmental and Global Health
School of Public Health
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

7:30 am – 8:30 am

Academic and Community Partnerships for Translational Research

Peter Shin, PhD, MPH

Chief Science Officer and Vice President
National Association of Community Health Centers

8:30 am – 9:30 am

Opportunities for Accelerating Translational Research: Current Perspectives

Sally L. Hodder, MD

Professor and Director
West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute
West Virginia University

PILOT GRANTEES' PRESENTATION GROUP 2

Silk Road 1
Conference Room

Moderator

Rebecca Palacios, PhD

Professor
Department of Public Health Sciences
New Mexico State University

9:30 am – 9:55 am

Effect of e-cigarette use as a switching tool among U.S. adults in outpatient substance use treatment who smoke cigarettes: a pilot mixed methods study

Jennifer Pearson, PhD, MPH

Associate Professor
Director Center for Drug Use, Equity and Policy Studies
University of Nevada, Reno

9:55 am – 10:20 am

Insomnia Symptoms, Cannabis Use, and Suicidal Behaviors

Maria M. Wong, PhD

Professor
Department of Experimental Psychology
Idaho State University

10:20 am – 10:35 am **Break**

**PILOT GRANTEES'
PRESENTATIONS
GROUP 3**

Silk Road I
Conference Room

Moderator:
Ruben K. Dagda, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Pharmacology
School of Medicine
University of Nevada, Reno

10:35 am – 11:00 am *Multiomics profiling of peripheral blood identifies early molecular signatures of Lyme disease*
Monika Gulia-Nuss, PhD
Associate Professor and Graduate Director
Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, and Biotechnology
University of Nevada, Reno

11:00 am – 11:25 am *Emerging Associations Between Maternal Anxiety and Milk Cytokine Trajectories in Rural Dyads*
Bethaney Fehrenkamp, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Immunology
School of Health and Medical Professions, WWAMI
University of Idaho

11:25 am – 11:50 am *Circadian Proteomic Alterations in Plasma and Serum Reveal Immune and Metabolic Signatures of Long COVID*
Subhash Verma, MD, PhD
Professor
Department of Microbiology and Immunology
University of Nevada, Reno

11:50 am – 12:15 pm *Telehealth Group Prevention for Perinatal Mental Health: A Pilot Study*
Ryoko Kausler, PhD, FNP-BC, MN, RN
Assistant Professor
School of Nursing
Boise State University

12:15 pm – 1:15 pm **Lunch**

**PILOT GRANTEES'
PRESENTATIONS
GROUP 4**

Silk Road I
Conference Room

Moderator:
Brach Poston, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Kinesiology and Nutrition Sciences
School of Integrated Health Sciences
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

1:15 pm – 1:40 pm *Retrospective study in pharmacological protection against noise-induced hearing loss*
Danny Xu, PhD
Associate Professor
Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences
Idaho State University

1:40 pm – 2:05 pm *Improving Active Range of Motion in the Arm after Stroke with a Body-Mounted Shoulder Exoskeleton*
Joel C. Perry, PhD
Professor
Department of Mechanical Engineering
University of Idaho

2:05 pm – 2:30 pm

Plasma Renin-Angiotensin System Components as Potential Biomarkers for Breast Cancer Screening

Ali Habashi, PhD

Associate Professor
Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Science
Idaho State University

2:30 pm – 2:45 pm

Break

**PILOT GRANTEES'
PRESENTATIONS
GROUP 5**

Silk Road 1
Conference Room

Moderators:

Lorraine S. Evangelista, PhD, RN, FAAN

Professor Emeritus
Sue & Bill Gross School of Nursing
University of California, Irvine

Juli Petereit, PhD, MS

Director, Nevada Bioinformatics Center
University of Nevada, Reno

2:45 pm – 3:10 pm

Pandemic-Driven Anti-Asian Racism and Its Impact on Mental Health Among AAIs in New Mexico

Jongwon Lee, PhD, RN

Associate Professor
College of Nursing
University of New Mexico

3:10 pm – 3:35 pm

Risk and Protective Factors of Internalized Racial Oppression among Blacks, Indigenous and People of Color in the U.S.

Gabriel M. Garcia, PhD, MA, MPH

Professor
Department of Public Health Division of Population Health Sciences
University of Alaska, Anchorage

3:35 pm – 4:10 pm

Effects of Area Deprivation and Income on Outcomes after Dysvascular Lower Limb Amputation

Szu-Ping Lee, PT, PhD

Associate Professor
Department of Integrated Health Sciences
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

4:10 pm – 4:35 pm

Reducing a Barrier to Gender-Affirming Surgeries

Paul Kwon, PhD

Professor
Director of Clinical Training
Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program
Department of Psychology
University of Nevada, Reno

4:35 pm – 5:00 pm

Engaging Clergy and Congregants as Citizen Scientists to Promote Health and Well-Being Within Faith-Based Communities

Nathan West, PhD

Research Assistant Professor
Center for Behavioral Health Research and Services
University of Alaska, Anchorage

5:00 pm

Meeting Wrap-up & Adjourn

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Networking Dinner

Silk Road 1
Conference Room

Acknowledgement & Disclaimer

The Mountain West Clinical & Translational Research Infrastructure Network (CTR-IN) project is supported by an award from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, National Institutes of Health under grant number U54GM104944. The views expressed by the speakers at this meeting do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the institutions with which the speakers are affiliated.