FAQs about the CTSA, ITMAT and the Community Engagement and Research (CEAR) Core

1. What is the Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA)?

The Clinical and Translational Science Award is a program operated jointly by the University of Pennsylvania, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), the Wistar Institute, and the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. The academic home for the CTSA is the Institute for Translational Medicine and Therapeutics (ITMAT) at the University of Pennsylvania. The CTSA is funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). It was first funded for 5 years in 2006 and has been successfully renewed since then.

2. What is the Institute for Translational Medicine and Therapeutics (ITMAT)?

The Institute for Translational Medicine and Therapeutics (ITMAT) supports research at the interface of basic and clinical research focusing on developing new and safer medicines. ITMAT includes faculty, basic research space, and the Center for Human Phenomic Science (CHPS), which includes both Penn and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). ITMAT also offers research cores, research programs, research centers, and educational programs in clinical and translational science for researchers and research support staff.

ITMAT has now expanded to include investigators focused on clinical and translational research in all schools at Penn, the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, the Wistar Institute, the Monell Institute and the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. For more information about ITMAT, please visit https://www.itmat.upenn.edu.

3. What are the themes of the Penn CTSA?

The overarching themes of the Penn CTSA are:
1) fostering the development of Translational Therapeutics and
2) bridging the divide between pediatric and adult physiology and disease.

4. What is the Community Engagement and Research (CEAR) Core?

The purpose of the Community Engagement and Research Core in the Penn CTSA is to facilitate community-based research and community engagement and enhance the translation of research and technological developments to key public health and community stakeholders. The NIH is committed to including a focus on Community Engagement in all CTSAs.

5. What are the CEAR Core's goals?

Broadly speaking, the CEAR Core aims to build capacity for community-engaged research in the Penn community through providing links to relevant information and resources, training and seminars, consultation, and support for pilot research. Specific goals are:
a. Determine community health needs and priorities, and make this information widely available to Penn and CHOP investigators

b. Foster community-based research by integrating lectures into existing academic programs and by developing or contributing to new training programs
c. Promote community-based research within the area of health disparities through a seminar series
d. Facilitate the use of academic-community partnerships to aid in the recruitment of research subjects
e. Fund community health research pilot studies
f. Maintain involvement in community outreach and education events that engage the community in health research

6. What services does the CEAR Core provide to investigators?

The Community Engagement and Research Core offers consultations on community engagement, training in participatory research methods, and assistance with the development, implementation, and evaluation of community translation activities. The CEAR Core is housed in the Center for Health Behavior Research (CHBR), which also offers consultation on measurement, theory, and research design and subject recruitment for studies of health behavior.

7. What funding opportunities does the CEAR Core offer?

The Community Engagement and Research Core will award two pilot grants every year, funding research initiatives that foster community engaged research, especially studies that use a participatory framework. This includes research in community settings or using a participatory research framework with active involvement of community stakeholders. "Community" is defined broadly to include populations in neighborhoods and organizations, including health care settings.

Detailed information about applying for these grants will be sent out each spring. For more information and questions about the CTSA Pilot Grants Program, contact Jade Avelis (jade.avelis@pennmedicine.upenn.edu).

8. What is the CEAR Core Steering Committee and what will it do?

The Steering Committee of faculty and senior staff at Penn helps the CEAR Core prioritize and guide the scope of the Core's activities. Steering Committee members will also serve as liaisons to community engagement and outreach programs around the University.

9. How can I become an ITMAT member?

ITMAT membership confers these benefits:
- Inclusion in the community of translational researchers at Penn, readily identifiable from within or outside Penn via membership of ITMAT;
- Immediate notification of new ITMAT initiatives;
- Eligibility for educational and research support grants provided via ITMAT;
- Access to core services provided to members at cost.

ITMAT is designed mainly to focus on the translational space, which we define as lying between proof of concept in cells and model systems and the completion of studies in mechanism and rational dose selection, ideally for individualized therapeutics at the end of Phase II. If your research interests lie within this area, we particularly welcome you as a member of ITMAT. Clinical and community health researchers can also join ITMAT, to enjoy the benefits of the CEAR Core and other resources and as part of their transdisciplinary research efforts.

If you meet this criterion and would like to become a member, more details and the membership form are available at: www.itmat.upenn.edu/membership.shtml.