

# Building bridges a key element of Drug Development

## Core mission

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Gene Morse, PharmD, SUNY Distinguished Professor in the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, is the core's director.

The main objective of the University at Buffalo Clinical and Translational Science Institute (CTSI) Drug Development Core is to foster innovation in drug development and clinical therapeutics research. While providing expert mentoring for researchers from the Buffalo Translational Consortium, the core also collaborates with industry partners, arranges access to CTSI core laboratory facilities that specialize in drug development and help investigators prepare top-flight grant applications and cutting-edge research protocols.

Those are some of the specific services provided by the core's faculty and staff. But, in a larger sense, they see their mission as building bridges between disciplines, institutions and individuals.

"The Drug Development Core is a mechanism to bring together different faculty and different key resources that exist across UB and partner institutions in order to assist investigators who are interested in any aspect of drug development research," says Gene Morse, PharmD, SUNY Distinguished Professor in the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences and the core's director.

"More than just a laboratory that people have access to, or assistance in submitting a grant, it's developing a mechanism so that faculty are aware of the different resources that exist at UB and Roswell Park Cancer Institute, so their grant applications can be even stronger and they can build new collaborations. People who may be used to working independently can begin working together."

Since August, the Drug Development Core has been accepting service requests from researchers and potential researchers via the on-line [Service Request Portal](#). By clicking on the "Request a CTSA Service" button on the Clinical and Translational Research homepage, researchers, trainees and staff interested in CTSI services can create an account and access a menu of cores, each with a list of services offered as well as a text box to provide any additional details. A representative of the CTSI core responds directly to each request.

"It's similar to a dating service initially," says Morse. "You'd be surprised how many people are not aware of the number of researchers and the wealth of lab facilities that exist outside their

own departments.”

The Drug Development Core Request Form is the first step for Buffalo Translation Consortium (BTC) researchers and research coordinators looking for help with: grant consultations; protocols, assays and data analysis; preclinical pharmacology, pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics; and phase I and II clinical pharmacology design, conduct and management. The core also has an educational mission, providing one-month scholar periods for external CTSA faculty members at BTC institutions. Key drug development topics are presented in a workshop format throughout the academic year, while “Community of Scholars” sessions present topics in drug development and translational pharmacology.

UB has a wealth of resources for investigators in terms of infrastructure and human capital scattered among a number of schools, departments and centers, and Roswell Park has a distinct and complementary set of resources.

Morse says there have always been individual faculty collaborations on an ad hoc basis but what’s new with [the granting of the Clinical and Translational Science Award \(CTSA\)](#) is the commitment of UB and Roswell Park to sharing resources and forging new bonds of cooperation.

Other cores at Roswell Park and UB’s CTSI can be involved in drug development. The Drug Development Core acts as a hub for coordinating all of that activity. “We’re working together to make all of these things more available and accessible, and to foster collaboration,” says Morse. He’s also working with UB’s MD PhD program to “assist PhD and post-doc trainees in utilizing the Drug Development Core to identify additional research mentors and new laboratory cores that can enhance innovation in their research.”

“It’s a broad mechanism of bringing everybody together,” he says. “I have a personal interest in helping UB to have this resource because I know what the individual needs of faculty trying to do clinical research are, because of my experience in drug development,” he says. “I have a good sense of the types of core resources that you need, depending on whether you’re in pre-clinical phase one, two, three or four. I think all of those different experiences came together in the Drug Development Core.”

Some of UB and Roswell Park’s most prominent researchers are contributing to the leadership of the Drug Development Core. These include: William J. Jusko PhD; Ravindra Pandey PhD; Kunle Odunsi, MD PhD; Igor Puzanov, MD; and Robert Bies, PharmD, PhD.

Through multiple international initiatives -- as principal investigator for the NIH Fogarty International Center HIV Research Training Program with the University of Zimbabwe, as director of UB’s Center for Integrated Global Biomedical Sciences and co-director of SUNY’s Global Health Institute - Morse is helping to bring the accelerated translational research model across literal, not just metaphorical, borders.

The kind of institutional support for cross-disciplinary and multi-site collaborations he’s seeing locally is something that “hasn’t happened in the past, and doesn’t happen in a lot of places.”