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More recovery, less disability focus of new musculoskeletal research center

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Kristin Archer, PhD, DPT, directs the new Center for Musculoskeletal Research. (photo by Steve Green)

by Bill Snyder

A multidisciplinary Center for Musculoskeletal Research has been established at Vanderbilt University Medical Center to encourage collaborative research aimed at improving patient outcomes and preventing disability after muscle and skeletal injuries and surgery.

Directed by Kristin Archer, PhD, DPT, associate professor and vice chair of Research in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, the center is part of the department and the Institute for Medicine and Public Health at Vanderbilt and is supported by the Center for Health Services Research.

Musculoskeletal conditions – including arthritis and low back pain – are among the leading causes of disability worldwide and are among the largest financial drains on the health care system.

What's needed is an integrated, comprehensive approach to recovery, said Archer, who has a doctorate in physical therapy and PhD in health policy and management from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in Baltimore, Maryland.

The center focuses on four main research areas – chronic pain, spinal pain, sports medicine and trauma.

Goals of the Center for Musculoskeletal Research include:

- Reducing opioid use in the management of chronic pain by providing integrated health services;
- Improving outcomes after orthopaedic surgery and musculoskeletal injury with evidence-based management strategies;
- Developing and validating measurement tools to assess clinical risk factors and outcomes; and
- Establishing infrastructure for clinical registries

The center will support scientific investigation and clinical dissemination of musculoskeletal research through seed grants, travel awards, seminar series, invited speakers and mentoring opportunities for trainees. Center faculty will have access to core resources such as statistical expertise, research coordinators and spine registry data.

Archer also has been appointed research director of the [Osher Center for Integrative Medicine](https://www.vanderbilthealth.com/osher) (<https://www.vanderbilthealth.com/osher>), which uses proven, research-based therapies such as yoga, acupuncture, massage and mind-body counseling in conjunction with traditional medicine to help clients achieve better health.

Core faculty for the new center span multiple departments in the School of Medicine including Orthopaedic Surgery, Internal Medicine, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and Psychiatry and Behavioral Services, as well as the School of Nursing.

“The idea is to take the integrative practice modeled at Osher and try to integrate that into some of the other clinical settings around Vanderbilt,” she said.

For more information visit the website at <https://www.vumc.org/musculoskeletal-research/> (<https://nam05.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.vumc.org%2Fmusculoskeletal-research%2F&data=02%7C01%7Cdoug.campbell%40vumc.org%7C475effb2c1d24cb631ba08d70a2>)


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