Each year, we are furthering our goal to strengthen our ties not only to the Gainesville community, but also to the larger community of geriatric research and care. Over the past several months, we have bolstered our relationship with a premier skilled nursing facility in Gainesville, Signature HealthCARE. We’ve joined forces with the company to provide on-site medical professionals for the facility’s older adult patients at every point during the week.

Bhanuprasad Sandesara, M.D., lends his expertise as medical director of the facility. The presence of Sandesara and physician’s assistant Angeline Leong helps in the transition of care as patients are released from UF Health Shands Hospital to the skilled nursing facility and, eventually, home.

While strengthening these community bonds, we continue investigating the underlying principles of aging. Recruitment for the Enabling Reduction of Low-Grade Inflammation in Seniors, or ENRGISE, pilot study is well underway. UF Institute on Aging researchers Yenisel Cruz-Almeida, Ph.D., Adam Woods, Ph.D., and Thomas Buford, Ph.D., have also received funding for a project to further investigate the effect of inflammation reduction in the trial participants who visit the UF site.

We continue to support faculty in embarking on this kind of research. Fellow IOA researchers Shinichi Someya, Ph.D., and Eric Porges, Ph.D., have recently been promoted to tenured associate professor and assistant professor, respectively. We also hope to expand our clinical faculty, and are searching for a physician with both research and clinical experience.

We appreciate your partnership and support in our mission to unpack the science of aging and to help older adults live healthy and independent lives through providing high-quality care.

Sincerely,

Marco Pahor, M.D.
Director, UF Institute on Aging
The Institute on Aging has recently joined forces with Signature HealthCARE, a skilled nursing facility in Gainesville that provides both short-term rehabilitation and long-term care for its patients.

In forging this partnership, the Institute on Aging hopes to help provide medical support for patients who live in the facility full-time or are there during a transition period between a hospital stay and home.

Beginning in October 2015, Bhanuprasad Sandesara, M.D., an assistant professor in the department of aging and geriatric research and attending physician at the Institute on Aging’s Senior Care Clinic, became Signature’s medical director, and Angeline Leong started as Signature’s physician’s assistant.

Sandesara and Leong’s presence as a geriatrician and physician’s assistant will help support the continuity of care for older patients as they transition from the hospital into the skilled nursing facility. UF Health’s geriatricians can communicate directly with a medical professional who is frequently on site to facilitate the care of patients from when they leave the hospital to when they receive care from Signature HealthCARE.

“We wanted to evolve the model of care with bringing a physician and the physician’s assistant into the facility every day of the week,” said Laurence M. Solberg, M.D., an associate professor in the department of aging and geriatric research and chief of the division of geriatric medicine. “This way, the patients can get the best medical care while they are undergoing rehabilitation.”

The first phase of the Enabling Reduction of Low-Grade Inflammation in Seniors, or ENRGISE, pilot study has begun: Researchers are now recruiting participants in six study locations in addition to the Institute on Aging.

The pilot study examines the effects fish oil and the blood pressure medication losartan have on the very low, chronic levels of inflammation older adults often develop. This kind of inflammation has been linked to a host of medical conditions such as Alzheimer’s, Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

“The question we are asking is whether reducing the level of these inflammatory proteins will maintain older people’s physical function and mobility, prevent mobility disability, and ultimately help them maintain independence,” said Marco Pahor, M.D., director of the Institute on Aging.

As part of the ENRGISE pilot study, Institute on Aging clinical researchers Yenisel Cruz-Almeida, Ph.D., Adam Woods, Ph.D., and Thomas Buford, Ph.D., have funded a project through the UF Claude D. Pepper Older Americans Independence Center to study the effect of inflammation reduction on the study participants’ pain, cognitive function and body composition.

“As part of the main ENRGISE trial, we can ask the study participants to visit our site a few extra times and get additional information the main trial does not obtain,” Cruz-Almeida said.

Cruz-Almeida and Woods will use brain scans and cognition tests to test for markers of neuroinflammation and to test for changes in pain and cognition. Buford will use body scans to assess the changes to the muscle, bone and adipose tissue a person may have after the treatment.

Shinichi Someya, Ph.D., was recently promoted to tenured associate professor in the department of aging and geriatric research. Someya, who has been with the department since 2011, studies how cochlear hair cells — nerve cells involved in hearing — and cells that form structures in the cochlear duct deteriorate with age.

Eric Porges, Ph.D., was recently promoted to assistant professor in the Cognitive Aging and Memory Clinical Translational Research Program in the Institute on Aging and the department of aging and geriatric research. Since arriving at UF in 2016 as a postdoctoral associate, Porges has focused on the application of advanced neuroimaging methods to better understand age-related changes in cognitive and socioaffective function.

The Institute on Aging is hiring a physician-researcher! In particular, we are searching for a physician who can translate research findings into clinical practice — and turn clinical practice into research findings.