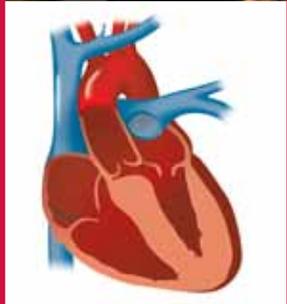




Gootter Endowed Chair for Sudden Cardiac Death Research Established



For Jil C. Tardiff, MD, PhD, the University of Arizona Sarver Heart Center’s reputation in heart muscle research was a major draw in her decision to accept the *Steven M. Gootter Endowed Chair for the Prevention and Treatment of Sudden Cardiac Death*.

“I am primarily a basic science researcher, specifically a muscle biologist, and the UA—stretching back to Eugene Morkin (a founding co-director of Sarver Heart Center)—always has been known as a stellar center for muscle research. That reputation continues to this day and the opportunity to interact directly with scientists like Carol Gregorio, Henk Granzier and Paul Krieg—to name but a few—was a significant attractant. Cardiac muscle is an inherently difficult system to study and having like-minded colleagues with such varied approaches is a major advantage to any research program,” says



Jil Tardiff, MD, PhD, at the Gootter Grand Slam Gala Dinner where her appointment was celebrated.

Dr. Tardiff, who recently joined the faculty as a professor in the Department of Medicine, Section of Cardiology, and the Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine in the UA College of Medicine, and the BIO5 Institute.

The UA’s “large and vibrant” Department of Physiology is another important factor to this physician-scientist, as is the emphasis on translational research that expands the role of physician-scientists who apply clinical experience to lab studies in the hope of improving patient care. “I like the energy here and am looking forward to developing

ways to both attract more junior investigators and encourage undergraduates and medical students to consider careers in biomedical research,” says Dr. Tardiff. As a southern California native, she also is enjoying a return to the Southwest after spending the past 25 years in New York City. “I was born and raised in southern California, so this is a bit of a homecoming for me.”

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Fernando D. Martinez,
MD



Allan and Alfie Norville

Dr. Tardiff's recruitment was made possible by support from the Steven M. Gootter Foundation and accelerated by a grant from the UA Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CTSI). Under the leadership of Fernando D. Martinez, MD, the UA CTSI provides the groundwork for therapeutic medical advances in priority areas, including cardiovascular disease. In March this year after seven years of fundraising, the Gootter Foundation met its goal of \$2 million for the endowed chair. Their goal was reached early when Allan and Alfie Norville, long-time Sarver Heart Center and Gootter Foundation supporters

stepped forward with a generous gift during the Gootter Gala dinner.

"We truly could not be happier with the appointment of Jil Tardiff as the *Steven M. Gootter Endowed Chair for Sudden Cardiac Death Research*. Dr. Tardiff's unparalleled expertise in hypertrophic cardiomyopathy coupled with her drive and passion to improve treatment and find a cure for this insidious disease makes her uniquely qualified for the position," says Claudine Messing, spokesperson for the Gootter Foundation and sister of Steven.

"I have tremendous respect for the Gootter Foundation and the work of the UA Sarver Heart Center Resuscitation Research Group. In many ways there is no greater gift than a successful resuscitation or 'save.' It gives someone a second chance in a situation where all would be lost. To develop all of these programs, provide AEDs and help broaden the knowledge in the community of the new approach to CPR that was developed at the UA is an incredible accomplishment," says Dr. Tardiff.

"The Gootter Foundation also emphasizes the important and active role that independent

foundations and donations can play in furthering health goals. My entire career has been focused on developing new approaches to alter the natural history of hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (HCM). The goal is to identify relatives at risk to prevent a cardiac arrest," says Dr. Tardiff.

Starting her medical career as an endocrinologist, Dr. Tardiff recalls a patient that changed her entire career trajectory. "This patient was resuscitated from a sudden cardiac arrest and turned out to have HCM. Many, many groups have wrestled with the difficulties in linking genotype (genetic makeup) to phenotype (physical characteristics) in the past 20 years and it has become very clear that new, results-oriented approaches are needed, both with respect to bench research and clinical diagnosis," she says.

From the bench research side, these novel experimental methodologies are, by definition, high-risk, meaning that there is no guarantee that they will work at first and often need significant development time. "I have earmarked the proceeds from the Gootter Chair to fund only my most creative and cutting edge work; it is a tremendous advantage for this program," says Dr. Tardiff.

HCM Clinic on the Horizon

Dr. Tardiff's inspired thinking doesn't end in the lab, but extends to the dream of establishing a clinic that focuses on HCM patients. "While HCM is a common disorder that affects one in 500 people, there is no dedicated HCM program in the Southwest and while developing such a comprehensive program is a daunting goal, we already have a growing Congenital Heart Disease Clinic in conjunction with Pediatric Cardiology. Given that HCM remains one of the most common genetic causes of sudden cardiac death, the establishment of such a program, where entire families can receive cutting-edge care, is a great fit with both the stated goals of the Steven M. Gootter Foundation and the College of Medicine's goals of increasing the academic efforts where the next generation of doctors can learn to diagnose and treat HCM," says Dr. Tardiff. ♥