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Casa Colina Team Lands \$2M Grant

HOWARD FINE - SEPTEMBER 30, 2024



Leader: Caroline Schnakers with a patient.

This story has been updated and corrected.

A multi-institution research team led by Pomona-based **Casa Colina Research Institute** has received a four-year, \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Defense to study the use of ultrasound technology to treat individuals with severe brain injury.

Led by Casa Colina Research Institute's assistant director of research, **Caroline Schnakers**, the researchers are pioneering an experimental, non-surgical intervention for severe brain injury called "low-intensity focused ultrasound stimulation."

The study explores the degree to which sonic stimulation can modulate brain function and enhance recovery of consciousness in patients with "disorders of consciousness," defined as a coma, vegetative state or other similar disorders. Currently, there are few treatment methods for this group of patients.

The project is a multi-institutional collaboration between Casa Colina Research Institute, **UCLA**, the **Harvard/Spaulding Rehabilitation Network** in Boston and **Massachusetts General Hospital**, also in Boston.

"The overall goal of our research is to positively impact the treatment of patients surviving moderate or severe brain injuries," Schnakers, the project's principal investigator, said in the grant award announcement.

"We hope this can serve as a steppingstone for the development of a neurorestorative intervention that can be used in both civilian and military hospitals and, eventually, in the acute care and long-term care settings."

The Casa Colina Research Institute was established 14 years ago as the research arm of Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare, a Pomona-based nonprofit provider of specialized medical and rehabilitative care. The research institute seeks to measure the impact of medical rehabilitation and develop new therapies for conditions and impairments treated at the hospital, such as brain injuries, concussions, spinal cord injuries and strokes.

Casa Colina Hospital and Centers for Healthcare was founded in 1936, with the hospital opening in late 1938. Its original mission was to provide care for children left disabled by the polio epidemic that swept through the nation in the mid-1930s. The hospital and health care centers currently provide medical-surgical and intensive care, acute rehabilitation, residential rehabilitation and long-term residential care. Outpatient services include orthopedic and neurologic rehabilitation, physician clinics, children's services, diagnostic imaging, laboratory, audiology and day treatment.

One of the hospital's higher-profile patients was a survivor of the Oct. 1, 2017, mass shooting at the Route 91 Harvest Festival in Las Vegas. The patient, **Katrina Hannah**, was shot once in the shoulder and once in the neck, initially partially paralyzing her. After months of therapy at the hospital, she began walking again.

Howard Fine

Howard Fine is a 23-year veteran of the Los Angeles Business Journal. He covers stories pertaining to healthcare, biomedicine, energy, engineering, construction, and infrastructure. He has won several awards, including Best Body of Work for a single reporter from the Alliance of Area Business Publishers and Distinguished Journalist of the Year from the Society of Professional Journalists.