

The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth Houston)
Institutional Biosafety Committee
August 13, 2026
Minutes

Meeting Attendance:

Voting Members

Dr. Catherine Denicourt (Chair)
Dr. Carolyn Grimes
Dr. Nicholas Justice
Dr. Ashish Kapoor
Dr. Yang Liu
Dr. Yahuan Lou
Dr. Duc Nguyen
Dr. Eunsu Park
Dr. Scott Patlovich
Dr. Brett Perkison
Dr. Jose Portugal
Mr. Spencer Chichester (SM)
Mr. Jesus Duran Ramirez (SM)
Mr. Petko Ivanov (CM)
Mr. Imad Khalil (CM)

Non-Voting Members

Dr. Joy Harrison
Dr. Kristin King
Dr. Mary Robinson
Mr. Colin Harrison
Mr. Zack Becker
Ms. Rebecca Kairis
Ms. Allison Lino
Ms. Meredith Mills

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Denicourt at 3:00 PM.

2. Conflicts of Interest

The Chairperson reminded the committee about the conflict of interest procedure. She also reminded the committee members that all protocols that are discussed at the meeting are to be considered confidential and are not to be discussed outside of the meeting with non-IBC members.

3. Review Previous Meeting Minutes (July 09, 2026)

Approved = 12
Opposed = 0
Abstained = 3

4. IBC Administrative Items

Announcement of change in reporting structure for EHS (SHERM) to Michael Patriarca.

IBC Membership Renewals

- Review of IBC Members with terms ending August 31, 2026

[USG Policy for Stopping High-Risk Life Sciences Research](#)

- Announcement of new policy and UTHealth Houston Biosafety Program action items for implementation and education.

Recombinant or Synthetic Nucleic Acid Molecules Research Applications Review

During the review, the committee assessed the containment levels as well as the facilities, procedures, practices, and training and expertise of the personnel involved in recombinant or synthetic nucleic acid molecules research. The committee also reviewed agent characteristics, types of manipulations planned, sources of the inserted nucleic acid sequences, the nature of the inserted nucleic acid sequences and whether an attempt will be made to obtain expression of a foreign gene, and if so, the protein that will be produced. Furthermore, the PI must determine the applicable section(s) of the *NIH Guidelines*.

5. Clinical Protocol Reviews (HGT)

IBC-26-051 – Dr. Hope Northrup – “A Master Protocol for a Phase 1/2 Study to Evaluate the Safety and Efficacy of BEAM-304 Drug Products in Patients with Phenylketonuria (PKU) having Specific Homozygous or Compound Heterozygous Mutations”

Containment Level: BSL-2; no animal work associated with this protocol

NIH Section: III-C-1

Training status: Personnel listed on the protocol must complete safety training

Approved = 15

Opposed = 0

Abstained = 0

The protocol was presented and approved, pending completion of safety training requirements and clarification about the stability of the IMP once injected as the primary handling for our staff will be of collected human samples.

IBC-26-066 – Dr. Suur Bilicier – “A Randomized Double-Blind Placebo-Controlled Study to Evaluate Efficacy, Safety, and Tolerability of Descartes-08 in Patients with Dermatomyositis and Antisynthetase Syndrome (Protocol RNAC-Triton-08)”

Containment Level: BSL-2; no animal work associated with this protocol

NIH Section: III-C-1

Training status: Personnel listed on the protocol must complete safety training

Approved = 15

Opposed = 0

Abstained = 0

The protocol was presented and approved, pending completion of safety training requirements and clarification of the “cell processor” role.

6. Protocol Reviews

IBC-26-067 – Dr. Mark Burish – “The Will Erwin Headache Research Center study of cluster headache and trigeminal neuralgia (WEC): A cellular model of cluster headache: human fibroblasts to study circadian rhythms”

Containment Level: BSL-2; ABSL-1

NIH Section: III-D-1-a, III-D-4-a, III-F-8

Training status: Personnel listed on the protocol are current on safety training

Approved = 14

Opposed = 0

Abstained = 0

The protocol was presented and approved, pending clarification on the use of transgenic mice and review of the EBV strain and any additional risk management needed.

IBC-26-068 – Dr. Laura Goetzl – “Determine the test performance and clinical validity of adult treponemal IgM assays in neonatal Congenital syphilis diagnosis”

Containment Level: BSL-2; no animal work associated with this protocol

NIH Section: N/A

Training status: Personnel listed on the protocol are current on safety training

Approved = 15

Opposed = 0

Abstained = 0

The protocol was presented and approved, pending clarification in the protocol summary on the use of neuronally derived extracellular vesicles.

7. Conditionally Exempt Protocol Reviews

IBC-26-063 – Dr. Zhongcong Xie – “Noninvasive optical assessment of neuroprotection in deep hypothermic circulatory arrest procedures”

IBC-26-064 – Dr. Jessica Schucht – “Human Organoid Models for Trauma Research”

8. Protocol Updates

a. Significant updates:

None

b. Administrative updates:

IBC-22-040 – Dr. Wenbo Li – “Elucidating eRNA Biology in Breast Cancer” AND Beyond Gene Dosage: Understanding Down Syndrome via 4D Genome Organization” AND “Mechanisms underlying Enhancer RNP mediated gene regulation and genome organization” AND “Enhancer RNAs in brain gene regulation and Alzheimer's disease”

AND “Novel roles of TAZ/YAP in DNA Damage repair, 3D genome organization and Therapeutic Resistance in Glioblastoma” AND “Elucidating T Cell Ferroptosis in Renal Medullary Carcinoma: 3D Genome Architecture Rewiring and Therapeutic Alleviation”

- **Addition of bioagent:** Antibodies (Trastuzumab monoclonal antibody and antibody-oligonucleotide conjugates)

IBC-22-071 – Dr. Kristin Mahan – “Role of the circadian clock in health and disease” AND “Metabolic consequences of adipocyte progenitor replicative senescence: mechanism and intervention” AND “The Role of the Paraventricular Hypothalamus in the Rhythmic Regulation of Feeding and Metabolism”

- **Addition of bioagents:** Mouse cells (CT2A, GL261)
- **Removal of personnel:** Rachel Van Drunen, Ruwaida Ahmed, Sina Noori
- **Addition of personnel:** Paula Bender, Tonghui Lin, Andy Escalante
- **Addition of location:** SRB 221

IBC-23-009 – Dr. Jordan Lake – “Umbrella protocol for the study of clinical, virological and immunological outcomes in HIV/HCV infected individuals.” AND “Understanding the Spectrum of Liver Health in HIV Infection” AND “Understanding the Contributions of HIV Infection and Hormone Therapy to Cardiovascular Disease Risk Among Transgender Women: A Deadly Crossroads?” AND “Cardiometabolic Risk in Transgender Women and its Relationship to HIV Infection and Feminizing Hormone Use” AND “The Impact of Cannabinoids on Inflammation, HIV Viral Load and Symptoms of Distress among Persons Living with HIV/AIDS.” AND “Hepatic effects of simultaneous supra physiologic Estradiol supplementation and androgen deprivation in transgender women initiating gender-affirming hormone therapy” AND “Sarcopenic Obesity and Relationships with Immunometabolic Parameters in People with HIV” AND “**The burden of sarcopenic obesity in chronic HIV and its implications in hepatic steatosis**” AND “**Role of FGF21 in HIV-Associated NAFLD**”

- **Addition of bolded titles**
- **Removal of titles:** “HIV Replicative Fitness in the setting of Anti-retroviral Drug Resistance”; “HIV Reservoir Characterization before and after Hormone Replacement Therapy”; “Feminas Study Stored Sample Analysis”; “A Phase 3b, Multicenter, Open-Label Study to Evaluate Switching From a Regimen of Two Nucleos(t)ide Reverse Transcriptase Inhibitors (NRTI) plus a Third Agent to a Fixed Dose Combination (FDC) of Bictegravir/Emtricitabine/Tenofovir Alafenamide (B/F/TAF), in Virologically-Suppressed, HIV-1 Infected African American Participants”; The Prevalence of and Risk Factors for Fatty Liver in HIV Infected Individuals Attending Multiethnic Urban HIV Clinics”; “Explorations into the mechanism for INSTI-associated weight gain: a focus on energy balance.”

IBC-23-049 – Dr. Anna Konovalova – “Mechanism of signal transduction across the bacterial cell envelope” AND “Biogenesis of the gram-negative bacterial cell envelope” AND “**Mechanism of the Regulator of Capsule Synthesis Stress Response**” AND “**Outer membrane remodeling to overcome Bam complex deficiency**”

- **Removal of titles:** “Biogenesis of Surface-exposed Lipoproteins in Gram-negative Bacteria”, “Biogenesis and maintenance of bacterial cell surfaces”
- **Addition of bolded titles**
- **Addition of bioagents:** Bacteria (*Proteus mirabilis*, *Enterobacter cloacae*, *Salmonella enterica* subsp. *enterica*, serovar Typhimurium, *Klebsiella pneumonia*

strain NR5452)

- **Addition of personnel:** Layne Smith

IBC-23-071 – Dr. Ashish Kapoor – “Molecular genetics of human diseases and traits” AND “Identifying Cis-Regulatory Variants, Genes, and Regulatory Networks Underlying QT Interval Variation”

- **Addition of personnel:** Catherine Omole

IBC-23-082 – Dr. Nicholas Justice – “Transformation of the stress response into motor behavior by the external globus Pallidus” AND “Postpartum expression of CRF receptors by Oxytocin neurons” AND “Investigating the anatomy and function of converging cholinergic inputs to central stress circuits” AND “Dorsal Striatal CRF and Alcohol Release” AND “Direct activation of CRF neurons by Abeta disrupts the stress response in Alzheimer's Disease”

- **Removal of locations:** SRB 401A, 404, 418, Vivarium
- **Addition of locations:** MSE R227A, R231, R231A, Vivarium

IBC-24-069 – Dr. Brian Skaug – “Pathogenic effects of DNASE1L3 R206C polymorphism in systemic sclerosis pathogenesis”

- **Addition of personnel:** Deokhwa Nam
- **Removal of personnel:** Xinjian Guo
- **Update AWC:** Updated AWC number is AWC-26-0033

IBC-24-072 – Dr. Vijayasree Vayalanellore Giridharan – “Role of Alternative Polyadenylation in Cognition”

- **Addition of work:** Work related to the stereotaxic injections of miR-203 into the medial prefrontal cortex of mice.
- **Removal of personnel:** Shahrazad Polk
- **Addition of locations:** BBSB 6224 or 6270

IBC-25-028 – Dr. Diana Proctor – “The human microbiome”

- **Addition of bioagents:** *Abiotropha defectiva*; *Actinomyces* spp. (*A. gerencseriae*, *A. naeslundii*, *A. oris*); *Corynebacterium* spp. (*C. durum*, *C. matruchotii*); *Fusobacterium nucleatum*; *Gemella* spp. (*G. haemolysans*, *G. morbillorum*); *Neisseria* spp. (*N. mucosa*, *N. sicca*, *N. subflava*); *Prevotella* spp. (*P. denticola*, *P. intermedia*, *P. melaninogenica*, *P. nigrescens*, *P. oralis*, *P. pallens*); *Rothia* spp. (*R. dentocariosa*, *R. mucilaginosa*); *Streptococcus* spp. (*S. gordonii*, *S. mitis*, *S. mutans*, *S. oralis*, *S. sanguinis*); *Veillonella* spp. (*V. atypica*, *V. dispar*, *V. parvula*); *Lactobacillus* spp. (*L. rhamnosus*, *L. reuteri*, *L. oris*); *Olsenella* spp.
- **Add CPHS protocol number:** HSC-MS-25-022

IBC-25-046 – Dr. Louise McCullough – “BioRepository of Neurological Disorders”

- **Removal of personnel:** Ana Cahuiche Saiz, Prasen Marella, Patrick Eagen, Ana Petway, Maya Hoffman, Lori Capozzi, Mahan Shahrivari
- **Addition of personnel:** Nathan Lopez, Jennifer Torres, Ana Del Rio, Ana Maldonado Arzaga

IBC-25-079 – Dr. Carmen Dessauer – “Regulation Of Adenylyl Cyclase Signaling Pathways” AND “Cellular Signaling Mechanisms that Drive Persistent Hyperexcitability in Nociceptors” AND “Mechanisms of Opioid Resistance after Spinal Cord Injury” AND

“Regulation of nociceptor excitability by macrophage migration inhibitory factor (MIF) as a therapeutic strategy for chronic pain treatment after spinal cord injury”

- **Addition of work:** AC activity assays, mass spectrometry, and bioinformatic analysis of atrial tissue
- **Addition of bioagent:** Human atrial tissue
- **Update IRB:** Adding HSC-MS-26-0479

IBC-26-005– Dr. Zhichao Xu – “Decoding Enhancer Range and Compatibility to Predict and Block Enhancer Hijacking”

- **Addition/Change of Title:** Remove “Modeling Enhancer Hijacking in Cancer via Genome Engineering and Single-Cell Sequencing” and Add/Change to “Decoding Enhancer Range and Compatibility to Predict and Block Enhancer Hijacking”

9. BSL-3 Update

Update on BioFire Global Special Pathogens testing.

10. Biological Safety Program Activity Report

The Biological Safety Program Activity Report was included in the packet for review. There were five reported incidents in July, all within CLAMC.

11. Environmental Protection Program Activity Report

The Environmental Protection Program Safety Program Activity Report was included in the packet for review, although July data was not available. Autoclave training for CLAMC staff was conducted in response to an incident.

12. Other Items

Researchers with RAS (SPH) have moved to PHB. The ACL2 Insectarium was verified by Biological Safety as compliant with ACL guidelines. Updates to IBCs are forthcoming.

13. Next Meeting

The meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2026, 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM, virtually via Microsoft TEAMS.

14. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Dr. Denicourt at 4:00 PM.