

# Robert A. Hiatt, MD, PhD

## academia

1. Professor and Co-Chair Department of Epidemiology & Biostatistics
2. Deputy Director and Director of Population Sciences  
UCSF Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center
3. Adjunct Investigator, Division of Research, Kaiser Permanente
4. Professor of Epidemiology (Adjunct),  
University of California Berkeley

# Career

- BS (UoMich) – MD (UoMich) – MPH (UCB) - PhD(UCB)
- SFGH - USPHS/UCSF - Private practice - Kaiser Permanente - NCCC- NCI - UCSF
- Engineering - 'Social Medicine' - Neurosurgery - Internal Medicine – Epidemiology
- Past President of ACE (1998-1999)

# Prior Research

- Parasitology - Renal - Vaccines - AIDs - Cancer
- Impact of schistosomiasis at pop level
- Acute schistosomiasis
- Diet and kidney stones
- Hemophilus B Vaccine efficacy
- Alcohol and breast cancer
- Community interventions in cancer screening for diverse populations
- Strategies for Cancer Control Research

# Current Research

- Breast Cancer and the Environment - Determinants of Puberty - Coordinating Center
- Cancer Burden in Northern California
- New Paradigm for Breast Cancer Etiology
- Personalized Medicine & Cancer Genetics
- Early Development and Cancer Disparities

# Advantages of Working in Academia

- Academic freedom
- Intellectually stimulating
- Opportunities for creativity
- Transdisciplinary science
- Independence
- Body of work – sense of accomplishment
- Teaching/mentoring/students
- Many options

# Disadvantages of Working in Academia

- Need to float your own boat – “soft money”
- Pressure to work toward tenure
- Obtaining grant support
- Committee work expectations
- Lack of security
- High salaries uncommon
- Impact of contractions in the economy

# Advice on Preparation for Academic Career

- Be sure that's what you want
- Get a sound epidemiologic education
- Demonstrate that you can 'do it' (e.g., pubs, projects, research assistant experience)

# What does academia offer that other settings don't?

- Primary focus on education and research
- The pleasures of having trainees
- High degree of independence
- One gets to do one's own research
- Freedom to go in new directions



# Key lessons learned

- Seek out good collaborators
- Keep a balanced 'portfolio'
- No real problems that money can't solve
- Space frequently an issue
- 'Floss' ('Kurt Vonnegut' –Mary Schmich, 1997)

# Advice to new researchers/epi students entering Academia

- Epidemiology is the “Epicenter” of translational science
- Epidemiology may be the only discipline that is comfortable spanning “cells to society”
- Epidemiology has a set of methods, but also a unique perspective on populations, disease origins and where new knowledge can be applied for the benefit of individuals and the public health