BioSpectrum
the business of Bio & Health Sciences
ASIA EDITION

Kevin Niswender named as the Director of the Clinical Research Center at Vanderbilt University

December 1, 2017 | News

Niswender has succeeded Mr. David Robertson, MD Elton Yates Professor of Autonomic Disorders, who had directed the CRC since 1989 and recently prepared for retirement.



Kevin Niswender, MD, PhD, whose work has helped advance understanding of the neural underpinnings of obesity and metabolic syndrome, has been named director of the Clinical Research Center (CRC) at Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC).

Niswender has succeeded Mr. David Robertson, MD Elton Yates Professor of Autonomic Disorders, who had directed the CRC since 1989 and recently prepared for retirement.

“Dr. Robertson is an amazing physician-scientist, mentor, friend, and CRC director. To step into his role leading such a productive translational research unit is humbling,” said Niswender, associate professor of Medicine and of Molecular Physiology and Biophysics.

“We have a world-class faculty and amazing investigators performing human-oriented research. It is an honor to assist them in achieving their goals,” he added. “While I am excited by the emerging portfolio of research in diabetes, obesity and metabolism, I also look forward to helping develop and support research in all of the exceptional programs for which the CRC

is a critical resource."

"Clinical and translational research is a strength at Vanderbilt," said Nancy Brown, MD, Hugh J. Morgan Professor of Medicine and chair of the department.

"Under David Robertson the Clinical Research Center has been the catalyst for discovery in humans. There is no one better suited to follow in Dr. Robertson's footsteps than Dr. Niswender."

Born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Niswender earned his Bachelor of Science degree from Colorado College in Colorado Springs and his MD and PhD degrees from Vanderbilt. He received residency training at the University of Washington in Seattle and stayed on for clinical and research fellowships in metabolism, endocrinology and nutrition.

In 2004 Niswender returned to Nashville as assistant professor of Medicine in the Division of Diabetes, Endocrinology and Metabolism at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and as staff physician for the Tennessee Valley Healthcare System (Nashville Veterans Affairs Medical Center). He was promoted to associate professor in 2011.

Niswender directs the Metabolic Physiology Shared Resource in the Vanderbilt Diabetes Research and Training Center. He just stepped down from directing the Body Weight Regulation Core in the Vanderbilt Mouse Metabolic Phenotyping Center and co-chairing the Scientific Review Committee in the Vanderbilt Institute for Clinical and Translational Research.

He is the author or co-author of more than 80 scientific papers published in peer-reviewed journals.

His work has focused on how changes in insulin and dopamine signaling induced by high-fat feeding alter feeding behavior in ways that lead to obesity and related disorders including high blood pressure and diabetes.

With colleagues in the Vanderbilt Center for Neuroscience Drug Discovery, Niswender has been developing small molecule-based therapeutics for modulating the activity of the glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor, a highly validated target for treating diabetes and obesity.

In 2016 he won a Harrington Scholar-Innovator Award from the Harrington Discovery Institute at University Hospitals at Cleveland (Ohio) Medical Center for developing novel compounds for diabetes, psychiatric and neurodegenerative disorders.

Niswender is a member of the Vanderbilt Digestive Disease Research Center and the Vanderbilt Brain Institute and an elected member of the American Society of Clinical Investigation.

He leads a Precision Obesity Medicine center at VUMC, part of a Strategically Focused Research Network with Johns Hopkins University, New York University Medical Center and the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

The network was established in March with a $15 million, four-year research award from the American Heart Association.