

Neurology News & Notes

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Message from the Chair

As we enter the month of August, I'm grateful to our faculty, trainees, and staff, as everyone has continued to provide high quality patient care through every facet of our department, while still innovating and advancing research in neurologic diseases.

I'd like to remind all our academic neurologists – as well as residents – that the 148th American Neurological Association (ANA) annual meeting will take place in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from September 9-12, 2023. Since this annual meeting will be taking place in our home state, I have been participating in the local subcommittee to help increase our visibility as an academic neurology department and training program in Pennsylvania. We will also provide material that details the history of the University of Pittsburgh Department of Neurology. I forward to seeing any faculty and trainees in Philadelphia who can make it – this is an excellent opportunity for networking with other academic neurologists in a more intimate setting. For those of you presenting at the ANA meeting, please share details with Lauren Stanick.

It is very exciting to see the community engagement our faculty and staff have been involved with over the past month; whether it be a community event to bring awareness to a certain neurological disease, speaking to children about the importance of sleep at a summer camp, or being recognized for your professional efforts in the workplace, I'm happy to see the pride everyone takes in their work in our department.

I would also like to commend our PGY-1 residents for completing the Neurology Bootcamp last month – we all look forward to working with you in various clinical settings! Please see the pictures included further into this newsletter.

For all staff members at any of our neurology locations, please send any news or accomplishments of yourself or your colleagues to Lauren Stanick so she may feature them in this newsletter. This can include anything from service anniversaries to a community engagement event.

I am very excited about the future of department – with the capable hands and bright minds we have at our disposal, we will no doubt be able to continue evolving it in a positive direction!

With great appreciation,

Page B. Pennell, MD, FAES

Chair and Henry B. Higman Professor of Neurology





Awards

Stetler Formally Accepted into AAAS Fellowship Cohort

R. Anne Stetler, PhD, has been accepted into the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences' (AAAS) newest class of science and technology policy fellows. The fellowship, which will take place in Washington, D.C., will utilize Dr. Stetler's experience studying the mechanisms underlying stroke pathogenesis.

Dr. Stetler will spend her time at the National Science Foundation's new Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships (TIP). TIP works across the NSF's directorates with industry and nonprofit partners to accelerate or grow the basic sciences into translation. Her office will be interfacing academics, the private sector, and the government – her role specifically will involve data analytics, impact communication, and input how to steer policy.

“The networking between fellows, current and alumni, is one of the long-term impacts that can facilitate tackling future issues wherever I am and underlies a career-long coordinated effort in tending toward the health of the scientific infrastructure in the United States,” says Dr. Stetler.

While this fellowship intentionally does not limit the incoming fellows in terms of career-progress, Dr. Stetler intentionally put off her application. “I considered applying for this fellowship about seventeen years ago as an early stage post-doc, but decided that having the working experience as a tenure-track funded research scientist would give me a depth of understanding that goes beyond postdoc, not only from my own experience but from my colleagues' as well”.

UPMC Presbyterian Receives National Recognition From AHA

In April 2023, UPMC Presbyterian received the American Heart Association Get With The Guidelines - Stroke GOLD PLUS with Target: Stroke Honor Roll Elite Plus and Advanced Therapy.

These quality achievement awards are for an organization's commitment to ensuring stroke patients receive the most appropriate treatment according to nationally-recognized, research-based guidelines, ultimately leading to more lives saved and reduced disability.

Get With The Guidelines puts the expertise of the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association to work for hospitals nationwide, helping ensure patient care is aligned with the latest research - and evidence-based guidelines. Get With The Guidelines - Stroke is an in-hospital program for improving stroke care by promoting consistent adherence to these guidelines, which can minimize the long-term effects of a stroke and even prevent death.

Namrata Kumari Awarded Research Fellowship from Alzheimer's Association

Namrata Kumari, PhD, a post-doctoral research associate in Abby Olsen's research lab, has been accepted into the Alzheimer's Association International Research Fellowship Grant Program.





The AARF-D is a unique opportunity that allows Kumari to gain the critical technical skills from her mentorship team: Drs. Aby Olsen, Gulnaz Begum, Sarah Berman and Julia Kofler. Additionally, as a foreign national Dr. Kumari is not eligible for NIH-based training fellowships; this fellowship will allow her to benefit from the structured resources of the Alzheimer's Association as well as attend their annual meetings to present her work to key leaders in the field.

Dr. Kumari plans to determine the mechanism of adenylate kinases in dementia with Lewy bodies using three complementary systems: *Drosophila*, mouse primary cortical neurons and astrocytes in co-culture, and human post-mortem brain tissue. This work will increase our understanding of these genes and advance them as potential therapeutic targets.

Clinical Trials, Studies & Research

Pitt NeuroNEXT Site Renewed for 5 Years

The University of Pittsburgh NeuroNEXT clinical study site (NEXT-UP) was renewed for continued participation as one of around 25 academic sites in the NINDS-sponsored NeuroNEXT clinical trials network with a goal to collaboratively accomplish multi-site, human clinical trial research in neuroscience.

The current active NeuroNEXT trial is NN111 EXTINGUISH trial testing treatment for NMDAR receptor encephalitis, with the NEXT-UP site in this trial led by site PIs Cigdem Isitan and Lori Shutter.

As the renewed NeuroNEXT network ramps up, there will be additional studies conducted by the network. We appreciate the participation of Neurology department physicians and study coordinators with completion of feasibility questionnaires, provision of project grant application materials and conduct of NeuroNEXT trials.

The NEXT-UP Steering Committee members are Zongqi Xia, Valerie Suski, Deepa Rajan, Yoshi Sogawa, Kerry Oddis and Paula Clemens.

Exposure to Antiseizure Medications Does Not Harm Neurological Development in Young Children



Cognitive outcomes at age 3 years in children with fetal exposure to antiseizure medications (MONEAD study) in the USA: a prospective, observational cohort study

*Kimford J Meador, Morris J Cohen, David W Loring, Abigail G Matthews, Carrie Brown, Chelsea P Robalino, Angela K Birnbaum, Paula E Voinescu, Laura A Kalayjian, Elizabeth E Gerard, Evan R Gedzelman, Julie Hanna, Jennifer Cavitt, Maria Sam, Jacqueline A French, Sean Hwang, Alison M Pack, Page B Pennell, for the MONEAD Investigator Group**



Page Pennell, senior author

Investigators found no difference in neurodevelopmental outcomes between children with fetal exposure to newer antiseizure medications compared with unexposed children. Some exposure-dependent antiseizure medication effects were seen in secondary analyses. The adverse effects of maternal post-birth anxiety emphasise the importance of screening mothers during pregnancy and postpartum and implementing interventions. Additional studies are needed to clarify the exposure-dependent effects.

Milestones & Recognition

Two Faculty Members Take Part in the UPMC Physician Leadership Essentials Program



Rajasekaran

The UPMC Physician Leadership Essentials program is part of a multi-year, comprehensive approach to physician leadership development; it will focus on multiple interventions over time to address the development needs of the entire physician employment life cycle. The program includes more than 40 hours of leadership and management instruction in addition to several self-assessments, class discussions, readings, homework, and a capstone project.

Congratulations to Viji Rajasekaran for completing this program! This is an exceptional achievement and we look forward to seeing how the program honed your leadership skills and approach to the workplace.



Hathidara

Mausaminben Hathidara is currently in Cohort U of Physician Leadership Essentials program, which began in June 2023. Dr. Hathidara is a vascular neurologist with a primary clinical commitment at the UPMC Altoona Campus.

Dr. Hathidara says, "Leadership is a skillset integral to achieve personal and organizational goals successfully. I find leadership intellectually stimulating as it constantly challenges me to be innovative and teaches me new lessons of human psychology. The UPMC Physician Leadership Essentials program presented me with an excellent opportunity to understand UPMC structure as an enterprise. Through this program, I am very much looking forward to develop better self-awareness of personal leadership style to improvise and overcome challenges, cultivate strategic mindset and connect with colleagues from different fields within the institute."

Rajasekaran Becomes Newest Member of UPMC GME Committee

Vijayalakshmi Rajasekaran has been welcomed as the newest member of the UPMC Graduate Medical Education Committee's subcommittee on Accreditation, Review, and Quality (ARQC).

The ARQC is responsible for coordinating both the internal and external review processes of all accredited training programs within the UPMC Health System. The subcommittee's primary focus is on monitoring program compliance with the accrediting body's institutional and program-specific requirements. This occurs through internal institutional reviews and subsequent follow-ups, as well as through coordination of the program's responses to any citations and concerns that result from periodic external reviews of its electronic status updates, resident and faculty survey results, and other reports. The ARQC also makes recommendations to the GME Committee regarding program director appointments, changes in program complement or structure, and other issues relevant to accreditation and the fostering of excellence in our training programs.



Urban

Urban Celebrates Six Years as Epilepsy Fellowship PD

Alexandra Urban, MD, recently celebrated her six-year anniversary of being the program director for the epilepsy fellowship. We're proud to have a faculty member like Dr. Urban leading the program and supporting its fellows!



Chauvel

Chauvel Receives Promotion

Congratulations to Patrick Y. Chauvel, MD, on his promotion from Visiting Professor to Professor!

Community Engagement

Fong-Isariyawongse Speaks to Children at the Batch Camp

Joanna Fong-Isariyawongse was recently invited by Latasha Wilson-Batch, M.S, NCC, and Charlie Batch, MSL, to speak to the children at Camp Batch about the importance of healthy sleep. Thank you to the Best of the Batch Foundation for advocating for community health and youth development!



Epilepsy Division Participates in EAWCP Family Run/Walk

Our epilepsy division - registered as Team Your Best Chance - took part in the Epilepsy Association of Western and Central PA's 35th Annual Family Fun Run/Walk for Epilepsy at PNC Park. They successfully met AND exceeded their fundraising goal of \$2500 with \$2704! The proceeds from this event will stay in western and central Pennsylvania to benefit the programs and supportive services offered by the EAWCP, which are aimed to support people living with seizures.



Resident's Corner

Residents Participate in Summer Neurology Boot Camp

The Neurology Boot Camp is a two-week program that provides an abundance of lectures and simulations that residents participate in. The academic chiefs, Ameneh Zare Shahabadi and Bishow Mahat, residency program director, Ajitesh Ojha, and senior residents were instrumental in making this successful!



Humza Ahmed Receives Professionalism Accolade

Humza Ahmed, PGY-4, recently received a Professionalism Accolade from the Learning Environment at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Ahmed received this accolade from one of the medical students he helped at the Pittsburgh VA, who was anxious to complete his first clinical clerkship with a physical disability. It is rare for such a glowing report to come in from the medical students, and it stands to show the type of leader and role model Dr. Ahmed is.

Staff Section

Kerry Oddis Recruited as NeuroNEXT Program Manager

Congratulations to Kerry Oddis, RN, who was recruited to the position of NeuroNEXT program manager for NEXT-UP in May 2023, filling the position vacated by the retirement of Christine Amity. Many will know Kerry, because of her 17-year tenure in the department contributing her outstanding skills as a study coordinator to human clinical studies in many divisions of the University of Pittsburgh Department of Neurology.

Integral to her role as NeuroNEXT program manager, Kerry will serve as a resource and coordinator of study coordinators in the department. This is a new role, which will be developed in collaboration with a newly established Clinical Research Committee for the Department of Neurology.

Kimberly McGonigle Nominated as Honorary Member in Chatham University Honor Society

Kimberly McGonigle has been nominated to Chatham University's Pi Alpha Honor Society chapter, part of the national honor society for Physician Assistants. This nomination was based on her contributions and long-term commitment to the profession.

Pi Alpha was organized for the, "promotion and recognition of significant academic achievement, leadership, research, community/professional service, and the

encouragement of a high standard of character and conduct among PA students and graduates”. Congratulations Kimberly on this well-deserved achievement!

Service Anniversaries

Thank you to all who celebrate a service anniversary this month! Your hard work and dedication to helping innovate and provide the best possible care is what helps our department shine. Congratulations on another year of hard work!

Faculty

- Barbara Vogler - 8/1/2006
- Erek Lam - 8/1/2012
- Houman Homayoun - 8/1/2012
- James Castellano - 8/1/2018
- Meghana Gaekwad - 8/1/2019
- Patrick Chauvel - 8/1/2020
- Leana Doherty - 8/1/2021
- Joseph Malone - 8/1/2022
- Sarah Wondisford - 8/1/2022
- Ali Fadhil - 8/1/2022
- Holly Appleberry - 8/1/2022
- Carolina Cuello-Oderiz - 8/12/2022
- Jan Drappatz - 8/15/201

Staff

- Heather McKeel - 8/15/2022
- Courtney Shafer - 8/16/2021
- Rica Howarth - 8/17/2021
- Summer Eckhart - 8/21/2017
- Jennifer Smith - 8/22/2016
- Lauren Stanick, 8/23/2021
- Hiromi Ogiso, 8/27/2018



Funding & Career Development Opportunities

2024 AAN Awards - Applications Now Open!

Share your achievements with the global neurology community! There's a prestigious 2024 AAN award to honor everyone across all career stages and over a wide range of scientific research, quality, practice, and diversity, equity, and inclusion contributions.

Look for special filter options that allow you to sort awards based on location, applicant type, career level, or practice setting to find the perfect award for you!

Recipients will be recognized and celebrated during the 76th AAN Annual Meeting in Denver, Colorado, next April. These AAN awards offer opportunities to be honored during conferences, receive travel stipends, and the chance to present your work to your colleagues.

[APPLY NOW for 2024 AAN Awards](#)

Neurology Philanthropy Partners

Why should you partner with philanthropy?

1. Philanthropy can result in direct funds for your research, equipment, training, and patient care needs
2. Learn more about how our partners can engage your patients, families, and department alumni to express gratitude to support our mission
3. Work with a partner to come up with a customized approach that works best for you
4. Justin and Stacie are available to meet with you virtually or in-person at your convenience



Justin Meyer

Grateful Patients and Families

jrm233@pitt.edu

(412) 482-4319 (call or text)



Stacie McAllister

Grateful Patients and Families

slm162@pitt.edu

(412) 482-4312 (call or text)



New Faculty & Staff

This month we had three new faculty members and one new staff member start in the department. Welcome to the Department of Neurology!



Petra Brayo, MD
Multiple Sclerosis/Neuroimmunology Division



Rahiwa Gebre, MD
Epilepsy Division



Marissa Gogniat, PhD
Division of General Neurology



Abigail Biery
GME Academic Manager

Upcoming Events

2023 EEG and Epilepsy in Clinical Practice, September 14-16

This program is an opportunity for a wide range of professionals to expand their knowledge and acquire and improve competencies for providing care to patients with epilepsy and related conditions. This is a 2.5-day course designed to introduce core clinical epilepsy and EEG, as well as cutting edge pre-surgical evaluation techniques for drug resistant (DRE) epilepsies. This is a didactic and interactive format.

Who should attend: Neurologists, neurocritical care specialists, psychiatrists, neurosurgeons, internal medicine and family practice physicians, advanced practice providers, technologists, and trainees in these disciplines.

Course Location:

Biomedical Science Tower S120
UPMC Presbyterian
200 Lothrop Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15213



Alexandra Urban, MD
Course Co-Director



Anto Bagic, MD, PhD
Course Co-Director



Jorge González-Martínez, MD, PhD
Course Director

Tuition:

\$350 for physicians (CME credits)
\$250 for non-physicians (CEU or other credits)
\$150 for UPMC employees

This course is offered as a hybrid model, with online (Zoom) and in-person options available. Tuition is the same for both. All course lectures will be recorded and made available for all attendees to view via Google Drive for one year after the course.

View the course agenda and register here: <https://procirca.com/intensive-eeg-and-epilepsy-course/>

Frontiers in Neurosurgery and Neuromodulation: Innovation and Leadership in Epilepsy, Movement Disorders and Spasticity Conference, September 28-29, 2023

The Department of Neurology will have several faculty members speaking at this conference. Join the University of Pittsburgh Department of Neurological Surgery for this two-day presentation and discussion on innovations in epilepsy, movement disorders, and spasticity care. Sessions will be centered around current state-of-the-art treatment methods as well as the future of the neuromodulation field. The symposium is under the direction of Jorge A. González-Martínez, MD, PhD, director of the University of Pittsburgh's Epilepsy and Movement Disorders Program and a world-renowned leader in the care and treatment of epilepsy and movement disorders.

Over the last 20 years, the surgical treatment for patients with epilepsy, movement disorders and spasticity have experienced a dramatic evolution, favoring the improvement of clinical results and safety. In this context, the upcoming neuromodulation field—applied to different neurological conditions—has provided additional treatment alternatives and hope for patients with medically intractable conditions. The Frontiers in Neurosurgery and Neuromodulation symposium is a focused and practical symposium dedicated to neurologists, general practitioners, mid-level providers, students, surgeons and patients interested in learning and discussing current state-of-the-art treatment methods, as well as the future of the neuromodulation field.

Patients and family members will also get the opportunity to pose questions to our experts during a special "Patient/Family Discussion" session on Friday from 1-2:30 p.m. There is no charge for patients or family members to attend this session.

Course Location:

Wyndham Pittsburgh University Center
100 Lytton Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Tuition:

Physicians/Administration/General Registration: \$300
Nurses/APPs/Students/Residents: \$0
First Responders: \$0

View the course agenda and register here: <https://bit.ly/3B7LONB>



American Neurological Association Annual Meeting

Join the ANA for the 2023 American Neurological Association Annual Meeting (ANA2023) from September 9-12, 2023 at the Philadelphia Marriott Downtown in Philadelphia, PA.

The ANA's 148th Annual Meeting will convene the nation's top academic neurologists and neuroscientists. The Meeting will feature six main symposia, which highlight groundbreaking conceptual and therapeutic advances in a variety of neurologic disease states, as well as interactive lunch workshops, special interest group sessions, and the ANA's celebrated poster sessions.

Other Meeting highlights include:

- Presidential Symposium
- Opening Symposium on Saturday evening (September 9)
- Plenary Sessions on key scientific advances, featuring data blitz presentations
- Professional Development Courses for academic neurologists at every career level
- Interactive Lunch Workshop sessions
- Special Interest Group (SIG) Sessions
- Women of the ANA luncheon
- And much, much more!

Meeting Location

Philadelphia Marriott Downtown
1201 Market Street,
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Main phone: (212) 625-2900

Who Should Attend

The ANA Annual Meeting has something to offer for everyone: medical students, residents, academic neurologists in their first faculty position, mid-level professionals and department chairs. ANA2023 is the ideal conference for any clinician-scientist looking to learn about cutting-edge research in the field and exchange ideas with thought leaders in academic neurology.

Neurology students and residents can benefit from the insight of senior investigators, while experienced academic neurologists can meet up-and-coming talent in the field. The Annual Meeting also features career development sessions that offer strategies for achieving professional success, whether you are a student deciding which subspecialty to pursue or a department chair seeking best practices in administration.

Upcoming Neurology Grand Rounds Information

Are you interested in being a Neurology Grand Rounds speaker?

The Neurology Grand Rounds planning committee are interested in having topics related to neurosurgery, new imaging developments/Radiology and neurology-relevant topics. *Be sure to check your emails each week for the invite link.*

Please email Audrey at rohea@upmc.edu with your suggestions and questions.

Thursday, September 7, 2023

Aaron Berkowitz, MD, PhD, FAAN (Outside Speaker)

“Global Neurological Health and Infectious Diseases”

Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Place: Scaife 1105ABC and online

Thursday, September 14, 2023

Murat Sari, MD

“Social Determinants of Health”

Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Place: Scaife 1105ABC and online

Thursday, September 21, 2023

Neurology Faculty Meeting (Bi-monthly)

Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Place: BST 100 and online

Thursday, September 28, 2023

Wouter I. Schievink, MD (Outside Speaker)

“Treatment of Spinal CSF Leaks”

Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Place: BST S120 and online

Thursday, October 5, 2023

Teun Teunis, MD, PhD

“Peripheral Nerve Repair in the Upper Extremity”

Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Place: Scaife 1105ABC and online

Thursday, October 12, 2023

Speaker: TBD

Lecture: Topic TBD

Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Place: Online only

Thursday, October 19, 2023

James Castellano, MD, PhD

Topic TBD

Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.

Place: Scaife 1105ABC and online

Thursday, October 26, 2023

Claire Creutzfeldt, MD (Tara Cook Memorial Neuropalliative Care – Outside

Speaker)
Topic TBD
Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Place: Scaife 1105ABC and online

Thursday, November 2, 2023

Speaker: TBD
Topic TBD
Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Place: BST S100 and online

Thursday, November 9, 2023

Rani A. Sarkis, MD, MSc (Outside Speaker)
Topic TBD
Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Place: Scaife 1105ABC and online

Thursday, November 16, 2023

Neurology Faculty Meeting (Bi-monthly)
Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Place: Scaife 1105ABC and online

Thursday, November 23, 2023

No Grand Rounds (Holiday)

Thursday, November 30, 2023

Howard Aizenstein, MD, PhD
“Deep Learning in Geriatric Mental Health”
Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Place: Scaife 1105ABC and online

Thursday, December 7, 2023

Wesley T. Kerr, MD, PhD
“Topic Data and statistics to improve patient care for those with epilepsy”
Time: 12:00-1:00pm
Place: Online only

Thursday, December 14, 2023

Vanessa Dwairi, MD (PGY-4 Resident)
Topic TBD
Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Place: Online only

Thursday, December 21, 2023

Aliana Giacobbe, MD (PGY-4 Resident)
Topic TBD
Time: 12:00 - 1:00 p.m.
Place: Scaife 1105ABC and online

Thursday, December 28, 2023

No Grand Rounds (Holiday)