

Neurology News & Notes

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Message from the Chair

As we enter the month of April, I'm grateful to our faculty, trainees and staff as they have continued to provide high quality patient care through every facet of our department, innovate and advance research in neurologic diseases.



We are extremely excited to welcome our 2023 match class of residents! Interviews of UPMC Neurology resident applicants went very well and we have a talented group of PGY-1's set for the upcoming academic year. Welcome to Matthew Flounders, Pratiti Ghosh-Dastidar, Shruti Iyer, Anna Kaiser, Rebia Khan, Shivaati Maddali, Gina Mavhezha, Frances Lee Mueller and Sarah Yaghoubi!



**2023 University of Pittsburgh
Neurology Residency Program Matches**



				
Matthew Flounders Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine	Pratiti Ghosh-Dastidar University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences	Shruti Iyer Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute	Anna Kaiser Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine	Rebia Khan University of Arizona College of Medicine - Phoenix
				
Shivaali Maddali Albany Medical College	Gina Mavhezha Indiana University School of Medicine	Frances Lee Mueller University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine	Sarah Yaghoubi Chicago College of Osteopathic Medicine of Midwestern University	

Thank you to the many clinical & research faculty and the residents for taking time to recruit this next group of residents. The applicants particularly noted how engaging the residents were in their virtual evening group gatherings and how it really set our program apart! Special thank you to Samantha Kunvatanagarn and her team for providing such an organized and welcoming experience.

The American Academy of Neurology 75th Annual Meeting will be taking place in Boston, Massachusetts, April 22-27. I'm pleased to say we have a large portion of

our faculty and trainees traveling to the conference to present abstracts, lectures and network with other neurologists from around the world. Please remember that if you are participating in any program or presenting an abstract or lecture, let our communications coordinator, Lauren Stanick, know so that she may publicize our presence at the conference.

SAVE THE DATE! The department will once again be hosting a reception at the AAN Annual Meeting. On Tuesday, April 25, from 7:30 - 9:30 p.m. at the Omni Boston Hotel at the Seaport, please join us for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres if you are attending. I am looking forward to seeing everyone there after last year's success!

I am very excited about the future of our Department of Neurology - continuing to evolve it in a positive direction definitely takes a village!

Cheers,

Page B. Pennell, MD, FAES

Chair and Henry B. Higman Professor of Neurology

Awards

Pennell Awarded Ambassador for Epilepsy by ILAE

Page B. Pennell, MD, has been named an Ambassador for Epilepsy for 2023 by the International League Against Epilepsy. This award is intended as a recognition of outstanding international contributions to activities advancing the cause of epilepsy, either internationally or with international impact. Out of thirteen awardees, Dr. Pennell is the only recipient from the United States.



Hu Receives RF1 Award from NINDS and NIA

Xiaoming Hu, MD, is the recipient of a three-year RF1 award for the study, "White matter injury and repair in vascular cognitive impairment and dementia". The award is co-funded by the National Institutes of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) and the National Institute of Aging (NIA). The total award amount - including indirect costs - over a three-year period is \$2,241,853.



This study will elucidate the role adiponectin and adipocyte-derived cytokine in promoting white matter integrity. It is hypothesized that adiponectin protects oligodendrocytes and enhances reparative microglial responses. The award will be in effect from April 2023 to March 2026.

Milestones & Recognition

Knepper and Yanta Recognized for Service to UPSOM

Laurie Knepper, MD, and Claire Yanta, MD, have been recognized by the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine for their outstanding contributions to the medical school curriculum committee. Both physicians have served on the curriculum committee for years as active voting members, working diligently on subcommittees and task forces to help improve the MD curriculum through design, development and monitoring.



Laurie Knepper, MD



Claire Yanta, MD

While this job may sometimes fly under the radar and go unrecognized, the School of Medicine wouldn't be able to function without the dedication of the active members of the curriculum committee. Our department is proud of the hardwork and time Drs. Knepper and Yanta have put into making the MD program outstanding!

Castellano Named Vice Chair of Institutional Review Board

James F. Castellano, MD, PhD, has been named the Vice Chair of the University of Pittsburgh Institutional Review Board. He is due to start in July 2023.

Mahat and Tandon on Consult Service in Malawi

Bishow Mahat, MD, (PGY-3), and Medha Tandon, MD, (PGY-3) are currently in Malawi! Each year, PGY-3 residents in the global neurology track spend a month at Kamuzu Central Hospital in Malawi as part of the consult service. Way to make a difference on a global scale! This is just one of the many ways our resident program provides opportunities for trainees.



Wittenberg Joins Scientific Advisory Board at Neuro-Innovators

George F. Wittenberg, MD, PhD, will bring his stroke rehabilitation expertise to Neuro-Innovator's Scientific Advisory board. Dr. Wittenberg has extensive experience in upper-body rehabilitation using transcranial magnetic stimulation, robotics for repetitive physical exercises, virtual reality training and other methods.

Neuro-Innovators is a clinical-stage drug company that focuses on engineering drugs to accelerate brain neuroplasticity for patients suffering from brain injuries and diseases. To find out more about Neuro-Innovators, please visit

<https://neuro-innovators.com>.



Zaydan to Present Multiple Sclerosis Clinic Model at PVA Healthcare Summit and Expo

Islam Zaydan, MD, co-director of the Multiple Sclerosis Comprehensive Care Center at the University of Pittsburgh Multiple Sclerosis Center of Excellence at the Pittsburgh VA Hospital, will present the Pittsburgh VA's comprehensive MS clinic model at the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) Healthcare Summit and Expo, August 14-17 in Orlando, Florida. The clinic experience will be presented as an exemplary model to be followed by other VA hospitals.





The PVA Healthcare Summit is a three-day learning and sharing experience that provides the most updated and vital information, state of the art research and emerging science that can be used in caring for individuals with spinal cord injury and disease, multiple sclerosis and ALS.

The comprehensive multiple sclerosis clinic at the Pittsburgh VA provides all-inclusive care for veterans with multiple sclerosis; this means that veterans will receive an evaluation by multiple providers in one visit to ensure that all the patient's needs are addressed. Services that are currently provided at the clinic include neurology, speech/language pathology, cognitive evaluations, physical and occupational therapy, social work, clinical pharmacists, palliative care and neuro-ophthalmology. With the opportunities available, UPMC residents, third- and fourth-year medical students, and medicine residents and geriatric fellows rotating in neurology are afforded unique educational opportunities.

Dr. Zaydan says that he's optimistic about services that will be added to the multiple sclerosis clinic within the next few months. "These are things like starting a safety initiative that provides a Life Alert to every patient with mobility problems or of certain elderly age. The Living with MS initiative will provide weekly services in the comprehensive clinic that allows providers to keep regular communication with patients."

Clinical services at the VA are offered face-to-face and virtual, as well as infusion services in all satellite hospitals in the local network that serves Western Pennsylvania, Eastern Ohio, Western Maryland and West Virginia.

"With the elements of education, research and clinical practice, as well as the comprehensive care clinic," says Dr. Zaydan, "We were designated a Regional Center of Excellence," by the VA Centers of Excellence East Network MSCoE.

Clinical Trials, Studies & Research

Congratulations to Zongqi Xia, MD, PhD, who received a new R01 grant in 2022 from the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, entitled "Real World Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in people with multiple sclerosis (MS)". The project aims to leverage multiple real-world data sources to inform the clinical management of MS in relation to COVID-19. Given the rapidly changing landscape of neurological care, the proposed study aims to address salient knowledge gaps in clinical management of people with MS during the pandemic and its aftermath.

Dr. Xia also received a new research grant in 2023 from the Pittsburgh Foundation, entitled "Effect of dietary prebiotics on the gut microbiome in people with multiple sclerosis (MS)". The Project aims to examine the mechanism of dietary intake of fermentable fiber on the gut bacterial metagenome profile in people with MS who completed a mechanistic trial of prebiotics. This proposed study will help identify and pave the way for future large-scale randomized trials assessing the clinical efficacy of prebiotics as either an MS monotherapy or a complementary therapy.

Congratulations to George F. Wittenberg, MD, PhD, who's manuscript "Epidural stimulation of the cervical spinal cord for post-stroke upper-limb paresis" in *Nature Medicine*, received widespread press coverage in outlets such as the New York Times, NPR, BBC as well as other national and local outlets.





He also had the collaborative study “Association of brain age, lesion volume, and functional outcome in patients with stroke” accepted in *Neurology*.

Congratulations to James F. Castellano, MD, PhD, who was part of a study published online in *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology, “Association of Posttraumatic Epilepsy With Long-term Functional Outcomes in Individuals With Severe Traumatic Brain Injury”.

Researchers performed a retrospective analysis of a prospective database including consecutive patients who had severe TBI and were admitted to a single Level 1 trauma center from 2002 through 2018. Patients, aged 16-80 years old, were enrolled with a post-resuscitation Glasgow Coma Scale of less than or equal to 8.

Research personnel then recorded characteristics including age, pupil reactivity, GCS score and neurosurgical procedures; a trained neuropsychologist at in-person, outpatient follow-up visits at the three-, six-, twelve- and twenty-four-months post-trauma through a structured interview using the Glasgow Outcome Scale, which categorizes the outcomes of patients after TBI.

In the 392 patients that were monitored within the cohort, 98 (25%) of them developed PTE and 77 (79%) of the patients within that quarter had their first seizure within two years of trauma. 73% of that quarter sect of patients experienced seizure recurrence within the study period (two years), but a majority of seizures occurred months to years later in an outpatient setting.

Dr. Castellano says, “Our results underscore the importance of the prompt identification and management of epilepsy in patients who have suffered traumatic brain injury”.

Neurology[®] AMERICAN ACADEMY OF NEUROLOGY

March 22, 2023 RESEARCH ARTICLE

Association of Posttraumatic Epilepsy With Long-term Functional Outcomes in Individuals With Severe Traumatic Brain Injury

Matthew Pease, Arka N Mallela, Jonathan Elmer, David O. Okonkwo, Lori Shutter, Niravkumar Barot, Jorge Gonzalez-Martinez, James F. Castellano

First published March 22, 2023. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1212/WNL.000000000000207183>

Objective: Nearly one-third of severe traumatic brain injury (TBI) patients develop post-traumatic epilepsy (PTE). The relationship between PTE and long-term outcomes is unknown. We tested if, after controlling for injury severity and age, PTE is associated with worse functional outcomes after severe TBI.

Funding & Career Development Opportunities

NOTE: The following funding and development links can also be found on www.neurology.pitt.edu/research under the Funding and Career Development tab. To view the links listed here, please copy and paste the hyperlink into a web browser.

New NIH “FORMS-H” Grant Application Forms and Instructions Coming for Due Dates on or after January 25, 2023
(NOT-OD-22-195)

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-22-195.html>

Notice of Special Interest (NOSI): Research on the Health of Bisexual and Bisexual+ People

(NOT-OD-22-166)

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-22-166.html>

Advancing Research to Understand Congenital Malformations (R01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

(PAR-22-215)

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-22-215.html>

Pediatric Scientist Development Program (PDSP) (K12 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

(RFA-HD-23-034)

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HD-23-034.html>

Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence (U54 Clinical Trial Optional)

(RFA-HD-23-035)

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HD-23-035.html>

Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence Data Innovation and Coordinating Hub/Resource Center (U24 Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

(RFA-HD-23-036)

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HD-23-036.html>

Maternal Health Research Centers of Excellence Implementation Science Hub/Resource Center (U24 Clinical Trial Optional)

(RFA-HD-23-037)

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-HD-23-037.html>

New Faculty & Staff

Welcome to the newest members of our department!

Faculty



Robert Joshua, MD

Telemedicine

Start Date: 1/1/23



Ingrid Loma-Miller, MD

Neuroimmunology/Multiple Sclerosis

Start Date: 1/1/23



Marlene Bednar, MD

Start Date: 3/1/23



James Sejvar, MD

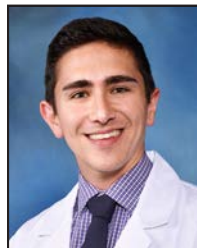
Start Date: 5/1/23



Wesley Kerr, MD, PhD

Epilepsy

Start Date: 7/1/23



Aaron Nehamkin, MD

Neurohospitalist

Start Date: 7/1/23



Lawrence Wechsler, MD

Cerebrovascular Medicine

Start Date: 7/1/23



Petra Bray, MD

Start Date: 8/1/23



Rahiwa Gebre, MD

Start Date: 8/1/23



Marissa Gogniat, PhD

Neuropsychology

Start Date: 8/1/23

Staff



Stephanie Allien, PA-C

Director of Advanced Practice Neurology

Start Date: 2/13/23



Justin Lander, CRNP

APP Supervisor; Community-Based APP's

Start Date: 7/1/23



Bethany Bugay

Credentialing Coordinator

Start Date: 3/27/23



Summer Eckhart

Administrative Assistant

Start Date: 3/27/23