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## Message from the Chair

With the end of the year around the corner, I want to thank everyone in the Department of Neurology for your dedicated work to bring excellent neurologic care to an ever increasing number of patients, to educate students and trainees in the neurosciences and clinical neurology, and to create new discoveries to lower the burden of neurologic diseases.



It is wonderful to see the department grow in a positive direction, and I am excited to see continued blossoming of the department as we enter the new year.

A friendly reminder to all UPMC and University of Pittsburgh employees in our department: our annual holiday party will be taking place Friday, December 8, starting at 6:30 p.m. at the Pittsburgh Golf Club. I look forward to seeing everyone there!

Wishing everyone a healthy and happy holiday.

Cheers,

Page B. Pennell, MD, FAES

*Chair and Henry B. Higman Professor of Neurology*

## Awards

### Denise Boger Wins The UPMC Extra Mile Award

We're proud to announce that Denise Boger, a patient services representative at the UPMC Headache Center, is the winner of the UPMC "The Extra Mile" Quarter 3 Award!

Denise was nominated by Barbara Wintermantel, practice manager at the UPMC Headache Center. Read Barbara's nomination below:

*"Denise is one of the hardest workers I know. She goes above and beyond not only for our patients, but for our providers and her coworkers. She picks up work whenever someone is off, falls behinds or they just need a little encouragement to make it through the day she is there to lend a helping hand. Denise goes above and beyond for our headache patients. When scheduling tests for them she works with departments within UPMC and the patient to make sure we can meet the patients needs. She advocates for the patients to meet their needs. An example of this was ..... There was a student athlete that needed testing ASAP after their appointment with one of our providers and Denise reached out to several facilities and kept making calls until she could arrange the test so the athlete would be able to have it done so they could participate in their first game. Both the coach and athlete reached out to me to say how impressed they were her determination to make this happen.*

*Denise will take time with our elderly patients who do video visits and will walk them through step by step until she knows they are logged on for their appointment. Providers often tell me she has the patience of*

*a saint for all she deals with. Denise often does things to brighten up our office to provide a cheery atmosphere. Her wit, her humor and her small gestures, such as a tablecloth in our kitchen for whatever season it is to bringing bags in chips, cookies or fruit that she brings out when someone is having a bad day. Her empathy, compassion and kindness adds a special touch to our headache center and we are lucky to have her as part of our team. Providers and co-workers know they can always count on her to complete the task and keep smiling while she is doing it no matter how she is feeling inside. She is a true star employee."*

The Extra Mile award recognizes staff, leaders, and physicians within the Physician Services Division (PSD) who go the extra mile beyond their required job responsibilities. These employees go above and beyond their job duties, maintain a high office morale and actively display UPMC values.



### **Fong-Isariyawongse Elected to AAN Leadership Forum and Recipient of Advocacy Grant**

Joanna Fong-Isariyawongse has two separate accomplishments with the American Academy of Neurology (AAN). Most recently, Dr. Fong-Isariyawongse has been selected to participate in the AAN Women Leading in Neurology leadership program. This is a program designed to help mid-career participants tackle gender disparities head-on, create a peer network with other AAN members, and advance to the top levels of leadership within their fields and AAN. She has also been awarded the 2024 AAN Palatucci Advocacy Grant for her advocacy efforts; the AAN Advocacy Engagement Subcommittee was extremely impressed with her application.



### **Doheim Receives Travel Award for ISC 2024**

Mohamed F. Doheim - clinical research fellow and post-doctoral associate at the UPMC Stroke Institute - has been awarded a Junior Investigator Travel Grant through the program committee at the 2024 International Stroke Conference and the American Heart Association for his abstract "One-year Outcomes After Endovascular Treatment for Posterior Circulation Tandem Occlusions: A Multicenter Experience of 249 Patients".

Dr. Doheim will have the opportunity to present one oral presentation, two moderated posters and one poster presentation; additionally, he will be a part of three other contributions.

## **Clinical Trials, Studies & Research**

### **Department of Neurology Clinical Trials Committee**

The University of Pittsburgh and UPMC Department of Neurology have established a clinical research committee. Its mission is to create a resource that will support clinical research in the department through shared guidance, training and assistance with high-level issues with general benefits. They will address issues as they arise in the conduct of human clinical research within the department; they will also serve as a liaison to the University of Pittsburgh Clinical Trialist Community.

Paula R. Clemens, MD, currently serves as the committee chair; other members include Drs. Sarah Berman, Zongqi Xia, James Castellano, and Ingrid Loma-Miller, as well as Kerry Oddis, Jackie Jones, and Denise McCarthy. Ex-officio members are Emily Stayshich, Jessica Saunders, and Page Pennell.



The committee meets on a monthly basis; if there are any questions, please direct them to any committee member or Kerry Oddis.

## **Wittenberg Lab Updates**

George Wittenberg has several updates from the month of November.

- Consented a participant for the Spinal Cord Stimulation for Stroke study and expanded the age range of Pre-Motor Reach Study
- The total enrollment is now 18/20 controls and 5/20 stroke participants for the Brain Connections for Arm Movement After Stroke project, with two additional participants completing the study this month
- Started a new collaboration with Doug Weber regarding the use of transcranial magnetic stimulation in a study of force control at Carnegie Mellon University.
- Dr. Wittenberg was awarded NSF funding for “Use of Augmented Reality and Electroencephalography for Visual Unilateral Neglect Detection, Assessment and Rehabilitation in Stroke Patients” with Dr. Murat Akcakaya as PI.

## **Milestones & Recognition**

### **Aung Completes UPMC Physician Leadership Essentials Program**

Congratulations to Thandar Aung, who recently completed the UPMC Physician Leadership Essentials program. She has successfully completed all program requirements, which include more than forty hours of leadership and management instruction as well as several self-assessments, class discussions, readings, homework and a capstone project.

Dr. Aung was nominated in Fall of 2022 by Drs. Page Pennell and Ira Bergman.

## **Community Engagement**

### **Clemens Hosts Becker Education and Engagement Day**

Paula Clemens hosted a Becker Education and Engagement Day (BEED) at the University of Pittsburgh on Saturday, December 2. BEED is an initiative developed by Becker advocated, clinical sites, advocacy groups and researchers aiming to unite the community. This educational event was free and presented on topics relevant to the Becker community, provided the latest research updates and created an opportunity for those impacted by Becker to connect in-person.



The University of Pittsburgh's BEED took place from 12:00 - 7:00 p.m. and had an extensive agenda:

- Becker Muscular Dystrophy Overview and Care Considerations
- Cardiac and Respiratory Health
- Muscle Health, Physical Therapy and Exercise
- Becker Resource Toolkit
- Living With Becker Muscular Dystrophy
- Becker Clinical Trials Overview
- Meeting the Becker Community's Needs
- Lunch and Reception



### **Fostering Youth Interest in Neuroscience**

Drs. Murat Sari, Ajitesh Ojha and Sitara Koneru took part in STEM Week at the Young Scholars of Greater Allegheny Charter School in McKeesport, PA!

Drs. Sari and Ojha attended the STEAM NIGHT, Wednesday, November 8. Students and their families were in attendance to participate in demonstrations ask questions about different STEAM careers. On Friday, November 10, Drs. Sari and Koneru were in attendance to engage with students during the STEAM Career Fair.



## Annual Meetings

### Society for Neuroscience 2023 Annual Meeting

George Wittenberg and members of his lab attended Neuroscience 2023 in Washington, DC, November 11-15. Dr. Wittenberg chaired a symposium; there were two presentations and multiple posters from lab members on imaging brain changes after stroke.

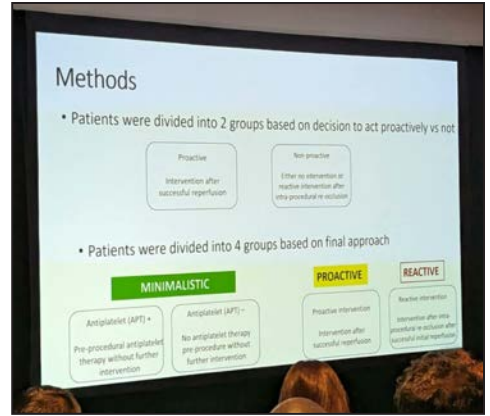


### Society of Vascular and Interventional Neurology 2023 Annual Meeting

Members of our department and the UPMC Stroke Institute recently attended the SVIN 2023 annual meeting in Miami, Florida, November 16-18. This meeting is a premier international academic gathering that covers the full spectrum of cerebrovascular diseases & stroke. Several faculty members & trainees serve as speakers in sessions & symposiums as well as having involvement in several posters.



Raul Nogueira presenting "Brain-Computer Interface: A New Frontier in Neuroendovascular Surgery"



Sitara Koneru presents "Technical Approaches for Intracranial Atherosclerotic Disease Large Vessel Occlusion Strokes"



Bharat Pillai (middle-right) moderates "SVINnovating Systems of Care: Transforming Old Diseases with Innovative Strategies"



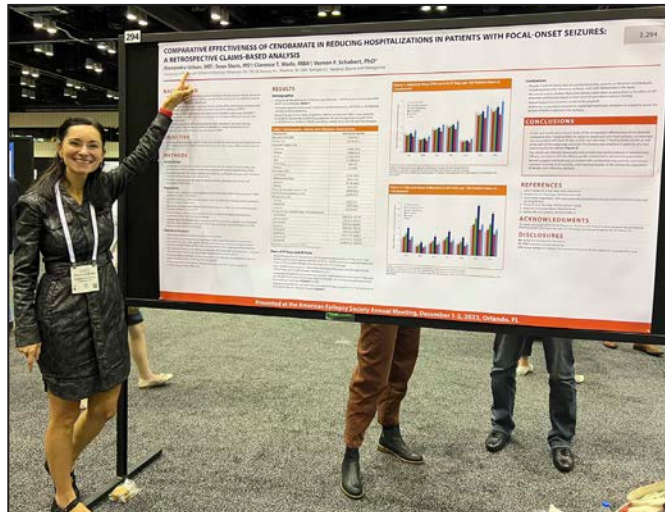
Raul Nogueira presents "Maximizing Outcomes in AIS Techniques: a Trevo + AXS Vecta Combination"



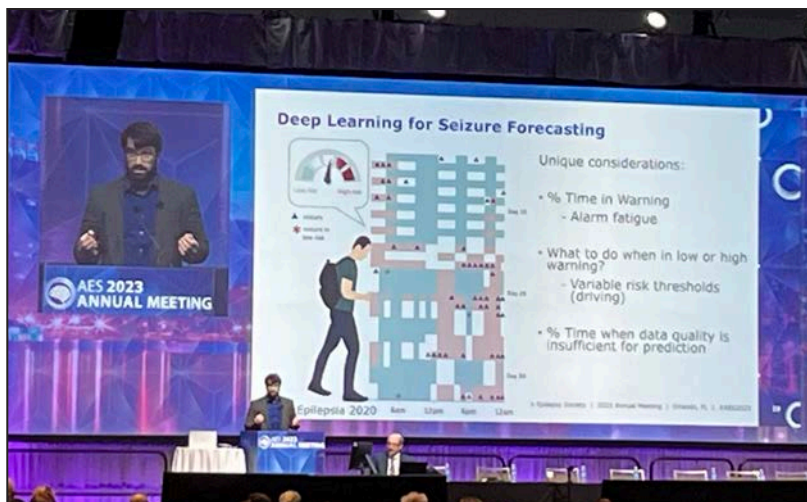
Mausamin Hathidara organized and presented the Neurosonology workshop

## American Epilepsy Society 2023 Annual Meeting

Several faculty members in our epilepsy division were recently in attendance at AES 2023 in Orlando, Florida, December 1-5. We had twenty accepted posters with faculty doing poster presentations, giving standing-room only presentations, being invited speakers/moderators in resident courses, professional development courses, special interest groups, platform sessions, ICWs, and symposiums.



Alexandra Urban presents two posters at AES 2023 (top-right, bottom) and is a speaker at Neuropace's breakthrough clinical trials presentation (top-left).



Wesley Kerr is a featured presenter during the Merritt-Putnam Symposium. He presented "Fundamentals and Principles of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Deep Learning"



*Joanna Fong-Isariyawongse presents "Harnessing the Power of Sleep for Physician Excellence"*



*Faculty, trainees and alumni attend the UPMC Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh evening reception*

## **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**

- Lana Chahine - 12/1/2017

### **Staff**

- Jessica Kunkel - 11/2/2015
- Alexandra Zyznewsy - 12/2/2013
- Donna Bartolone - 12/2/2013
- Kelli Bishop - 12/4/2015
- Kristen Pereira - 12/17/2018
- Zxalasjea Smith - 12/19/2022
- Catherine Opalko - 12/23/2003
- Maranda McGovern - 12/27/2021



## Funding & Career Development Opportunities

### Neurology Philanthropy Partner

#### 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 Justin to create a customized approach that works best for you
4. Justin is 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)

## Upcoming Events

### December Neurology Grand Rounds Information

#### Upcoming Speakers and Topics

Please email Audrey at [rohea@upmc.edu](mailto:rohea@upmc.edu) with any questions.

#### ***Thursday, December 7, 2023***

##### **Wesley Kerr, MD, PhD**

*Topic: TBD*

12:00-1:00 p.m.

Online only (Check email the week of the lecture for the invite link)

#### ***Thursday, December 14, 2023***

##### **Vanessa Dwairi, MD (PGY-4 Resident)**

*Topic: TBD*

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

Online only (Check email the week of the lecture for the invite link)

#### ***Thursday, December 21, 2023***

##### **Alaina Giacobbe, MD (PGY-4 Resident)**

*Topic: TBD*

12:00-1:00 p.m.

Scaife 1105ABC and online (Check email the week of the lecture for the invite link)

#### ***Thursday, December 28, 2023***

**No Grand Rounds (Holiday)**