



Neurology News & Notes

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Message from the Chair

I would like to give a warm welcome to our newest residents and fellows! Our training programs here at the University of Pittsburgh and UPMC Department of Neurology are some of the best in the world; the experiences and rewards gained will be worth your hard work. We look forward to guiding you through your training and watching you develop into well-rounded neurologists and subspecialists.



Our department has a significant number of research scientists receiving R01 awards. These NIH-funded grants are extremely competitive, and I am very excited for our faculty who earned them, as the boundaries of their research will be expanded by the opportunities provided by the grant. Please see below to read about two of the newest R01 grants in our department.

Once again, I'm encouraging all staff members - whether you work in Oakland or at a community neurology location - to 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 promotions to a community engagement event. In *Neurology News & Notes*, we would like to feature staff as well as faculty and trainees. Please reach out to Lauren if you have any questions on what this might entail.

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

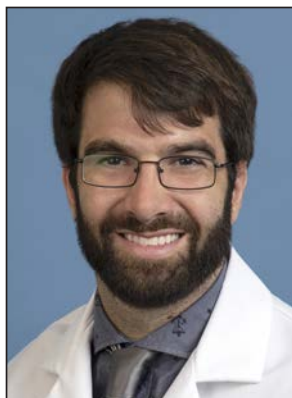
With great appreciation,

Page B. Pennell, MD, FAES
Chair and Henry B. Higman Professor of Neurology

Awards

Susan S. Spencer Clinical Research Scholarship to Help Wesley Kerr Create New Approach to Epilepsy Clinical Trials

In April 2023 at the 75th Annual Meeting, the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) awarded Wesley T. Kerr, MD, PhD - the department's newest faculty member in the epilepsy division - the Susan S. Spencer Clinical Research Training Scholarship in Epilepsy. This two-year award supports clinical research training in the field of epilepsy; it targets new faculty members or fellows to foster the development of clinical care providers interested in pursuing careers in patient-oriented research.



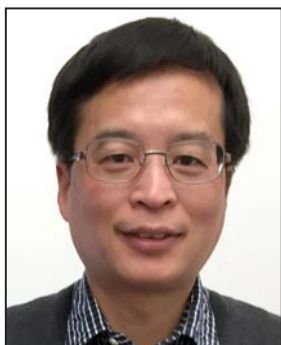
The award will support Dr. Kerr's work in using data to optimize epilepsy clinical trials, which often are expensive, slow, and have difficulty recruiting patients. With his big data expertise, Dr. Kerr has published analyses of prior clinical trials of epilepsy drugs to see if results would differ significantly when employed with a "time to exceed pre-randomization seizure count" (T-PSC) design.

"Almost all the trials I've re-analyzed with a T-PSC design have almost matched or exactly matched the conclusion of the previous trial," Dr. Kerr said. "Our simulation analysis says that the power is possibly 5 to 7 percent lower, which is not a substantial difference. Meanwhile, the average trial would be about 30 percent shorter, and some would have been half as long."

The award - which is funded by the American Epilepsy Society, Epilepsy Foundation, and American Brain Foundation in conjunction with the American Academy of Neurology - consists of \$65,000 per year for two years, plus a \$10,000 stipend per year to support education and research-related costs for a grand total of \$150,000.

To learn more about Dr. Kerr plans for the Susan S. Spencer Award and how both clinical trials and individual patients would benefit from a T-PSC design, please view the original article linked below.

[*Susan Spencer Awardee Proposes a New Approach to Epilepsy Clinical Trials*](#)



Kejie Yin Receives NIH R01 Award and AHA Transformational Project Award

Kejie Yin, MD, PhD, is the recipient of a five-year R01 award for the study, "Targeting Krüppel-like transcription factor for white and grey matter protection in vascular cognitive impairment and dementia". The award is co-funded by the National Institutes of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) and National Institute of Aging (NIA). The total award amount - including indirect costs - over a five-year period is \$3,047,330. The object of this project is to investigate the key role of the Krüppel-like factor 11 in the regulation of long-term cognitive function, brain white matter integrity, and neuronal loss in vascular cognitive impairment and dementia. The award goes into effect July 2023 and ends in April 2028.

Dr. Yin is also funded with a three-year AHA Transformational Project Award for the study entitled "Therapeutic potential of targeting miR-15a/16-1 in ischemic stroke under STAIR criteria" from the American Heart Association. The total award amount is \$300,000 from July 2023 to June 2026. The major goal of this project is to test the therapeutic efficacy of specific miR-15a/16-1 molecular inhibitor (antagomir) in rodent stroke models by following the criteria recommended by the STAIR (Stroke Treatment Academic Industry Roundtable) consortium. Successful completion of this project may eventually lead us to identify novel microRNA-based therapeutic approaches for the treatment of ischemic stroke.

Dandan Sun Part of Five-Year, Multi-PI, NIH R01 Award

A \$3 million NIH award (R01NS129613, NINDS) will expand research at the University of Pittsburgh into a genetic variant linked to higher stroke incidence and worse stroke recovery in African Americans, a longstanding and poorly understood health problem with costly human and financial consequences.



The award brings together a “multiple principal investigative (MPI) team, led by MPI Dr. Adam Straub (Pharm/VMI), an expert in redox signaling in cardiovascular physiology and disease, MPI Dr. Katherine Wood (Pharm/VMI) who has expertise in vascular biology and nitric oxide signaling, and MPI Dr. Dandan Sun (Neurology/PIND), a well-established investigator in ischemic stroke models, blood brain barrier dysfunction and white matter demyelination. As such, the award supports brain research through collaborative, innovative strategies that have high impact for advancing prognostic, diagnostic and therapeutic management of stroke patients via precision medicine approaches.

Milestones & Recognition

Residency Program Graduation

The Department of Neurology Residency Program Graduation took place on June 10, 2023, at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. Congratulations to our (former) PGY-4 residents on completing your residency - our department has a rigorous training program, which was only made more challenging as most of their training was completed in the midst of a pandemic. We’re extremely proud of all they’ve accomplished and look forward to seeing their careers progress.



Post-Graduation Plans:

- Lamees Alzyoud - Neuroimmunology Fellowship, Cedars Sinai (LA)
- Katharine Dermigny - Stroke Fellowship, UPMC
- Jennings Gyedu - Neuroimmunology Fellowship, Mt. Sinai (New York)
- Yi Li - Neuro-Oncology Fellowship, UPMC
- Aaron Nehamkin - UPMC Neurohospitalist Faculty
- Meghan Piccinin - Headache Fellowship, Cleveland Clinic
- Mathura Ravishankar - Epilepsy Fellowship, Brigham and Women’s Hospital
- Yajing “Yan Yan” Xiong - Epilepsy Fellowship, Northwestern University

Fellowship Graduations

Epilepsy & Clinical Neurophysiology

On June 1, 2023, the graduates of our Epilepsy and Clinical Neurophysiology Fellowships were celebrated at the Monterey Bay Fish Grotto. Congratulations to an exceptional class of fellows!



- Emre Cakmak, Clinical Neurophysiology
- Salam Nasralla, Clinical Neurophysiology
- Shobhit Singla, Clinical Neurophysiology
- Carolina Cuello-Oderiz, Epilepsy
- Ruchi Dhyani, Epilepsy
- Laura Kirkpatrick, Epilepsy
- Meghan Mack, Epilepsy

Neurointerventional Radiology

Congratulations to Okkes Kuybu and Aldo Mendez Ruiz on completing the Neurointerventional Radiology fellowship at UPMC. We wish them good luck in their future endeavors!



Staff Section

Promotions & Recognition

Congratulations to Nicole Marks and Maranda McGovern, both of whom have been promoted to Senior APP!

The department is proud to announce that Rebecca Patterson, CRNP, based in the UPMC Stroke Institute, has passed her Advanced Neurovascular Practitioner (AN-VP-BC) exam through the Association of Neurovascular Clinicians. Awesome work, Rebecca - congratulations!

Keeping Up-To-Date

The official University of Pittsburgh/UPMC Department of Neurology directory has been updated and distributed to the department. If you or someone in your office is in need of a copy, please contact Stacey Wagner at wagnersm4@upmc.edu.

The neurology residency program, pediatric neurology, and fellowship photo directories are now available for the 2023-2024 academic year. If you would like a copy, please contact Lauren Stanick at stanickld@upmc.edu.

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

- Frank Lieberman - 7/1/1999
- Anto Bagic - 7/1/2005
- Matthew Starr, 7/1/2013
- Grant Gibb - 7/1/2015
- Erin Canale - 7/1/2016
- Tawfiq Al-Lahham - 7/1/2020
- Aaron Ravelo - 7/1/2021
- Judy Dawod - 7/1/2021
- Neil Suryadevara - 7/1/2022
- Isaac Goldszer - 7/1/2022
- Abby Olsen - 7/1/2022
- Mohammad Kayyali - 7/1/2022
- David Lacomis - 7/15/1993
- Amber Van Laar - 7/17/2009

- Mohamed Shehab-Eldin - 7/20/2022
- Avinash Aggarwal - 7/30/2017

Staff

- Wendy Himmelrick - 7/5/2016
- Kimberly Lee - 7/8/2019
- Paige Billetdeaux - 7/9/2018
- Elizabeth Kirk - 7/11/2012
- Andrea Brown - 7/13/2005
- Lauren Thoryk - 7/19/2021
- Jami Proden - 7/19/2021
- Anneline Lauziere - 7/19/2021
- Amie Neil - 7/25/2016

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

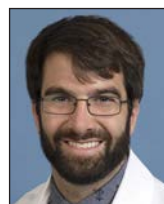
Grateful Patients and Families

slm162@pitt.edu

(412) 482-4312 (call or text)

New Faculty & Staff

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



Wesley T. Kerr, MD, PhD

Epilepsy Division



Aaron Nehamkin, MD

Neurohospitalist Division



Lawrence R. Wechsler, MD

Division of Cerebrovascular Medicine



Alexandra Urban, MD
Course Co-Director



Anto Bagic, MD, PhD
Course Co-Director



Jorge González-Martínez, MD, PhD
Course Director

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. A didactic and interactive format include workshops at the end of each day to encourage audience participation.

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

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-eeeg-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, but space is very limited.

Course Location:

Wyndham Pittsburgh University Center
100 Lytton Ave
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Tuition:

Physicians/Administration/General Registration: \$300
Nurses/APPs/Students/Residents: \$150
First Responders: \$0

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