

# Neurology News & Notes

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## Message from the Chair

I want to thank all departmental faculty and staff for providing high-quality patient care and advancing research and education in neurologic diseases. Please take a look through the October edition of *Neurology News & Notes* to get a glimpse of all the wonderful things happening in our department!

It was a pleasure to host along with our vice-chairs the newest faculty members and their partners at my home. I would like to extend my warmest welcome to each new faculty member and their families.



Over the past month, our department was well-represented at the American Neurological Association's 148th annual meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We had several abstracts presented from current faculty members, resident program alumni, and a University of Pittsburgh medical student, Emma Osterhaus. Dr. Lori Shutter and I were also invited speakers at the special topics sessions, Neurocritical Care and Epilepsy, respectively.

*Neurology News & Notes* is an excellent way for everyone to stay up to date on different accomplishments and future events in our department. Staff members and APPs are also encouraged to reach out to Lauren Stanick (Communications Coordinator) if they have information they would like featured.

I am very excited about the future of our department and the positive direction it's headed in!

Cheers,

Page B. Pennell, MD, FAES

*Chair and Henry B. Higman Professor of Neurology*

## Save The Date!

### Holiday Party

Mark your calendars for the Neurology Holiday Party for staff and faculty on Friday evening, December 8, 2023. The Pittsburgh Golf Club has already been booked.

### ACTION REQUIRED: Annual/Clinical Mandatory Trainings

The UPMC Annual/Clinical Mandatory Trainings must be completed by Tuesday, October 31. If you haven't completed your trainings by this date, corrective action will be taken. UPMC is responsible for ensuring all staff members, students, volunteers and others who work at a UPMC facility, complete this annually.

To access your trainings, go to 'UPMC Infonet > HR Direct > Current Learning' to see overdue, in-progress, upcoming and pending trainings. The Current Learning tile includes all required courses and assigned due dates - once a course is completed, it will be removed from the Current Learning tile.

If you have questions or need assistance, contact the Learning Support Team:

Phone: (412) 864-4053 Option 2

Email: [LearningSupport@upmc.edu](mailto:LearningSupport@upmc.edu)

## Awards

### N<sup>3</sup>-PREP to Train Next Generation of Physician-Scientists

The University of Pittsburgh Departments of Neurology and Neurological Surgery and Division of Neuropathology have been awarded a five-year NIH NINDS R25 Research Education Grant to help advance academic research careers in the field of neuroscience.

The grant will fund the "Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Neuropathology Pittsburgh Research Education Program" (N<sup>3</sup>-PREP). The overarching and long-term goal of the program is to train the next generation of physician-neuroscientists in basic science, translational science, data science, and clinical research through a closely mentored approach. This will happen in an environment ripe with physical and faculty resources across the translational spectrum of neuro-focused research.

Key components include a well-defined pathway for each trainee to be paired with a primary mentor and a mentoring committee, a core curriculum, internal study sections for grant reviews, progress tracking for both trainee and mentor, and continued support for the trainee's progress toward and NIH K mentored-career development award or equivalent.

Led by multi-principal investigators in Neurology (Page B. Pennell), Neurological Surgery (Constantinos G. Hadjipanayis), and Neuropathology (Julia K. Kofler), and an advisory committee, N<sup>3</sup>-PREP is well supported by commitments from 87 research mentors across 16 departments.



*Page B. Pennell*



*Constantinos G. Hadjipanayis*



*Julia K. Kofler*



### **Begum Receives NIH R21 Award**

Gulnaz Begum has received an NIH R21 award for her work as the principle investigator on “Astrocytic NBCe1 in regulation of blood brain barrier integrity”. This study investigates dysregulation of bicarbonate transport in contributing to the blood brain barrier damage in stroke brains.

Ischemic stroke is a major cause of death and disability worldwide and disruption of the blood-brain barrier (BBB) structure and function plays a critical role in stroke brain damage. This newly funded research is meant to study the roles of perivascular astrocyte dysfunction on the loss of BBB integrity in stroke brain. The study will specifically assess pathogenesis of the BBB involving astrocyte aquaporin 4 (AQP4), a water channel, and sodium-bicarbonate transporter 1 (NBCe1).



### **Berman Receives R01 Award**

Sarah B. Berman is the recipient of an R01 award from the National Institute on Aging for her project, “Brain mitochondrial PET imaging and 21P-MR spectroscopy to dissect the role of mitochondrial dysfunction in bioenergetic dysregulation in Dementia with Lewy Bodies pathogenesis”. This grant was earned in collaboration with Victor Villemagne, MD, Howard Aizenstein, MD, PhD, and Shaolin Yang, PhD, of the University of Pittsburgh Departments of Psychiatry and Bioengineering.

Dr. Berman says that understanding the earliest changes in Dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB) is critical to developing neuroprotective therapies for this devastating dementia. Defects in the energy systems of brain cells are thought to be critically involved yet difficult to study. Because of this setback, the study utilizes a combination of brain imaging techniques and other measures for people who are at risk for or have already developed DLB; this will help determine how and when the energy system fails and how to help guide development of targeted protective therapies.

The following goals will be addressed:

1. Characterizing specific mitochondrial respiratory chain dysfunction in the brain DLB pathogenesis progresses from at-risk to established disease
2. Dissect specific bioenergetic dysfunction and changes in cognitive function, peripheral ATP dysregulation in DLB
3. Analyze the relationship between brain mitochondrial and bioenergetic dysfunction and changes in cognitive function and peripheral measurements of bioenergetics
4. Explore how mechanisms of mitochondrial dysfunction in DLB might differ from Alzheimer’s disease, and the role of AD pathology in mitochondrial changes observed in DLB

## Clinical Trials, Studies & Research

### Nogueira and Doheim Publish Study in Annals of Neurology



#### Higher Procedural Volumes are Associated with Faster Treatment Times, Better Functional Outcomes, and Lower Mortality in Patients Undergoing Endovascular Treatment for Acute Ischemic Stroke

Raul G. Nogueira MD ✉, Diogo C. Haussen MD, Eric E. Smith MD, MPH, Jie-Lena Sun MS, Ying Xian MD, PhD, Brooke Alhanti PhD, Rosalia Blanco PhD, Brian Mac Grory MB BCh, Mohamed F. Doheim MD, Deepak L. Bhatt MD MPH, Gregg C. Fonarow MD, Ameer E. Hassan DO, Raed A. Joundi MD DPhil, J Mocco MD, Michael R Frankel MD, Lee H. Schwamm MD  
First published: 20 September 2023 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/ana.26803>

Investigators aimed to characterize the association of hospital procedural volumes with outcomes among acute ischemic stroke (AIS) patients undergoing endovascular therapy (EVT). The study, which involved a cohort of over sixty thousand AIS patients with EVT within twenty-four hours at 626 hospitals showed that higher procedural volumes were associated with better workflow and clinical outcomes.

Read the full study here: [“Higher Procedural Volumes are Associated with Faster Treatment Time, Better Functional Outcomes, and Lower Mortality in Patients Undergoing Endovascular Treatment for Acute ischemic Stroke”](#)

### Pascoal Featured for Research on Alzheimer’s Progression

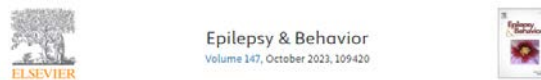
Tharick Pascoal, MD, PhD, and his lab were recently featured in an article by Pitt Magazine for their research that was published in the journal Natural Medicine.

To read the article, please click here: [Advancing Against Alzheimer’s](#)



Tharick Pascoal, MD, PhD

### Authors Create Educational Materials For Young Females with Epilepsy



#### Co-production of online educational resources for adolescent and young adult females with epilepsy

Medha Parulekar<sup>✉</sup>, Traci M. Kozmerski<sup>✉</sup>, Danielle Gordon<sup>✉</sup>, Tahniat Sved<sup>✉</sup>, Janet F.R. Waters<sup>✉</sup>, Anne C. Van Cott<sup>✉</sup>, Laura Kirkpatrick<sup>✉</sup>

Authors recruited participants from Western and Central Pennsylvania, comprised of females with epilepsy ages 18-26 or parents of children with epilepsy ages 12-26. Healthcare providers who participated in the study were recruited nationally from the disciplines of pediatric epilepsy, adult epilepsy, women’s neurology, and adolescent medicine.

Read the full study here: [Co-production of online educational resources for adolescent and young adult females with epilepsy](#)



## Milestones & Recognition

### UPMC APP Appreciation Week is October 23-27!

In advance of UPMC Appreciation week October 23-27, we would like to thank all forty-one of our phenomenal APPs for delivering exceptional care, elevating the fields of medicine and nursing, and helping ensure that our patients receive safe and high-quality care.

Neurology is a field that requires continuous collaboration with everyone in order to provide the best possible care for our patients. If you work with one of our wonderful APP's, take a moment to thank them and recognize their efforts.



Partha Thirumala, MD

### Thirumala Presents at IONM Conference in Indonesia

Earlier in September and in conjunction with Procirca Center for Clinical Neurophysiology, Partha Thirumala presented during a Neuromonitoring Course at the National Brain Centre Hospital in Jakarta, Indonesia.

### EEG and Epilepsy Intensive - A Success!

Led by Alexandra Urban and Anto Bagic, the EEG and Epilepsy Intensive course was a complete success! Audience members were attentive and engaged, and all the presentations went smoothly! Congratulations to each member of our department who presented!

#### PRESENTATIONS by department members:

Alexandra Urban, MD (Co-Course Director)

- *"Semiology, Lateralizing and Localizing Signs and Seizures"*
- *"Neurostimulation Part 2: RNS and DBS"*

Anto Bagic, MD (Co-Course Director)

- *"Introduction to Epilepsy, Classification of Seizures and Epilepsies"*
- *"Mimickers of Epilepsy and Functional Neurological Disorder"*
- *"Introduction to the Concept of Drug Resistant Epilepsy"*

Page B. Pennell, MD - *"Pregnancy Considerations on WWE"*

Thandar Aung, MD - *"Longitudinal Epilepsy Surgical Outcomes"*

Patrick Chauvel, MD - *"Pre-Surgical Evaluation, Defining Epileptogenic Zone"*

James F. Castellano, MD, PhD

- *"Neurophysiology and Basis of EEG"*
- *"Introduction to Management of Epilepsy and ASM Updates"*

Vijayalakshmi Rajasekaran, MD - *"Common Ictal Pattern"*

Joanna Fong-Isariyawongse, MD - *"ACNS Standardized ICU EEG Nomenclatures"*

Anne C. Van Cott, MD - *"Normal EEG"*

Lori Shutter, MD - *"Treatment of Status Epilepticus"*

Maria E. Baldwin, MD - *"Benign EEG Variants VS. Interictal Epileptiform Patterns"*

Hallie Williams, PA-C - *"Optimizing H&P - Pearls in Epilepsy Care"*

Cheryl Plummer, BS, R EEGT T. NA-CLTM - *"Review of International 10-20 System of Electrode Placement"*

#### **WORKSHOPS by Department Members:**

*"Interictal-ictal continuum/ seizures status epilepticus"*

- Moderators: Joanna Fong-Isariyawongse & Pat Lordeon, R. EEG T., FASET

*"Epilepsy Treatment in Diverse Populations"*

- Presenters: Shobhit Singla, MD, PhD
- Moderators: Alexandra Urban & Anto Bagic

## **Community Engagement**

### **Stroke Outreach at Cheswick, PA**

Members of the UPMC Stroke Institute completed great community outreach efforts at the Cheswick Community Pop-Up Market on Sunday, September 10!



Stephanie Henry (Program Director), Kimberly Lee (Stroke Coordinator), and Billie Reese (Nurse, UPMC Mercy Outpatient Stroke Clinic) helped community members complete blood pressure screenings, review signs and symptoms of stroke, and education on healthy eating.

## **Staff Section**

### **October Neurology Staff Listening Session**

Please join the next department-wide staff listening session on Friday, October 20, 2023, from 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. A Microsoft Teams invite has been sent out to everyone's emails - please RSVP as soon as possible!

## **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**

- Oscar Lopez - 10/1/1987
- James McLaughlin - 10/1/2006
- Islam Zaydan - 10/1/2010
- Kelly Kay - 10/1/2011
- Laurie Knepper - 10/1/2011
- Marcelo Rocha - 10/1/2015
- Rafeed Alkwadri - 10/1/2018
- Priya Cardone - 10/1/2021
- William Musser - 10/1/2021
- Cigdem Isitan Alkawadri - 10/12/2018
- Paula Clemens - 10/16/1995
- Danielle Carns - 10/18/2021
- Rock Heyman - 10/26/1992

### **Staff**

- Eileen Roach - 10/2/1995
- Lisa Sambol - 10/8/2018
- Kelly Betts - 10/19/2020
- Kimberly Fleischer - 10/23/2005
- Lisa Kunkel - 10/24/2011
- Tina Busko - 10/25/2011
- Hallie Williams - 10/29/2018
- Jennifer McAlister - 10/31/2000

## **Funding & Career Development Opportunities**

### **Applications Open for Two AAN Leadership Development Programs**

#### **“Women Leading in Neurology”**

“This empowering and inspirational leadership program is designed to help mid-career participants tackle gender disparities head-on, create a peer network with other women AAN members, and advance to the top levels of leadership in





their field and with the Academy”. The deadline is Tuesday, October 31. Apply here: [bit.ly/3BnfR2d](http://bit.ly/3BnfR2d)

### “Transforming Leaders”

“Created for innovative leaders with aspirations to transform their practice community and field of neurology. This multi-month program is designed to equip mid-career leaders with the advanced knowledge and skills to have greater impact and influence”. The deadline is Tuesday, October 31.

Apply here: <http://bit.ly/2YvD5ER>

## 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.

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](mailto:jrm233@pitt.edu)

(412) 482-4319 (call or text)



**Stacie McAllister**

*Grateful Patients and Families*

[slm162@pitt.edu](mailto:slm162@pitt.edu)

(412) 482-4312 (call or text)



## New Faculty & Staff

We had two new faculty members and one staff member start in the department. Welcome to the Department of Neurology!



**Abdulrahman Alwaki, MD**

Epilepsy Division

*Previous Institution: Emory University Hospital, Atlanta, GA*

*Residency: Neurology - Wayne State University*

*Fellowship(s): CNP/EEG - Emory University; Epilepsy - Mayo Clinic*



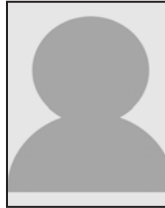
**Carolina Cuello, MD**

Division of General Neurology

*Previous Institution: UPMC*

*Residency: Instituto Universitario Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires*

*Fellowship: Instituto Universitario Hospital Italiano de Buenos Aires, UPMC*



**Lynn Hoegel, RN**

Professional Staff Nurse, OP

UPMC Monroeville

## Upcoming Events

### UPMC Stroke Institute Fall 2023 Virtual Nursing Symposium

Join Raul Nogueira, MD, and the rest of the stroke team as they cover topics applicable to nurses and APPs of all levels of care. This event is designed to provide the most recent advances in stroke for nurses and health care providers including nurse practitioners and physician assistants. This event is to assist with educational requirements of nurses who work at certified stroke centers and to provide education to health care professionals who care for stroke patients.

Learning Objectives:

1. Develop the understanding of pre-hospital stroke care and the importance of communication
2. Understand the applications of transcranial dopplers in stroke neurology
3. Become familiar with large core stroke treatments
4. Discussion of mile stroke in large vessel occlusion
5. Become familiar with cryptogenic stroke, the diagnostic work-up, and pote

### 5th Annual Parkinson's Disease Patient & Caregiver Symposium

The Pittsburgh Institute for Neurodegenerative Diseases is sponsoring a free, educational event aimed for patients and caregivers of those with Parkinson's disease.



Review the latest updates in management of PD motor and non-motor symptoms by neurologists in the UPMC Comprehensive Movement Disorders Clinic, as well as research studies and how you can be involved.

A light breakfast and lunch will be provided, but availability is limited. RSVP no later than Friday, October 6, 2023, at neuro2@pitt.edu or 412-692-4659.

**Date:** Saturday, October 14, 2023

**Time:** Registration is 9:00 - 10:00 a.m.; Program is 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

**Location:** DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, Pittsburgh-Monroeville, 101 Mall Blvd, Monroeville, PA 15146

## **October Neurology Grand Rounds Information**

### **Upcoming Speakers and Topics**

Please email Audrey at rohea@upmc.edu with any questions.

#### ***Thursday, October 5, 2023***

##### **Teun Teunis, MD**

“More than just peripheral nerve surgery”

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

*Place:* Scaife 1105ABC and online

#### ***Thursday, October 12, 2023***

##### **Jana M. Kainerstofer, PhD**

“NIRS 2.0 – Enhanced cerebral hemodynamic and intracranial pressure sensing using near infrared light”

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

*Place:* Neurosurgery Conference Room, B477

#### ***Thursday, October 19, 2023***

##### **Neurolo James F. Castellano, MD, PhD**

“Post-Traumatic Epilepsy: A human model of epileptogenesis”

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

*Place:* Scaife 1105AB 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