

Cleveland Clinic Research Trainee Newsletter

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This newsletter is written by members of the Cleveland Clinic Research Trainee Association Communications Committee. We welcome your questions and suggestions!

Email researchtraineeassoc@ccf.org to connect with us.

Welcome to the August 2025 Cleveland Clinic Research Trainee Newsletter! We're here to keep you informed and inspired with important updates and resources to help you succeed in your training!

You may have noticed the Trainee Association has a new name and email address! If you accidentally email our old address, don't worry as messages will still reach us for a limited time.

This month, don't miss our newest brain teaser in the *Puzzle* section! While we're no longer able to offer prizes, we'll continue bringing fresh puzzles each month to spark curiosity and help you unwind. In *Recent Events*, we highlight the past quarter's major happenings, including Beam Signing celebration and the Women in Science video series. Be sure to check out our *Upcoming Events* section for exciting opportunities just around the corner, including Velosano, National Postdoc Appreciation Week, Molecular Medicine PhD student showcase, and AHA Heart Walk!

Meet Dr. Vartika Srivastava, a postdoctoral fellow whose research investigates novel anti-adhesion therapeutic strategies, including vaccines and drugs targeting serious human bacterial pathogens. Joining her is PhD student Tiffany Bartel, whose research explores the effects of loss-of-function SLC35A2 variants in Focal Cortical Dysplasia, a common cause of drug-resistant epilepsy. Be sure to visit our *Recent Accomplishments* section and congratulate your colleagues for their awards, publications, talks, and career milestones. Want to get featured? Check out the *Opportunities* section and start applying.

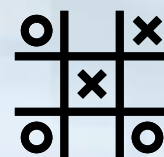
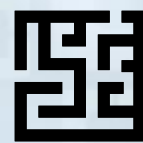
Lastly, trainees can find *Wellness Resources* that provide Yoga, Meditation, Fitness, and Culinary Medicine sessions. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please reach out to us at researchtraineeassoc@ccf.org.



Join our LinkedIn Group

The Cleveland Clinic Postdoc and Grad Student Alumni Network on LinkedIn is a group of current and former postdoctoral fellows, research scholars and graduate students at Cleveland Clinic Research. We share opportunities for career development, networking and highlighting our scientific achievements. We also post reminders about upcoming events, so be sure to turn on notifications! [Request to join here.](#)

CCTA Newsletter Puzzle



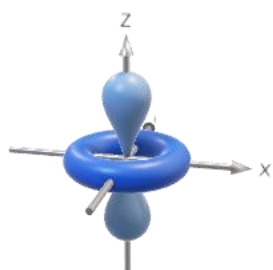
How to play:

- Figure out the correct sentence using the given letters .
- Hint: molecules and ions**

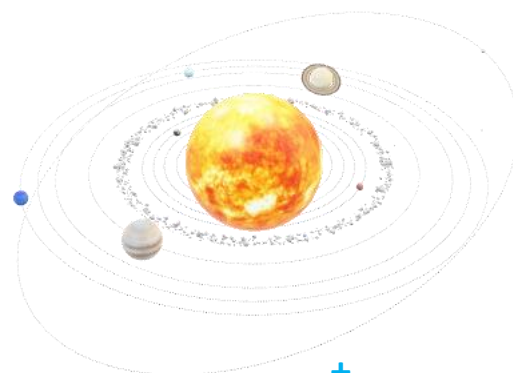
S T S T T D
P W R O F B R P B G O W G O J B O Q

T S T L L
B Z O V R G B P A N Y O W D Y O

O K O G B N V N G A, Z O Y R D A



D D , B
Z H Q G R Q O, M H



S S +
P D C O G R A C N P R F T Z O Z⁺

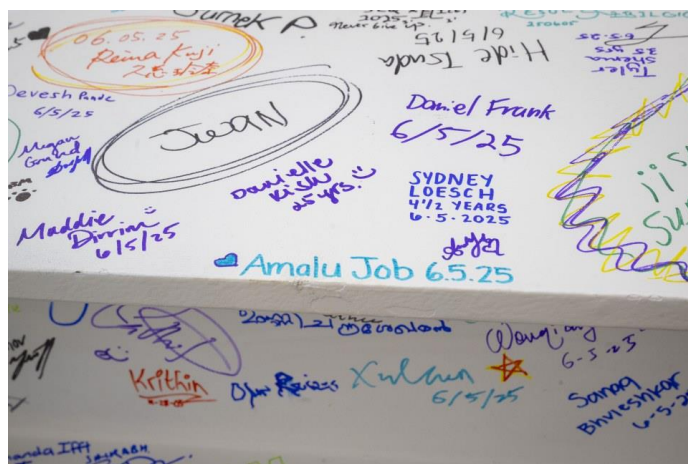
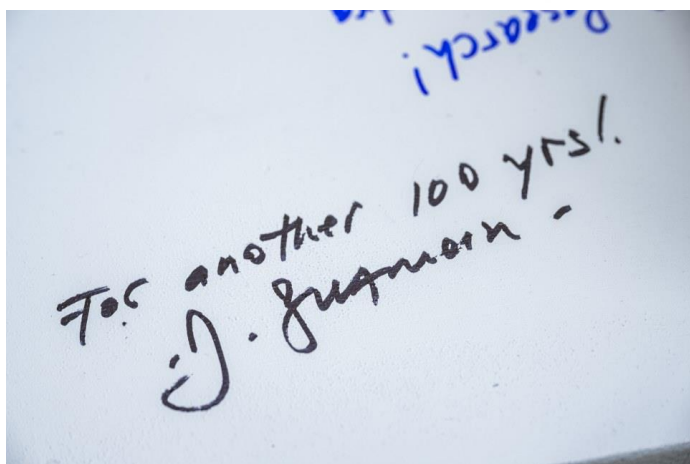
S D T T S.
R N F P Q O D B O G R D A J B N A P.

Recent Events

Beam Signings for New Research Buildings

In June, Cleveland Clinic Research caregivers marked a construction milestone by signing two steel beams to be installed in the skyway bridge over E. 100th St., linking the new CBA and CBB buildings in the Cleveland Innovation District. Executives, including Drs. Tomislav Mihaljevic, Serpil Erzurum, and Beri Ridgeway, joined Research leaders, administrators, fellows, and students in covering the beams with signatures, messages, and doodles.

The combined 300,000 sq. ft. facilities began construction in February 2023, with more than 690,000 hours logged by June 5, 2025. CBB, at 170,000 sq. ft. and housing wet labs along with the Global Center for Pathogen Research and Human Health, is slated for completion in November 2025 with occupancy in March 2026. CBA, at 120,000 sq. ft. and designed for specialty research facilities and cores, will be finished in March 2026, with occupancy to follow once commissioning is complete.



Photos and information courtesy of the Cleveland Clinic Research Communications Office

Recent Events

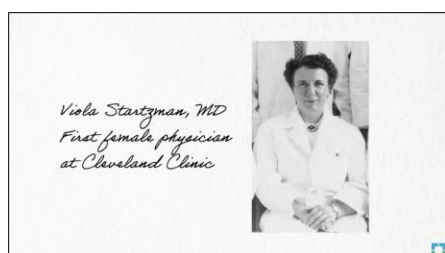
New Video Series: Cleveland Clinic Women in Research

In Cleveland Clinic's Women in Research series, we celebrate the remarkable women who have led the way and whose work continues to influence what's possible today. Watch all 5 videos [here](#) or on [YouTube](#).



Episode 1 | A Legacy of Women in Discovery

Research has been an essential part of patient care at Cleveland Clinic since its founding. Throughout the history of Cleveland Clinic, women shaped this legacy, making extraordinary contributions across science, medicine and patient care.



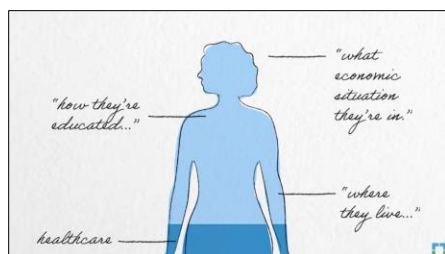
Episode 2 | The Women Who Set the Path

From Cleveland Clinic's start, women opened doors in healthcare and made essential discoveries for patient care. Their contributions continue to inspire Cleveland Clinic researchers today.



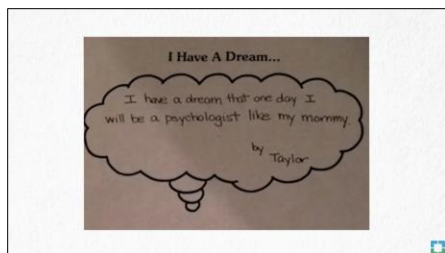
Episode 3 | The Science of Sex-based Differences in Disease

Historically, women's health research has faced barriers – but we are now building a critical understanding of the sex-specific differences that influence disease. Cleveland Clinic is dedicated to furthering women's health research and ensuring access to healthcare.



Episode 4 | Seeing Ourselves in Research

Healthcare is only a small portion of the many influences that encompass someone's overall health. Learn more about these differences, and how today's researchers are working to improve and personalize care for all patients.



Episode 5 | Why Not Me

What inspires women to pursue healthcare and research? Hear inspiring stories and advice from leaders, researchers and doctors at Cleveland Clinic.

Information courtesy of the Cleveland Clinic Research Communications Office

Upcoming Events

Velosano 2025: Bike to Cure September 5-6, 2025

Cleveland, OH
September 5-6, 2025

Bike to Cure Registration is Open!

Who will you ride for?

REGISTER TODAY!

DONATE

This summer, the Cleveland Clinic community will come together once again for Velosano, our annual “Bike to Cure” event fueling groundbreaking cancer research. Riders of all skill levels will be hitting the road to pedal for a purpose—and every dollar raised goes directly to research that brings us closer to new treatments and cures.

If you know a colleague, mentor, or friend riding in Velosano 2025, now is the perfect time to show your support. Your donation—big or small—helps turn miles into meaningful impact. Let’s rally behind our riders and push the fight against cancer forward.

<https://www.velosano.org/bike-to-cure/>

Upcoming Events

SAVE THE DATE National Postdoc Appreciation Week



September 15th – 19th, 2025



Nominate a postdoc for the **Leadership & Service Award** by 8/25/25. Self-nominations are welcome. Winners will receive a \$500 cash prize! Submit nominations at <https://bit.ly/2025NominateAPostdoc>.



Free professional headshots are available at main campus for postdocs on Tuesday and Wednesday during Postdoc Appreciation Week. Reserve a spot by 9/8/25 at <https://bit.ly/2025NPAWheadshot>.

Full Schedule Coming Soon!
Brought to you by the Research Education and Training Center

Upcoming Events



Save the Date!

Please join us for the

Molecular Medicine PhD Program Annual Student Showcase

**Thursday, September 25th
2:00-5:30PM | NA5 Atrium**

Featuring poster presentations from all students and

Oral presentations from select 5th year students

Upcoming Events



A large, stylized rainbow graphic with red, orange, and yellow stripes, arching over the team portraits.

Lerner Research Walks Team
welcomes you to
join us for the
AHA Heart Walk

Saturday, Sept 27, 2025
Flats East Bank

Scan the QR code to
join & donate today



For more information, contact Sathyamangla Prasad (prasad2@ccl.org)
or reach out to one of the Team captains above.

Team Captains: Jonathan, Serpil, David, Nicole, Kelley, Mohan, Selvam, Sumita, Edelyn, Suman, Julia, Anu, Terri, Cameron, Kate, Prasad.



Meet your Fellow

Vartika Srivastava

PhD

Where are you from?

My home country is India.

What is your educational background?

I hold a Bachelor of Science (Honors) degree in Zoology from Banaras Hindu University, India, and a Master of Technology in Biotechnology from Amity University, India. I later earned my Ph.D. in Microbiology and Molecular Biology in the year 2021 from the University of Delhi, India.

What did your graduate research focus on?

My graduate research focused on isolating, identifying, and characterizing anti-*Candida* compounds produced by Actinobacteria. The goal was to discover novel bioactive metabolites with potential antifungal activity against *Candida albicans*. I worked on purifying and characterizing new molecules produced by a group of bacteria called Actinobacteria that can kill or inhibit the growth of *C. albicans*, a fungus that can cause serious infections in immunocompromised individuals. My focus was to investigate the underlying mode of action of the purified bioactive compounds. The aim was to discover new antifungal compounds that could potentially be used to treat *Candida* infections.

How did you decide to pursue your current postdoc at Cleveland Clinic?

I am highly motivated to engage in translational research that bridges the gap between bench and bedside.

The Cleveland Clinic's commitment to innovation and its integration of research with patient care make it an ideal place to translate scientific discoveries into clinical solutions.

Which lab do you work in and for how long have you been a part of this team?

I have been working with Dr. Jeannette Messer and the team in the Department of Inflammation and Immunity for a year and a half.

What is your current research focus?

As a postdoctoral fellow, my work includes developing novel anti-adhesion therapeutic strategies, including vaccines and drugs targeting serious human bacterial pathogens. Furthermore, I am exploring the role of gut microbes in chronic inflammatory diseases and uncovering crucial host-microbe interactions that contribute to infectious diseases.

Do you have any recent accomplishments in your current position?

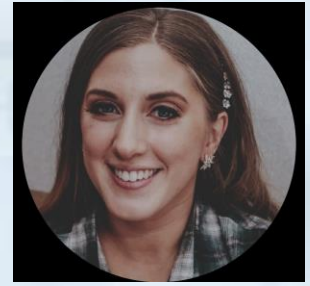
Among my recent accomplishments in my current position, I was honored with the 2024 Impact Area Poster Session Award during the LRI Research Day. Additionally, I received the 2025 Alumni Association Postdoctoral Travel Award.

What do you like to do outside of the laboratory?

Outside the laboratory, I enjoy gardening, painting, and cooking. I also have a passion for traveling and exploring new places.

Meet your Graduate Student

Tiffany Bartel



Where are you from?

I grew up in a suburb outside of Cleveland, Ohio.

What is your educational background?

I received my bachelor's degree in biology and neuroscience from Baldwin Wallace (BW) University in Berea, Ohio. I started volunteering in the behavioral neuroscience labs at BW headed by Dr. Clare Mathes. While I was there, I learned a lot about behavioral research and neuroscience research using a rat model. I became comfortable working with animals and studying their brain tissue for differences in c-Fos expression after sucrose ingestion. Currently, I am working on my PhD in regulatory biology through the Cleveland State University and Cleveland Clinic collaboration.

Which lab do you work in and for how long have you been a part of this team?

I am a part of Dr. Imad Najm's lab in the Epilepsy Center. I originally started out as a lab technician after graduating from BW. At that time, I was trying to figure out if I wanted to pursue academic research or work in industry. But after working in the lab for a few months, I quickly learned that the lab was where I am meant to be. So, I asked my PI at the time (Dr. Najm) if I was a good fit for a PhD program and he insisted I apply. The rest is history. I have been in this lab for almost six years (in February) and have been in the PhD program since spring of 2023. I would highly recommend the CSU-CCF program to those students who can balance their own schedules and are comfortable with putting themselves out there. CSU-CCF are both rich in resources and connections that you can find pretty much expertise in all sorts of fields and disciplines.

How did you decide on the Cleveland Clinic?

I was very blessed to grow up with Cleveland Clinic in my backyard. I come from a working-class background, and I was not fully aware of how instrumental CCF has played in a role in shaping healthcare and science. I knew it was a big deal, but did not know how big until I went to college. In undergrad, I knew I was always going to apply to Case but was not aware of the CSU program with CCF. I decided on Cleveland Clinic due to its reputation, access to cutting-edge research, and wealth in expertise and resources.

What is your current research focus?

My current research is studying the effects of loss-of-function *SLC35A2* variants in Focal Cortical Dysplasia, a common cause of drug-resistant epilepsy.

What do you like to do outside of the work?

Outside of the lab, all my time is spent raising my two daughters with my husband in University Heights which is 15 minutes down the road from CCF. We enjoy playing Settlers of Catan and video games together. I am usually outside riding bikes with my kids or walking my dog around the neighborhood. Most of our family and friends live around Northeast Ohio so we try to be around our family as much as we can. We also have Cedar Point season passes and all of my family members and children love riding roller coasters.

I love to golf (but wish I had more time for it) and going on camping / hiking trips. Being a scientist has made me a much better cook and baker, so I enjoy trying new recipes from other cultures and making yummy treats. Next year, I'd like to work on my landscaping and gardening. Eventually, I'd like to have a garden that provides my family enough food for the year. Right now, I am just focused on completing my PhD and getting all the foundational skills down.

Accomplishments

Congratulations to Dr. Salem from the Foo Lab in the Department of Infection Biology!

Dr. Gielenny M. Salem won the Best Researcher Award - Virology Category during the 26th Edition of International Research Award and Honors. <https://awardandhonors.com/>

Dr. Salem published the article "Factors determining the outcomes of immune imprinting after repeated orthoflavivirus infections" in *Frontiers in Immunology*.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fimmu.2025.1560851>

She also published as a co-first author the article "SARS-CoV-2 antibody response and serum neutralizing capacity of early unvaccinated COVID-19 patients in the Philippines" in *Journal of Clinical Virology Plus*.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcvp.2025.100217>



Congratulations to Dr. Liu from the Plow Lab in the Department of Biomedical Engineering!

Dr. Jia Liu won the "First Place Best Oral Presentation Award" at the American Spinal Injury Association Annual Scientific Meeting 2025 in Scottsdale, Arizona. The title of the talk was "Upper Extremity Function Classification for Tailored Rehabilitation in Cervical Spinal Cord Injury: Novel Insights from a Nationally Diverse Cohort".

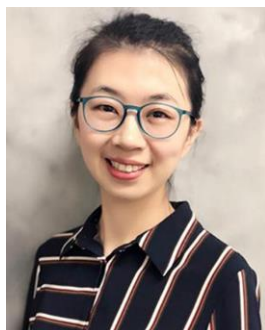
<https://asia-spinalinjury.org/research-awards/paper/>

Dr. Liu published the article "Characteristics of ipsilateral corticomotor pathways in people with cervical Spinal Cord injury" in *Clinical Neurophysiology*.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clinph.2025.2110762>

She also published as a corresponding author the article "Influence of unanticipated side-step cutting and landing on trunk and lower limb biomechanics: A systematic review and meta-analysis" in *Journal of Biomechanics*.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbiomech.2025.112863>



We love celebrating trainee accomplishments! To submit your own news or to recognize someone else, email

researchtraineeassoc@ccf.org

Accomplishments

Congratulations to Madeline Porter from the Baker Lab in the Department of Neurosciences!

Madeline Porter achieved a graduate school milestone for having successfully defended her Prospectus, titled "Treatment-Related Neural Changes in Essential Tremor."



Congratulations to Dr. Khan from the Chen Lab in the Department of Cancer Biology!

Dr. Fatima Khan published the article "Macrophage TBK1 signaling drives the development and outgrowth of breast cancer brain metastasis" in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS)*.

<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2420793122>

Congratulations to Dr. Gupta from the Cheng Lab in the Genomic Medicine Institute!

Dr. Amit Gupta published the article "Comprehensive characterization of the RNA editing landscape in the human aging brains with Alzheimer's disease" in *Alzheimer's & Dementia: Journal of the Alzheimer's Association*.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/alz.70452>



We love celebrating trainee accomplishments! To submit your own news or to recognize someone else, email

researchtraineeassoc@ccf.org

Opportunities

Professional Development

Resilient Scientist Series: The NIH Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE) offers both Resilient Scientist Series this fall. Trainees and fellows at all levels will have the opportunity to develop skills needed to thrive in research and healthcare careers. Faculty and staff will be supported in mentoring trainees in the biomedical, behavioral, and social sciences.

For **students, trainees and fellows** at all levels, NIH OITE offers the [BECOMING A RESILIENT SCIENTIST](#) Series. There are five units in the series. Each includes a lecture followed by a facilitated small group discussion allowing trainees to share their experiences and learn from peers. Each lecture will run from **3:00 – 4:30 pm ET** followed by **30 minutes of Q&A**. To register and to learn more information, please visit [here](#).

Unit 1. An Introduction to Resilience and Wellness (**9/29/25**)

Unit 2. Exploring our Self-Talk: Cognitive Distortions and Imposter Fears (**10/20/25**)

Unit 3. Self-Advocacy and Assertiveness for Scientists (**11/3/25**)

Unit 4. Developing Feedback Resilience (**11/10/25**)

Unit 5. Managing Up to Maximize Mentoring Relationships (**11/24/25**)

Note: There will be a combined group for Units 3 & 4 and no group discussion for Unit 5.

For **faculty and staff**, NIH OITE offers the [RAISING A RESILIENT SCIENTIST](#) Series. There are five units in the series; each unit will consist of a 60-minute online lecture followed by a 15-minute Q&A. Lectures will run from **12:00 – 1:15 pm ET**. For more information and to register, please visit [here](#).

Unit 1: Communication Skills to Build Trainee Resilience (**9/30/25**)

Unit 2: Promoting Trainee Resilience (**10/7/25**)

Unit 3: Building a Welcoming and Collegial Research Group (**10/14/25**)

Unit 4: Difficult Conversations, Conflict, and Feedback (**10/21/25**)

Unit 5: The Mental Health and Well-being of Your Trainees (**10/28/25**)

There is no charge for participation, but advanced registration is required. Webinars will be recorded and shared with all registrants.



Opportunities

Professional Development

- **2025 Office of Educator & Scholar Development | Overview of Programs and Offerings and Updates:** The Education Institute offers both live and self-paced teaching courses. [Click here](#) to see the full list of offerings. Postdoctoral Fellows are now eligible to participate in their *Distinguished Educator Implementation Programs* (4 individual programs), after they have completed the *Distinguished Trainee Educator Program*. For questions, please contact educatordevelopment@ccf.org.
- **New Educator Development for Students:** This online, on-demand course provides an opportunity for students at Cleveland Clinic to explore key topics in health professions education. PhD students are eligible to participate! This is a great course to take if you are interested in teaching. [Click here](#) to register.
- **Mandel Global Leadership and Learning Institute Courses:** Check out free online opportunities to engage connect and help grow your skills as a leader [here](#).
- **Mass Spectrometry Journal Club:** Interested in joining a journal club focused on reviewing the use of Mass Spectrometry in biological research? If you are interested, please fill out the survey found here: <https://forms.office.com/r/LvftDgemJh> . You can also view the QR code linked to the survey [here](#).

Career and Jobs

- **Education Institute Positions:** The EI has announced new positions have been posted to support our new organizational structure, including several leadership and program management positions: Program Manager, GME (I, II, III, IV): Requisition – 282048 – apply [here](#).



Opportunities

Funding, Awards, and Grant Writing

- **CCF Internal Opportunities:** Explore various funding and collaboration opportunities through the CCF Office of Research Development. Be sure to visit the Competition Space on [InfoReady](#) for the latest updates on internal opportunities tailored to support your research goals and levels.
- **Researchers' Writing Podcast:** Podcast is hosted by Anna Clemens, Ph.D., who has helped hundreds of researchers inside her online program, the [Researchers' Writing Academy](#), develop a structured writing process so they can get published in top-tier journals time-efficiently. Subscribe on YouTube [here](#). On this podcast, you will learn how to:
 - Write scientific research papers time-efficiently
 - Get published in your target journals
 - Structure a paper so that it tells a compelling and coherent story
 - Develop a healthy (and joyful!) relationship with your writing The Researchers' Writing
- **The POSTDOCKet | A Personal Guide to Applying for the NIH K99/R00 by Debosmita Sardar, PhD:** The NIH's K99/R00 Pathway to Independence Award provides up to five years of grant support in two phases - two years of mentored postdoctoral training (K99) and additional funding for up to three years of independent research support (R00). This prestigious and highly competitive award can fund up to approximately 1 million dollars and is the only NIH funding available for international postdocs. [This article](#) aims to discuss the overlooked aspects of the K99/R00 award in two parts. Part I will focus on the period before and during the preparation of the application; while Part II will delve into what happens after the submission and the potential of resubmission.

In Case You Missed It

- **New Executive Orders Toolkit:** A new [Executive Orders Toolkit](#) is now available for all caregivers. Executive Orders are directives issued by the president that manage operations of the federal government. The toolkit is designed to be updated on an ongoing basis with as much information as possible as well as resources to help caregivers navigate these changes. Please check back periodically for those updates. Should you have questions, you may contact EOQuestions@ccf.org.

Opportunities



novo nordisk
foundation
Benefitting people and society

BE A PART OF THE QUANTUM FUTURE

Launch your postdoctoral career at the intersection of AI, quantum technology, and biomedical innovation.



Conduct cutting-edge research at Cleveland Clinic and top Danish research Institutions



Up to three years of fully funded fellowship with mentorship and global exposure



Gain access to the world's only quantum computer dedicated to healthcare housed at **Cleveland Clinic**



Work alongside leaders in quantum computing, AI, and medicine

Want to learn more about Quantum – AI Biomedical Frontiers Postdoctoral Fellowship

Contact: Priya Putta, PhD | Email: puttap@ccf.org
Program Manager, Global Research Education

Research Education and Training Center (RETC)

Wellness Resources



Cleveland Clinic
Wellness

Daily Wellness Tools for YOU Program

Weekly, live and virtual. Ongoing self-help support.

Meditation Monday 12:15 – 12:45 pm	Fitness Friday 10:00 - 10:30 am
Yoga - Therapeutic Chair 12:15 - 12:45 pm Tuesday - Level 1 Wednesday - Level 2 Thursday - Level 3	Culinary Medicine/Nutrition Friday 12:15 - 12:45 pm two times per month (see event page for dates)

All sessions will be held via the Webex platform,
registration is required at:
clevelandclinic.org/CILMevents

Join in on live virtual Yoga, Meditation, Fitness and Culinary Medicine sessions. These are available for free to all caregivers. All sessions will be held via the Webex platform, registration is required at:

<http://clevelandclinic.org/CILMevents>

****Graduate Students are welcome to join!****

Well-Being, Self-Care and Emotional Support for Caregivers

Please note: A connection to the Cleveland Clinic network is required to access many of these resources.

Caregiver Experience Wellness Portal: disconnect, unwind or say thank you virtually

Caring for Caregivers: confidential services that preserve, restore and enhance wellbeing of our caregivers. Available at 1-800-989-8820 (including new Boost telephone appointment).

Cleveland Clinic Office of Caregiver Experience on [Facebook](#) and Instagram.

Connect Today/Learner Connect: resiliency resources to help you manage complex, changing times (virtual meetings, change and stress management, and communication)

Occupational Health: If you have further questions about COVID-19 please contact the COVID-19 Caregiver Hotline at 216-445-8246.

OneClick to Well-Being: well-being information and resources for staff

Spiritual Care and Healing Services: information for the religious and spiritual needs of CCF patients, their families and loved ones, and Cleveland Clinic caregivers. (216) 444-2518

CCPD Victim Advocacy: resource to help educate and support the CCF community on domestic violence. Email the committee at: dvcommittee@ccf.org

Behind the Scenes

This newsletter is written by the Communications teams of the Cleveland Clinic Research Trainee Association Leadership Council and fellow trainees. We welcome your questions and suggestions!

Email researchtraineeassoc@ccf.org to connect with us.

CC-RTA Communications Team

Nam Than, Amanda Daulagala, Swapnil Dey, Anxhela Gjojdeshi, Kelsey Bohn

Cleveland Clinic Trainee Association Leadership Council



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