

# Lerner Trainee Newsletter

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

Email [LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org](mailto:LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org) connect with us.

## Embracing Spring's Arrival

In this issue, we celebrate the arrival of Spring by showcasing our trainee's exciting accomplishments, including their recent publications, conference presentations, doctoral defenses, and awards.

We feature post-doctoral fellow Dr. Kavita Sharma and doctoral student Vaani Nanavaty, along with LRI alum Dr. Sashi Kant.

In Recent Events, we highlight the CBTA 2024 Networking Day at Case and the March Lerner Lunchtime Linkups. These events offered our trainees a valuable opportunity for professional development while also providing a well-deserved break after hours spent juggling research responsibilities.

Our Upcoming Events feature Office of the Research Development Webinar and the Cleveland Pain Symposium 2024. We have also recently added an Opportunities section which summarizes all the funding and job opportunities that have been advertised in LRI in the past and have upcoming deadlines.

Our monthly feature presents a Q&A with Sakina Dharas, who is a part of the Innovation Fellows Program and Innovations for Cleveland Clinic London. Our readers who are interested in inventing but may be intimidated by the process can find her exciting journey shared at the end of this section.

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please reach out to us at [LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org](mailto:LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org).



## Join our LinkedIn Group

The Lerner 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 Lerner Research Institute. 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.](#)

# Upcoming Events

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## Office of Research Development Webinar

### How CCF Investigators Can Use Dimensions Web App

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#### Dates

**Internal Submission Deadline:** Monday, April 1, 2024 at 12:00 PM

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#### Details

**Administrator(s):** Nicole Brey (Owner)  
Office of Research Development (ORD)

**Category:** Registration

**Cycle:** 2024

**Number of Possible Awardees:** 100

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#### Description

The Office of Research Development (ORD) and Dimensions invite you to attend a 30-minute webinar titled:

**"How CCF Investigators Can Use Dimensions Web App"**

on Tuesday, April 2, 2024, from 12-12:30 PM EST via Microsoft Teams.

**Dimensions** is the world's largest linked scientific research analytics tool that allows everyone at Cleveland Clinic to measure and assess their research impact, identify collaborators and competitors, and inform strategic initiatives. Users can explore connections between researchers and institutions along with grants, publications, clinical trials, patents, and policy documents that they may have contributed to the academic sphere. Access is **free** to all Cleveland Clinic investigators through the Office of Research Development.

After attending this webinar, you should be able to:

- Login to Dimensions with your CCF single sign on
- Determine the funding landscape for your area of research
- Identify potential collaborators, funders, and competitors

Registration via InfoReady is open through 12 PM EST on April 1, 2024.

You are confirmed for participation by registering for this webinar in InfoReady. A Microsoft Teams link will be sent via Outlook invite on March 27, 2024. Those who register after March 27, 2024, will receive the Outlook invite with Teams link on April 1, 2024.

If you have further questions, please contact Nicole Brey at [brey@ccf.org](mailto:brey@ccf.org).

Sign up at <https://ccf.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1933393> by noon, April 1

# Upcoming Events



*Sponsored by Cleveland Clinic Consortium for Pain, Case Western Reserve University,  
and the Cleveland Functional Electrical Stimulation (FES) Center*

**April 12-13, 2024**

**Health Education Campus**

9501 Euclid Ave  
Cleveland, OH 44106

Pain is a multi-disciplinary experience that requires multi-modal approaches for accurate diagnosis and effective therapy. Holistic understanding of individual differences is key to achieving 'whole person' health for patients with chronic pain. The main themes for this year's conference are:

- Personalized Pain Management (biomarkers, wearables, brain imaging, data analytics)
- Neuromodulation (SCS, photo-bio-modulation)

Main topics to be discussed include the relation between chronic pain and the opioid epidemic, ocular pain, stem cell therapies, and big data analytics, as well as the ethics and philosophy of pain.



**PRE-REGISTER**  
FOR UPDATES AND  
LIVE REGISTRATION LINK



[WWW.CLEVELANDPAINSYMPOSIUM.ORG](http://WWW.CLEVELANDPAINSYMPOSIUM.ORG)

Please direct questions to [info@fescenter.org](mailto:info@fescenter.org)



# Upcoming Events

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## BenMed Program

The goal of the BenMed Program at Benedictine High School is to expose students to medical or medical-adjacent careers, to enhance their college choice and provide networking. They have a particular interest in exposing students to medical research. Most of BenMed's activity is in the form of seminars from 11-11:35 am on Wednesday or Thursday.

The seminar format is a 20-minute talk followed by 10 minutes for Q&A. Trainees could also do ask-me-anything sessions with very little presentation, if someone wants to do that.

Below are some example topics:

- Biomedical research summary
- Overview of specialized medicine (e.g. orthopedics vs cardiology)
- Surgical/procedural/treatment/lab techniques
- Diagnostic techniques/pathology
- FDA approval process for drugs/treatments
- Career summary (what it's like to be a...)
- Overview of an ambulance/clinic/lab

They would be happy to have doctors, nurses, lab technicians, technologists, post-docs, paramedics, or other staff. The goal is to stoke the fires of their student's interest.

[Please sign up here if you are interested in this outreach opportunity.](#)

Anyone interested in participating can reach out to Dr. Tessianna Misko ([tam37@case.edu](mailto:tam37@case.edu)) or Alicia Santin ([axa1059@case.edu](mailto:axa1059@case.edu)) and put their name on the document above. They will then reach out with scheduling information for those who are interested.

They also are happy to facilitate on-site visits or shadowing, but please be aware that you must receive prior approval from LRI administration for high school students to visit before being allowed to schedule an on-site. Any interested parties for an on-site visit will need to work in more detail with Dr. Misko in the CWRU School of Medicine Graduate Education Office and consult with Dr. Abby Bifano ([bifanoa@ccf.org](mailto:bifanoa@ccf.org)) regarding regulations for students in the LRI. You may also reach out to [LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org](mailto:LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org) with any questions.



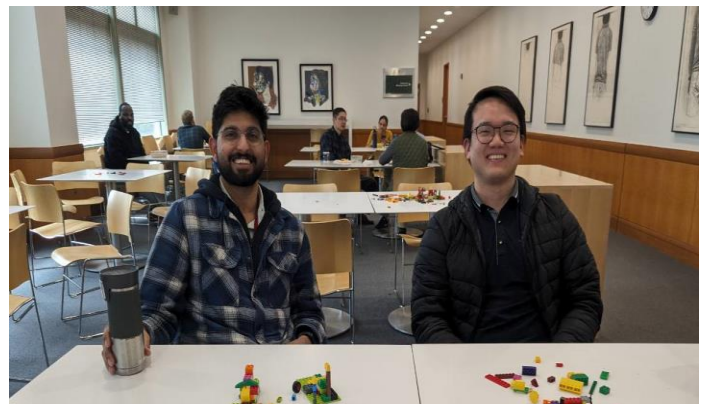
# Recent Events

## March Lerner Lunchtime Linkup

This month Lerner Lunchtime Linkup (LLL) was held on March 13th. To go along with the delicious treats from Insomnia Cookies and Starbucks coffee, we offer Legos, and we even engaged attendees with a "What's your favorite podcast?" survey! A few listed ones included My brother, My brother & Me, System Mastery, and My Favorite Murder. Contact us to get the entire list!



The LTA Social/Outreach subcommittee is excited to present an opportunity for trainees to unwind and bond with peers amidst research commitments. LLL is a monthly event held every first Wednesday of the month. Come join us and bring your friends for a fun-filled time with coffee, treats, and Legos at the next LLL!



# Recent Events

## Cleveland Biomedical Training Alliance Networking Day 2024

We extend our gratitude to all who took part in the inaugural CTBA Networking Day 2024! This includes our company sponsors (Ohio Life Sciences, Abeona Therapeutics, Cincinnati Children's, Wave Strategy), partnering organizations (LTA, CWRU BME GSA, CSU ABCE, CWRU BGSO, CWRU PDA), administrative collaborators, and individual trainee volunteers. With over 20 companies and more than 100 attendees, the event was a resounding success. The feedback we've received, particularly regarding the roundtable discussions, has been overwhelmingly positive, with an average rating of 8 out of 10 for the usefulness and helpfulness of our sessions across both the CBTA 2023 Professional Development Conference and 2024 Networking Day. The valuable feedback we've gathered will guide us in continuing to make further improvements to better serve the needs of our trainees in the future with this new annual program.



**Organizers and Panelists** - Pictured left to right: Dr. Kavya Vipparthi (LTA), Hope Zehr (LTA/CSU), Dr. Marvin Nieman (CWRU SOM), Dr. Brian Kevany (Abeona Therapeutics), Hannah Morgan (CWRU BME), Dr. Paul Wille (Abeona Therapeutics), Rachel Begley (CWRU Grad Studies), Edward Carson (LTA/CCF-CWRU BME), Dr. Lavanya Jain (LTA), Gabrielle Labrozzi (CWRU BME), Dr. Tessianna Misko (CWRU SOM), Dr. Brian Davis (CSU). Not pictured: Liz Wakelin (BME GSA), Felicia Moss (CWRU Postdoc Office), Dr. Jason Ross (CCF RETC), Jessica Crissman (CCF BME), Dr. Jia Liu (LTA), Molly Guthrie (LTA), Dr. Morgan Carter (CCF Innovations), Melissa Cadaret (NAMSA), Dr. Jonathan Smith (CCF-CWRU Molecular Medicine)

**Career Roundtables** - Trainees rotated through roundtables of over 20 life science companies from across Ohio. Hosted in the CWRU Tinkham Veale University Center Grand Ballroom.



**Industry Career Panel** - Pictured left to right: Dr. Brian Kevany (Abeona Therapeutics), Melissa Cadaret (NAMSA), Dr. Morgan Carter (CCF Innovations).



# Recent Events

## Northeastern Ohio Science and Engineering Fair 2024

The 71st Annual Northeastern Ohio Science and Engineering Fair (NEOSEF) took place from March 11th to 14th, 2024, at Cleveland State University. NEOSEF is a non-profit, all-volunteer organization whose goal is to spark young adults' interest in science and engineering by encouraging their participation in a science and engineering competition. The 2024 fair involved over 300 students from 44 schools across seven surrounding counties: Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage, and Summit. Each student in the fair was judged by at least two of the 300+ scientists and engineers who generously donated an afternoon of their time to this event. Many LRI trainees serve every year as general and special fair staff, judges, and board members. Congratulations to all the winners for their outstanding achievements, and a big thank you to our LRI colleagues for their invaluable support in ensuring the success of NEOSEF 2024!



NEOSEF 2024 judges: In blue T-shirt are trainees from LRI!



Students at the entrance ready for their poster presentation



Projects in the Physical Science Category (bottom left photo) encompass topics such as Chemistry, Physics, Math/Computer Science, Earth/Space Science, and Engineering. Projects in the Biological Science Category (bottom right photo) cover subjects like Biology, Health/Medicine, Environmental Science, and Behavioral Science. All winners in the fair receive a monetary award, a medal, and a ribbon. Additionally, approximately 350 special awards donated by companies, societies, and organizations are distributed. NEOSEF honors two 7th-8th Grade Grand Prize Winners with a plaque and a monetary award, and nominates 20-25 students for the Thermo Fisher Scientific Junior Innovator Challenge. As top honorees at NEOSEF, each of the 9th-12th Grade Grand Prize Winners is awarded an all-expense-paid trip (along with a chaperone) to represent NEOSEF at the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) from May 12th to 17th, 2024, in Los Angeles, CA. At ISEF, NEOSEF Grand Prize winners will compete with over 1,800 students from all 50 states and more than 70 countries for over \$8,000,000 in scholarships and prizes.



# Meet your Fellow

Kavita Sharma

*PhD*

## Where are you from?

I hail from Delhi, the vibrant heart of India, a bustling metropolis known for its dynamic energy and rich heritage.

## What is your educational background?

After completing my Master's education from Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India, I pursued a PhD in Biotechnology from Council of Scientific and Industrial Research - Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology (CSIR-IGIB), Delhi, India.

## What did your graduate research focus on?

During my PhD, I was part of a collaborative research project on essential hypertension and high-altitude pulmonary edema. We used genotyping and next-generation sequencing data to identify key genetic markers linked to hypertension and explored how hypoxia impacts gene expression. Our findings shed light on novel pathways in these conditions, offering potential insights for future treatments.

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

Through my PhD, I developed an understanding of human diseases through clinical, biochemical, and genomic variables that instilled a passion for interdisciplinary research in me. My current postdoc position provides me with ample opportunities to work on global genetic datasets with vast numbers of variables to understand the resulting phenotypes. Also, I am free to learn and grow in the current lab at multiple levels, making research an exciting journey for me that I am sure will help me become an independent scientist in future.

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

I work within Dr. Asha R. Kallianpur's laboratory in the Genomic Medicine Institute (GMI), and I have recently completed a year in this position.

## What is your current research focus?

My postdoctoral research involves identifying the intricate relationship between iron regulation and neuropsychiatric complications in individuals living with HIV. I am exploring how specific genes and pathways influence major depression and neurocognitive impairment in this population.

## Do you have any recent accomplishments in your current position?

In my present role, I derive a sense of fulfillment from acquiring new skills and contributing to the ongoing manuscript preparation within the laboratory. My abstract was accepted for poster presentation at the 2023 American Society of Human Genetics meeting. Additionally, I completed the Medical Biostatistics course at the Cleveland Clinic and became part of the Lerner Trainee Association to advocate for Lerner trainees. I am also serving as a member in the GMI Engagement Committee. Recently, I was honored to serve as a special award judge at the Northeastern Ohio Science and Engineering Fair.

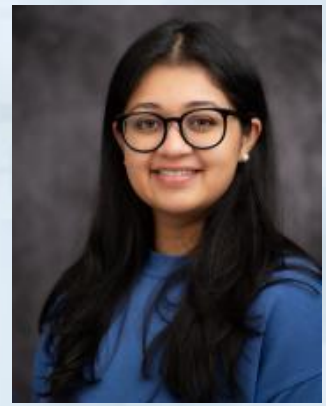
## What do you like to do outside of the laboratory?

In my daily routine, I find immense joy in cooking and singing as ways to unwind. Exploring new destinations and cherishing moments with my loved ones fuels my spirit. As a social individual, I eagerly participate in events hosted by the Cleveland Clinic and Case Western Reserve University. Moreover, I indulge my creative side by immersing myself in art and craft projects during my free time.



# Meet your Graduate Student

## Vaani Nanavaty



### Where are you from?

I grew up in a suburb in New Jersey, where I stayed to complete my undergraduate studies. I moved to the Cleveland area in 2018 where I am now completing my PhD studies.

### What is your educational background?

I received my Bachelor's degree in biology at Rutgers University in NJ. Having an affinity for health sciences, I continued and completed my Master's degree in medical physiology at Case Western Reserve University. I quickly developed an interest in developmental biology and joined Dr. Nina Desai's embryology lab at Cleveland Clinic, where I worked on translational projects and clinical reviews, presenting my work at various national and international conferences. As I learned about the effects of cancer and cancer therapies on fertility, I was inspired to contribute to the growing pool of knowledge in the cancer biology space. In 2022, I began my PhD journey through CWRU's Biomedical Sciences Training Program with the goal to develop as an independent scientist and return to clinical research in the future.

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

In 2023, I joined Dr. Abhishek Chakraborty's lab in the Department of Cancer Biology.

### How did you decide on the Cleveland Clinic?

Having studied near and worked with Cleveland Clinic, I was inspired by the collaborative approach of the Lerner Research Institute to research critical issues in the preclinical and translational space. The students at the institute are exposed to translational research and bedside applications of bench-work from the start of their training. Having

a desire to pursue a clinical scientist role in the future, I quickly learned that the comprehensive environment of the Cleveland Clinic will nurture my training in both academic science and clinical application. In my two years as a graduate student, I have already had meaningful interactions with scientists and trainees from diverse educational backgrounds. The Clinic's dedication to being at the forefront of translational research led me to choose a lab at the LRI for my doctoral studies, where I could further my training in a scientifically rich environment.

### What is your current research focus?

My research is focused on exploring the role of the gut microbiome on clear cell renal cell carcinoma (ccRCC) disease progression and therapy response. ccRCC/kidney cancer is one of the most common cancer types, with increasing incidence and lack of curative therapies. Research shows that the gut microbiome plays an increasingly important role in cancer progression and response to immunotherapies. My work explores the direct relationship of the microbiome's circulating metabolites on the progression of ccRCC, along with the microbiome's impact on the immune microenvironment. My project aims to further understanding of the intricate connections between the microbiome and cancer and uncover potential avenues for therapeutic interventions for ccRCC.

### What do you like to do outside of the work?

I am an avid hiker, and I enjoy weekend adventures in the Cuyahoga Valley National Park and the Cleveland Metroparks. In the colder seasons, I can be found attending orchestral performances at the Severance Music Hall or taking dance classes at a gym.



# Meet your Alum

**Sashi Kant**

*PhD*

## **Where did you obtain your PhD?**

I earned my PhD degree in 2012 from the University of Delhi, India.

## **When did you work in Lerner and in which lab? What positions did you hold?**

I worked with Dr. Srinivasan Dasarathy at the Department of Inflammation and Immunity as a post-doctoral fellow from 2017 to 2019.

## **What did you work on at Lerner?**

At LRI, I investigated the signaling mechanisms responsible for skeletal muscle loss in patients with liver cirrhosis and alcoholic liver disease (ALD). My research provided novel insights into the role of hyperammonemia and ethanol in impairing mTORC1 signaling and protein synthesis, leading to severe muscle loss.

## **What successes did you have at Lerner?**

During two years of my work at LRI, I devoted my efforts to exploring the mechanism of severe muscle loss in patients with liver cirrhosis, resulting in three high-impact papers. The key findings were as follows: (1) Ethanol, coupled with hyperammonemia, impaired protein synthesis and mTORC1 signaling, increased autophagy, and led to severe muscle loss. (2) Hyperammonemia-induced loss of  $\beta$ -catenin, caused by proteasomal degradation via a noncanonical GSK3-independent, IKK-dependent pathway, ultimately resulted in skeletal muscle loss. (3) Activated protein phosphatase 2A (PP2A) led to the dysregulation of protein homeostasis and muscle loss.

## **What is your current position title, and where are you now?**

I hold the Scientist IV position at Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health, Ames, Iowa.

## **What does your role in your current position entail and what is your favorite part?**

Before moving to my current position, I served as a Research Instructor for four years at the University of Colorado, located in Aurora, Colorado. During this time, my research focused on uncovering the molecular mechanisms by which Salmonella protects itself against oxidative stress. In my current role, I work on the vaccine development for both livestock and pets. My passion lies in contributing to safeguarding animal health, promoting animal welfare, supporting economic stability in agriculture, protecting public health, and advancing sustainable food production systems through the development of animal vaccines.

## **What about your time at the Lerner do you think prepared you for this position?**

My tenure at Lerner provided me with a comprehensive foundation and experience that equipped me with strong research skills, exposed me to cutting-edge technologies and methodologies, provided opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, and fostered a mindset of innovation and scientific rigor. The experience also helped my professional development and readiness for my next role.

## **Is there something you particularly miss from your time at Lerner?**

I miss the stimulating intellectual environment, the camaraderie with colleagues, the access to cutting-edge resources and facilities, and the opportunity to contribute to meaningful research endeavors.

## **In one sentence, what advice would you give current Lerner post-docs?**

I would advise post-docs to actively seek out interdisciplinary collaborations and opportunities for networking, as they can enhance the impact and reach of your research within and beyond your field.



# Accomplishments

## **Congratulations to Dr. Lacin from the Yildirim Lab in the Neurosciences Department!**

The recent article by Dr. Macit Emre Lacin titled "Applications of multiphoton microscopy in imaging cerebral and retinal organoids" was published in *Frontiers in Neuroscience*.

<https://doi.org/10.3389/fnins.2024.1360482>



## **Congratulations to Dr. Coutinho de Oliveira from the Melenhorst Lab in the LRI Center for Immunotherapy and Precision Immun-Oncology!**

Dr. Beatriz Coutinho de Oliveira was selected to give a talk at the Translational Research Cancer Centers Consortium (TRCCC) Meeting 2024 in Seven Springs, Pennsylvania. The title of the talk was "Enhancing CAR-T cell function in CLL by targeted CRISPR-library screening from lentiviral integration site analyses". The recent article by Dr. Coutinho de Oliveira titled "Key role of CD4+ T cells in determining CD8 function during CAR-T cell manufacture" was published in *Journal for ImmunoTherapy of Cancer*.

<https://doi.org/10.1136/jitc-2023-008723>



## **Congratulations to Dr. Michael from the Yuan Lab in the Department of Ophthalmic Research, Cole Eye Institute!**

The recent article by Dr. Shiju Thomas Michael titled "Extracellular vesicle biomarkers in ocular fluids associated with ophthalmic diseases" was published in *Experimental Eye Research*.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.exer.2024.109831>



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

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# Accomplishments

## **Congratulations to Dr. Gohel from the Cheng Lab in the Genomic Medicine Institute!**

The recent article by Dr. Dhruv Gohel titled "Sildenafil as a Candidate Drug for Alzheimer's Disease: Real-World Patient Data Observation and Mechanistic Observations from Patient-Induced Pluripotent Stem Cell-Derived Neurons" was published in *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease*.

<https://doi.org/10.3233/JAD-231391>



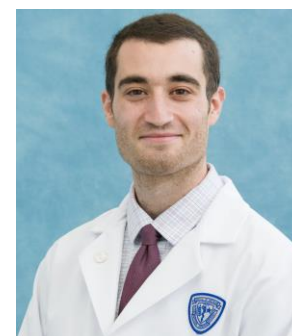
## **Congratulations to Kristen Kay from the Lathia Lab in the Cardiovascular and Metabolic Sciences!**

Kristen Kay defended her dissertation titled "Metabolic dysfunction in the brain under pathological conditions". This work has been published in the *Journal of Biochemistry* and *bioRxiv*.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbc.2023.105299>

## **Congratulations to Benjamin Mittman from the Rothberg Lab in the Center for Value-Based Care Research!**

Benjamin Mittman from CVCR - Community Care was selected to be sponsored by Case Western Reserve University for the American Association for the Advancement of Science [Catalyzing Advocacy in Science and Engineering \(CASE\)](#) policy workshop 2024 in Washington, D.C.



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# Accomplishments

## **Congratulations to Dr. Biswas from the Stuehr Lab in the Department of Inflammation and Immunity!**

The recent article by Dr. Pranjal Biswas titled "Visualizing mitochondrial heme flow through GAPDH in living cells and its regulation by NO" was published in *Redox Biology*.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.redox.2024.103120>



## **Congratulations to Dr. Jain from the Bekris Lab in the Genomic Medicine Institute!**

Dr. Jain was selected to give a talk at the hybrid International Conference on Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Diseases and related neurological disorders (AD/PD) 2024 in Lisbon, Portugal. The title of the talk was "Exploring the Female Plasma Proteome in Alzheimer's Disease".

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# Opportunities

## American Cancer Society

[Postdoctoral Fellowship](#), \$216,000/3yrs. Support new investigators in research training programs to position them for independent careers in cancer research. As part of their evaluation, peer reviewers consider how well the fellowship will broaden the applicant's research training and experience. Deadline: **April 1, 2024**.

## American Association for Cancer Research.

- American Association for Cancer Research Renal Cell Carcinoma Research Fellowship, \$130,000/2yrs. To encourage and support a postdoctoral or clinical research fellow to conduct renal cell carcinoma research and to establish a successful career path in this field. The research proposed for funding may be in basic, translational, clinical, or population sciences research and must have direct applicability and relevance to renal cell carcinoma. Deadline: **April 11, 2024**
- American Association for Cancer Research Cancer Disparities Research Fellowship, \$130,000/2yrs. Intended to encourage and support postdoctoral or clinical research fellows to conduct cancer disparities research and to establish a successful career path in this field. The proposed research may be in basic, translational, clinical, or population sciences research and must have direct applicability and relevance to cancer disparities. Deadline: **April 16, 2024**

## Global Center for Pathogen and Human Health Research

The Global Center for Pathogen and Human Health Research is offering the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual opportunity to apply for funding in support of the training and career development of postdoctoral fellows. The purpose of this mechanism is to provide one early-career postdoctoral fellow each year a 2-year fellowship covering salary, fringe benefits, and the cost of a computer. No specific scientific research discipline required. **Please note: this is a nomination submission.** All interested postdoctoral candidates must be nominated by a CCF mentor PI with a primary appointment in LRI. To submit your nomination, please visit this [InfoReady link](#). **All nominations must be submitted by the mentor PI by April 12, 2024.**

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# Opportunities

## TEACHING

**Spring 2024 Inclusive Teaching Course:** Join the [Inclusive STEM Teaching Project](#) course from March 4<sup>th</sup> – April 26<sup>th</sup> by [enrolling here](#). Join the community of more than 11,000 faculty, postdocs, graduate students, and staff, and register for the online course this spring. By participating in this free course, you will learn how to advance your awareness, self-efficacy, and ability to cultivate inclusive classroom environments; support your development as a reflective, inclusive practitioner; engage in reflection and discussion around topics of equity and inclusion across a variety of institutional contexts; and, implement inclusive teaching methods in your classes which will remove common barriers and enhance learning in STEM for all students. If you are interested in joining a learning community, please express that interest [here](#).

## JOBS

**Cancer Biology Researcher | Wake Forest Brain Tumor Center of Excellence** is hiring multiple positions for basic science and translational researchers focusing on brain tumor therapies. The [job link](#) states that an established independent research program and active funding are requirements, but we're told that may not be the case depending on the candidate. If interested, you can reach out to [Dr. Bryan T. Mott](#), Neurosurgery Resident at Wake Forest, with any questions.

### Tenure-Track Faculty Positions | University of Louisville

The School of Medicine at the University of Louisville invites applications for tenure-track faculty positions in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the Assistant/Associate Professor level from applicants with research interests and a strong record of productivity in cancer immunology including clinical and experimental Immunotherapy, CAR-T cells, reprogramming of tumor microenvironment, and/or role of microbiome in cancer immunotherapy. Learn more [here](#).

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# Monthly feature



## CCF Innovations

Happy Spring LRI Trainees! For this issue, we wanted to introduce and highlight CCI's Sakina Dharas, who is currently in the Innovation Fellows program and is helping set up our innovations presence at Cleveland Clinic London by providing a Q&A. If you are interested in learning more about the innovation fellows program, feel free to reach out to us and we can put you in touch with that group.

As a reminder, [Cleveland Clinic Innovations \(CCI\)](#) is the commercialization arm and tech transfer office of the Cleveland Clinic. Our strategic goal is to accelerate the delivery of lifechanging healthcare solutions to patients. We re-organized in 2021 to better serve inventor and to make innovation easier and more accessible for all caregivers. The results are new medical devices, therapeutics and diagnostics, and digital health solutions that drastically improve patient outcomes. Your LRI Engagement Partners ([Morgan Carter, PhD and Matt Koletsky, MS](#) as leads for Therapeutics and Diagnostics, [Nicole Byram](#) as lead for Medical Device, and [Michelle Leung](#) as lead for Digital Health), are here for any questions and/or to discuss the innovations process or ideas you may have. Thanks!



### Q&A with Sakina Dharas

**Innovation Fellows program  
and Innovations for Cleveland  
Clinic London**

**What brought you to Cleveland Clinic London, and how long have you been with Cleveland Clinic?**

I've been at Cleveland Clinic London for four years. I began in February of 2020 just before the pandemic. I feel like the name of Cleveland Clinic preceded itself as a global leader in healthcare. I was working in the digital health space for a National Health Service (NHS) hospital called University College London (UCL) Hospital. At UCL, I trained as a pharmacist and I was helping with digital health implementations, specifically with Epic and other systems, and a colleague and friend of mine mentioned that Cleveland Clinic London was opening. Given the recognition and prestige of Cleveland Clinic is an international hospital, I was really intrigued,

# Monthly feature



## CCF Innovations

so I applied to the Chemical Informatics department, which I am currently still in. I've been at Cleveland Clinic since, but the Innovations path happened a little later.

### **How were you introduced to Cleveland Clinic Innovations?**

I was always interested in the idea of innovation. I didn't know it specifically as a process. Innovation is not necessarily something I was exposed to through the culture of an organization, but more so something I was introduced to more organically, from personal experience. While I was in my clinical practice as a pharmacist, I noticed that medicines being wasted was a major problem. On the wards, we would see cartons and bins full of wasted and unused medications. I did research and found that billions of pounds within the UK are wasted every year on unused medicines. A colleague of mine, who was also a medic, shared with me that the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was doing a health hackathon where people in the health space could present their ideas. So I went to MIT, and I pitched my idea, where I went through a process of rapid prototyping. We worked within a diverse team, and I found the entire experience to be exciting and interesting. That was my gateway into the whole concept of clinicians having a voice to innovate and create.

Cleveland Clinic has a great focus on identifying problems and creating solutions to solve unmet clinical needs, and I didn't realize that I was going through that kind of process on my own while at NHS. So that was insightful and exciting. When I came back from MIT, I realized I had caught the innovation bug a little bit. When I was settled into my role at Cleveland Clinic within Clinical Informatics and we opened our first site, I felt like I wanted to embark on something new. I searched innovations in healthcare in general and I serendipitously came across Cleveland Clinic Innovations. After doing some research about the department and team, I was eager to see if there was an opportunity for me to get involved in some capacity. This is when I first learned of the Innovation Fellows program.

### **How did you hear about the Innovations Fellows program, and what has being in the program entailed for you?**

In 2022, when I reached out to learn more about Cleveland Clinic Innovations, I was introduced to Beth Sump from the Proof-of-Concept Office and Innovations Engagement teams. Beth shared with me a lot about what was going on within Cleveland Clinic Innovations and how they just started the Innovation Fellows program. I found the process to be a more in-depth and



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## CCF Innovations

formal program compared to the insight I had at MIT, so I was immediately intrigued. I'm undergoing a Master's in healthcare and design, which is very focused on healthcare innovation, and I find it to be a great convergence of what I found to be a great fit for what was being covered in the Innovation Fellows program. I applied, and the experience has been a pivotal and career-changing one for me that caused a seismic shift in where I saw my career going. The first year of the program was a lot of theory-based learning where the Fellows gained an understanding of the process of what happens when you go from idea to invention, right through to commercialization. We were given tasks of doing patterns to assessment as well, which provided beneficial practical experience. In the second year of the program, we've been working on our Catalyst SPARK project. During this time, we were given hands-on experience of seeing where things could progress and what happens with specific projects rather than just learning from a theoretical perspective, which I found great.

### **Being located at Cleveland Clinic London, what has the Innovation Fellows program meant to you?**

I'm the only one from London in the program, so it has provided me the opportunity to make connections across the enterprise. It means a lot to me to be able to bridge the gap across our two markets in Cleveland and London and make connections that bring the operating model of Innovations to the UK. There are opportunities for innovation everywhere, but to be able to be the facilitator of the process here in London is exciting for me. While I am the only London representative, my hope and goal are that this opens opportunities for future caregivers in London to be a part of Innovations as well so that we, too, can make significant strides in advancing and enhancing patient care.

### **How is the innovation mindset viewed and approached in London compared to the United States?**

I can only really speak to my own experience and during a recent presentation I gave to London physicians about Innovations, I heard similar feelings echoed back. Within the health system in London, there isn't a palpable culture of innovation yet. At Cleveland Clinic, innovation is one of the core values so that we can be the leaders in advancing patient care and outcomes.

In the United States culture, my perception is that the entrepreneurial mindset is much more pushed and supported than in the UK. This could be a philosophical discussion because

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we had some of the doctors express during our conversation that the NHS was founded in the spirit of public service and to try and produce things that would lead to entrepreneurship and commercialization and not take that into account might be too high-risk. I emphasized the point that the connection with Cleveland Clinic was very much about putting patients first and innovation was a way of doing so. What we stand for, what we're all about, is fueling that kind of hunger for innovation to be able to give the best possible care to our patients. So, it's not a case of just trying to make money, it's about the end result of helping patients. I feel like we have a lot to learn from the culture of innovation and I'm excited to facilitate the innovative mindset in London.

### **So, you'll be officially starting your role at the conclusion of your fellowship, correct?**

I've begun my role with the team, and once the Innovation Fellows program ends, I'll ramp up into my role with Innovations even more. In January I had the pleasure of coming to Cleveland to meet the Innovations team, which was a great experience. While I'm still part of the Fellows program, my role now is more around engagement and awareness and how we are trying to set up the Innovations process in London. I think this is a nice transition period between the Fellows program and my role with the team, as I see and experience things from both an inventor side as a fellow and an operations side. It was so special for me to be able to meet everyone earlier this year so I could build a rapport with the team.

### **What are you most excited about with your role? What are you hoping to achieve?**

This may be a lofty goal, but I really want every caregiver in London to know what Innovations is and that we are available to support them. Already this year we've had our first Invention Disclosure Form (IDF) submitted at Cleveland Clinic London. Just being able to have caregivers be aware of us is my first goal. The way I found out about Innovations was on my own. It was very serendipitous, which is great, but I want our caregivers to be aware without having to find out for themselves. Innovation is one of our core values. I want people to just know when they identify a problem or unmet need and have an idea to solve it, Innovations is their resource to bring their vision to life. I want my colleagues to think, "I'm going to go talk to Sakina; maybe this is something that I can work on with Innovations." I want us in London to feel like we are a part of that bigger picture and part of the wider Cleveland Clinic ecosystem.

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### What does innovation mean to you?

I believe innovation is about people being able to actualize their dreams of wanting a better world when it comes to helping patients. That's what innovation in relation to healthcare means to me if I had to put it in a statement. It's about giving and allowing people the opportunity to actualize their visions for a better future for patients to make their lives better.

I think every team in Innovations approaches that philosophy in a different way that is unique to their area of expertise. Whether it be through assessing the marketing, protecting intellectual property, working with a portfolio company, etc., we're all here for the right reason and for the same reason. Our North Star is patient care, and we are all pointing in the same direction.

Beth expressed to me when I first met her that she has the best job in the world because she gets to help people achieve their dreams. And to have gone through the process with the Innovation Fellows program, I have seen that her sentiment is very much the case. There are things that don't necessarily make it through the innovation process, but the bigger picture is very much that we are doing amazing things that are changing the face of healthcare and the future for patients. Earlier in my career and at university I worked with inventors of novel drugs. It feels crazy for me to be at a point in my life where things have already come full circle. I once only learned about drug development, and now I'm with an inventor of a drug looking at how they first started inventing. It's kind of mind-blowing! Innovation really is as exciting as you would think.



# Wellness Resources

The Cleveland Clinic Wellness logo is in the top left corner. The background features a silhouette of a person in a yoga pose against a sunset sky. The text is white and pink on a dark background.

**Cleveland Clinic**  
Wellness

## Daily Wellness Tools for YOU Program

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

<b>Meditation</b> Monday 12:15 – 12:45 pm	<b>Fitness</b> Friday 10:00 - 10:30 am
<b>Yoga - Therapeutic Chair</b> 12:15 - 12:45 pm Tuesday - Level 1 Wednesday - Level 2 Thursday - Level 3	<b>Culinary Medicine/Nutrition</b> 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](http://clevelandclinic.org/CILMevents)

## 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.*

For a more detailed and complete list of resources, please visit [this link](#).

**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](mailto:dvcommittee@ccf.org)

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!\*\***

# Behind the Scenes

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

Email [LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org](mailto:LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org) to connect with us.

## LTA Communications Team

Jason Ross, Nam Than, William (BJ) Massey, Anushruti Ashok, Swapnil Dey, Susan Afolabi, Julia Myers, Lavanya Jain

## Lerner Trainee Association Leadership Council



### Executive Board

Co-Presidents: Jia Liu, Hope Zehr

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