



## New Campus Celebrates Grand Opening, Welcomes Inaugural Class

Drexel University College of Medicine, Tower Health and local community members came together Tuesday, July 27, to celebrate the grand opening of the new four-year regional medical campus, Drexel University College of Medicine at Tower Health. The campus, within walking distance to and less than a mile away from Reading Hospital, welcomed its inaugural class of 40 first-year medical students in early August.

Charles B. Cairns, MD, the Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Dean and senior vice president of medical affairs, said he looks forward to the impact of the campus on its community and on medical education. "The opening of this campus is so gratifying and solidifies our college's vision for a truly community-integrated medical college that spans urban, suburban and rural populations," Cairns said at the grand opening. "This campus

will serve as the intersecting point of our high-quality medical education, patient care, research and service missions."

The College of Medicine at Tower Health's four-story campus building includes state-of-the-art medical education technology. Future physicians will hone their diagnostic and interpersonal communication techniques in simulated hospital settings. Like their peers in Philadelphia, students will practice medical interviewing, physical exams and patient counseling with standardized patients, who are trained to portray scenarios and specific medical conditions.

To build skills in scenarios that would be uncomfortable or unsafe to create with a standardized patient, such as a live birth or bout of high blood pressure, students turn to the Simulation Laboratory. The Simulation

Lab's patient rooms are home to computer-controlled robotic manikins whose vital signs and responses to "treatment" are managed by technicians. Sim Lab sessions are filmed for student and faculty review and skills assessment.

The facility also has a fitness center, library, lounges, game room and café space to enhance student wellness. On the building's upper floors, large windows and an outdoor seating area offer forest and mountain views.

A mural, created by the Legacy Center with materials from its archives and special collections, features the College's legacy institutions, Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, the first medical school in the world for women, and Hahnemann University, a homeopathic institution that admitted non-traditional students.

"This building and its layout will help the campus to build community and also encourage our students to make strong connections to faculty, staff and professionals," said Orcel Kounga, director of admissions and student affairs. "Education, innovation, research and collaboration will thrive in one central, unifying space."

The campus's lecture halls, classrooms and common spaces are built to promote collaborative work. Students will work together to connect basic science concepts

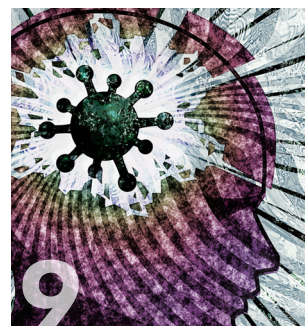


SUMMER/FALL 2021

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Commencement sets class of 2021 off to bright futures



Faculty benefits from student mental health awareness training



Spinal cord research receives funding from Department of Health

# Contents

West Reading Campus ..... 1  
Destination Excellence..... 3  
Commencement..... 6  
Thesis Defenses..... 10  
Scholarship Recipients..... 12  
Faculty Awards..... 13  
Discovery Day..... 20

## NEWS & EVENTS

Antiracism Training Grant, Mental Health Awareness, LGBTQ+ Symposium . . . 6–13

## WHAT WE'RE DOING

Activities and accomplishments..... 14–18

**Calendar** ..... 13

**In Memoriam** ..... 18

**Get to Know**..... 19

# pulse

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1505 Race Street, MS 484  
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### Danielle Kane

Executive Director  
Marketing & Communications

### Adrienne Hovey

Editor

### Heidi Karl

Art Director

### Contributing writers:

Greg Richter, Lisa Ryan

### Editorial Advisory Council:

Joris Beld, PhD, Danielle Kane,  
Paul McGonigle, PhD, Andrea Pesce

Submissions may be emailed to  
CoM\_Pulse@drexel.edu.

For questions, comments or additional copies of *Pulse*, call 267.359.6370 or email CoM\_Pulse@drexel.edu

[drexel.edu/medicine](http://drexel.edu/medicine)



# Dean's Message

As we start our new academic year, it is hard to believe that the College of Medicine is entering its third full semester of medical and biomedical graduate education in a pandemic. I continue to be proud of the extraordinary impact of students, trainees, faculty and staff on our community.

In July, we celebrated the grand opening of the College of Medicine at Tower Health, a new four-year regional medical campus in West Reading that is the academic home of 40 members of the MD program class of 2025. The event was attended by stakeholders from the College of Medicine and Tower Health, local and state government officials and community leaders. It was exciting for all of us to tour the state-of-the-art facility, view the beautiful historical wall created from



Charles B. Cairns, MD

materials housed at Drexel's Legacy Center: Archives & Special Collections, and picture the incoming students using the common spaces to relax and get to know each other. The event was capped off by a ribbon cutting, with Drexel President John Fry and Tower Health President and CEO P. Sue Perrotty deftly wielding the scissors.

We had 303 first-year medical students, a record number, enroll in the College of Medicine this year. The students in both the Philadelphia and West Reading campuses are settling into their lives as medical students. All of these students were set on the path toward the compassionate practice of medicine at the annual White Coat Ceremony held on August 6. We were thrilled to return to an in-person ceremony this year, and grateful again for everyone's understanding and cooperation with COVID-19 protocols.

In addition to the medical students, we welcomed new master's and PhD students into the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Professional Studies. Whether they are in a pre-health, career-oriented or biomedical science program, we are so pleased to have these talented students among our ranks. We look forward to seeing their future contributions to our community, the Philadelphia community and the ever-growing body of research and scientific knowledge.

We have garnered a record \$42 million in research awards over the past year, a 30% increase over the previous year. Importantly, all College of Medicine students will have a chance to share their research accomplishments at Discovery Day, our annual day of research, in October. We are excited for this wonderful showcase of research and innovation. Discovery Day is also an opportunity for fellowship and cross-disciplinary collaboration, as educators and investigators learn about the work happening in other departments and laboratories. In addition, we get a chance to recognize outstanding undergraduate and high school students for their research endeavors. I hope to see all of you on October 21!

I recently marked the two-year anniversary of my arrival at Drexel. What a remarkable two years it has been. We have persevered through the closure of Hahnemann University Hospital, the COVID-19 pandemic and social justice challenges to become a bigger, more productive and impactful College of Medicine. We have opened a new campus in West Reading, with a new educational facility under construction in University City and a new research building in active planning. I do not have the words to thank you — all of you — for your support, your dedication to excellence and your leadership. I couldn't be prouder of our work together.

### Charles B. Cairns, MD

Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Dean  
Senior Vice President of Medical Affairs

## I'm a First-Gen College Student Who Made It to Medical School

I still remember the moment when I told my parents that I had been accepted into medical school, and the look on their faces when I donned my white coat for the first time (albeit over Zoom). They were, and still are, so proud of me and made sure to remind me every chance they got. I remember the feeling of them believing in me and their support before I even began this journey.

I was so bright-eyed and excited the summer before MS1, and as orientation week loomed closer and emails began flooding in about policies and seminars coming up, I began to realize I had no idea of the amount of work that would be expected of me in my first year. And work it was. The saying "It's like drinking from a fire hose" was no exaggeration. It felt like I could barely come up for air in between exams, and then being in the middle of a pandemic, too? It was nothing like I thought my first year would be, but then again who could've prepared for something like that? My first year passed in a blur, and I made it out alive. I learned so much along the way.

Now, as I'm entering my second month of MS2 and reflecting on my time here, already I can see clearly how much I've grown. The resilience I've shown, lessons I've learned, and highs and lows that I've experienced in this past year, which had its share of challenges, have only prepared me to better tackle the year ahead.

Being first-generation comes with its own set of challenges on top of striving to do well in medical school. Paperwork and processes seem so daunting when your parents haven't seen them before or are unfamiliar with the system. Student loans seem unbearably impossible to pay off when your parents never had any. It's a difficult experience, and yet it's polished and challenged me along the way, and I know there is plenty more to confront ahead.

Even outside of paperwork and processes, it is not always easy to help my family understand that studying will very likely take all of my day, or to set boundaries that limit the times on weekends that I can see and visit with them. In fact,

it rarely ever is easy, and it's the sacrifice that I make often to continue to pursue the dream and passion I've worked so hard for.

One thing I've learned in my time here at Drexel is to not be afraid to ask for help. I don't mind emailing my professors whenever I have a question or going to the Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for advice on volunteering, shadowing or mentoring opportunities. Seeking knowledge and opportunities is how I got to where I am now, and I want to continue to ask for help all along the way, as well as be a resource for up-and-coming students who may have felt how I did entering first year and beyond.

Overall, I'm proud to be the first physician in my family, and when I graduate, I can say I have worked hard for it. Above all, my advice to others in my position, or anyone who resonates with my story, is to stay encouraged, keep working hard, ask for help, and whenever things get hard (which they inevitably will) remind yourself why you worked so hard to be here, and keep going.

— Jade Overton, MS '20



Jade Overton, MS '20, second-year medical student

**Contribute to Destination Excellence.** In each issue of *Pulse*, we highlight one aspect of diversity, equity and inclusion at Drexel University College of Medicine via a first-person essay. If you would like to write a piece for Destination Excellence, please contact [CoM\\_pulse@drexel.edu](mailto:CoM_pulse@drexel.edu).



## West Reading Campus

• continued from the cover

to medical cases, symptoms and disease presentation in the first-floor bioskills laboratory, and practice crucial skills in the adjacent anatomy laboratory.

Davin Evanson, MD '25, looks forward to collaborating with his classmates to sharpen various skills they will use as physicians. "One of my goals during my time in medical school is to practice working effectively as part of a medical team," he said. "Collaborating with my classmates to analyze cases and make diagnosis and treatment decisions will teach me the communication skills and emotional intelligence I'll need as I work with colleagues, as well as patients and their loved ones."

The class of 2025 will study the same outstanding curriculum as their peers at Philadelphia's Queen Lane Campus; all Drexel medical students have the opportunity to complete clinical rotations at Reading Hospital in their final years of medical school.

Reading Hospital, recently named one of *U.S. News & World Reports'* top 10 hospitals in Pennsylvania, is Tower Health's flagship location and the largest hospital between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. The hospital has been a key site of clinical education for College of Medicine students for more than 20 years. Drexel University President John Fry noted that the opening of the new campus allows for increased collaboration between the organizations, which are both invested in quality medical education.

"This incredible new campus builds on this great foundation in service of Drexel University, Tower Health and Reading Hospital's shared educational missions," Fry said at the grand opening. "There's no doubt in my mind



**A ceremonial ribbon was cut by Drexel President John Fry and Tower Health President and CEO Sue Perrotty (third and fourth from left). Joining them were (L-R) Tower Senior VP and Chief Academic Officer Mark Martens, MD; Drexel Provost Paul E. Jensen, PhD; Drexel Board Chair Richard Greenawalt; Dean Charles B. Cairns, MD; Tower Executive Vice President Daniel Ahern; and Regional Vice Dean Karen Restifo, MD, JD.**

that our partnership will impact this community positively in so many ways. And as for our students, it will provide great opportunities to train and go on to be leaders in medicine, especially in areas in need of more doctors."

Josette Graves, MD '25, looks forward to learning from providers at the hospital. Graves hopes not only to observe surgeries at Reading Hospital, but also to develop skills during her hands-on education that will help her better serve patients. "I hope to learn how to effectively bridge gaps in the system as a medical provider," she said. "I want to be able to advocate for patients with chronic pain and provide resources, so they don't have to struggle finding specialized health care close to home."

Students will not just learn to provide quality health care



## Inaugural Class Takes on Community Mural Project

Students in the inaugural class at Drexel University College of Medicine at Tower Health took part in a mural painting activity to get to know their community during their medical school orientation week. Students painted a portion of a mural sponsored by the Berks County Suicide Prevention Task Force *ruOK Berks?* The 45-foot-tall mural's theme is "HOPE."

West Reading and the Greater Reading area are home to many murals, and local art teacher Michael Miller showed the public art and downtown West Reading to students, who took a walking tour prior to breaking out their paintbrushes. College of Medicine students are just some of the community members helping to add the area's newest mural; *ruOK Berks?* is working to engage as many people in the project as possible to help raise awareness of the services they provide.

"Being a part of something to help reduce suicide, and the stigma surrounding it, is critically important," said Karen Restifo, MD, JD, regional vice dean, Drexel University College of Medicine at Tower Health. "We've made a promise that our students and faculty will be dedicated to the health and well-being of the community, and this project is a clear demonstration of that commitment."



during their time in medical school. They'll also connect with the surrounding community. West Reading is home to a diverse and underserved population, allowing students to engage with patients with varied backgrounds and life experiences. The area is also experiencing economic growth, which College of Medicine at Tower Health faculty members see as a positive catalyst in providing further opportunities for medical students' community engagement and collaborative learning.

Tower Health President and CEO P. Sue Perrotty often hears from residents and local business owners who are excited for medical students to join the community. "They know this partnership will train new physicians to care for their family, friends and neighbors," Perrotty said at the grand opening. "The medical students, their families and the instructors will live here, work here and they will become customers at local business and restaurants — all making a significant positive impact on the local economy."

Members of the MD program class of 2025 said they looked forward to getting to know their classmates over meals at local restaurants, and to taking advantage of the area's parks and trails when they need a study break. Many were also excited to serve the community through their coursework and extracurriculars.

Throughout their time in medical school, the College's MD program students participate in community engagement, lectures and reflective discussions. This work prepares them to address social determinants of health, health disparities and trauma-responsive care, and to become community-responsive physicians.

After deferring medical school for two years to take on a long-term service project, David Talarico, MD '25, is happy that community engagement will be a major part of his medical education. "I know that I will learn a lot in laboratories and am excited to be back in the classroom again, but I also can't wait to practice patient interaction through community engagement experiences," he said. "I'm excited to meet and serve people from different backgrounds."

Alexis Price-Moyer, MD '25, grew up in West Reading and is excited to return as a medical student. She believes studying medicine in the area will provide her with opportunities to work with patients from varied backgrounds, and to learn how their life experiences affect their approach to health care. She is excited to help provide care to underserved patients, and about the difference the school will make in the community.



**Grand opening attendees toured educational facilities including the Simulation Center.**



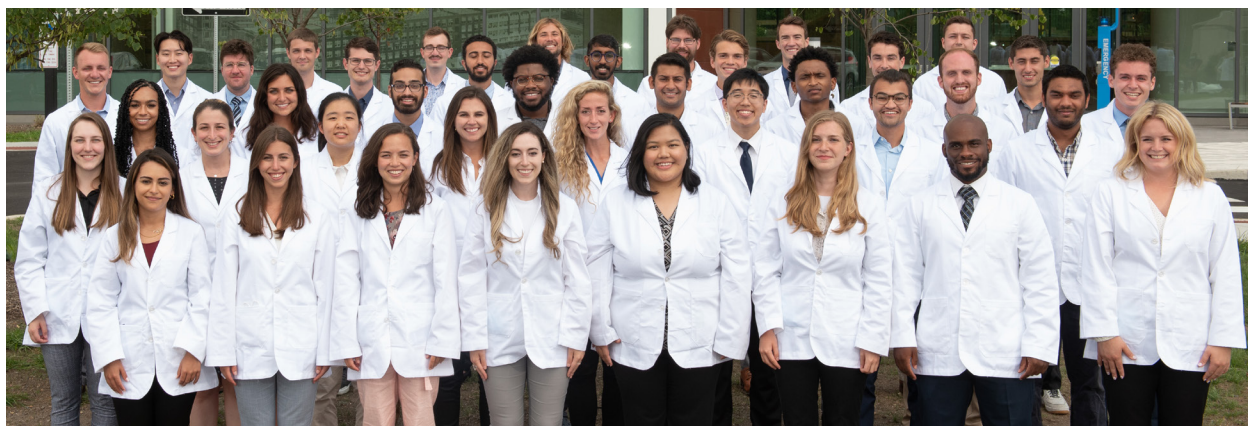
**The mural wall highlights Drexel's rich history with materials from the Legacy Center: Archives and Special Collections.**

"Having a medical college here will absolutely change the lives of those that may not be as fortunate to see a physician due to cost, and it gives the younger population a clear view that they have the option to pursue a career in medicine," she said. "It touches my heart that I will be able to give back to a community that I love and have a deep connection to."

Regional Vice Dean Karen Restifo, MD, JD, said the community has welcomed its newest members with open arms. During MD program student orientation week, students took a walking tour of West Reading in their white coats and were stopped by local business owners and other residents who wanted to wish the future physicians well.

"It's daunting to start medical school, and for the students to have been embraced by the community this way is a fantastic help," Restifo said.

– Lisa Ryan



**Drexel University College of Medicine at Tower Health's inaugural class.**



# Commencement

On May 18 at Philadelphia's Mann Center for the Performing Arts, the class of 2021 celebrated Commencement surrounded by family, friends and the faculty who taught them.



Students recited the Graduate Student Oath, the Physician's Pledge and the Military Oath for MD Officers.



Graduates donned their own hoods to maintain social distancing.

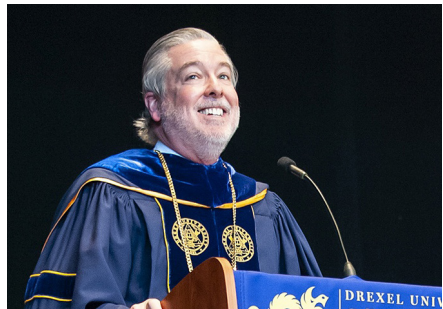




**Theophilus Owofu Abah, MD '21,**  
reciting his poem "A Survivor's Guide  
to Graduating"



**Dean Charles B. Cairns, MD**



**Drexel President John Fry**



**Sitara Soundararajan, MD '21,** giving the  
graduate remarks



**Honorary degree recipient Drew  
Weissman, MD, PhD**



## Macy Grant Supports Online Antiracism Module

Drexel University College of Medicine faculty will receive \$300,000 over the next three years to spearhead creation of an online learning module on antiracism. The project is funded by the Josiah Macy Jr. Foundation, which aims to improve public health through advanced education and training for health care professionals.

Leon McCrea II, MD, MPH, senior associate dean for diversity, equity and inclusion, and Dennis Novack, MD, associate dean of medical education, will collaborate with Camille Burnett, PhD, MPA, an endowed professor at the University of Kentucky Center for Research on Violence Against Women. The team will collaborate to create a free, online module on antiracism, to be used as part of health care education curricula.

"Antiracism health care education is needed now more than ever," the investigators say in the grant proposal. "Health care providers have a moral and professional



**Leon McCrea II,  
MD, MPH**



**Dennis Novack,  
MD**

responsibility to redress health inequities." The project aims to not only train future health professionals who will provide compassionate care and approach all patients with respect, empathy and cultural humility, but to also create learning environments where all feel welcome and empowered.

Rita Guevara, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics and assistant dean of diversity, equity and inclusion, and Kristen Ryczak, MD, assistant professor in the Department of Family, Community & Preventive Medicine and director of the Women's Health Education Program, will create faculty development materials and programming for faculty, staff and affiliate site trainings. Kymberlee Montgomery, DNP, senior associate dean for nursing and student affairs at Drexel's College of Nursing and Health

Professions, will collaborate with McCrea and Novack on interprofessional and CNHP-based use of the module.

"At Drexel University College of Medicine, we are uniquely poised to develop high-quality, compelling, interactive and educationally effective online learning modules," the grant proposal notes. "We are confident that we can make a positive impact nationally on antiracism education in health care."

## 4D Fellowship Supports Diversity in Pharma

The College of Medicine is proud to partner with Janssen Research and Development LLC to create the Diversity in Drug Discovery and Development (4D) Fellowship. The fellowship is the brainchild of Fei Shen, PhD pharmacology '17, and Olimpia Meucci, MD, PhD, professor and chair of pharmacology and physiology. It will cover the cost of tuition and living expenses for selected students underrepresented in biomedical sciences who want to enroll in the Drug Discovery & Development or Pharmacology & Physiology master's degree programs at Drexel University College of Medicine.

The goal of the fellowship is to reduce one of the barriers to entry that underrepresented minority students face: the cost. While PhD students are often funded for the duration of their programs, master's students usually are not, which makes access to financial resources a key factor in determining who can work in the pharmaceutical industry.

The original goal was to select two fellows from among the accepted applications, but when the fellowship committee reviewed the candidates, three stood out. All were chosen as the inaugural 4D fellows.

### MEET THE FELLOWS



**Mohammed Sani Alhassan, PharmD**  
*Pharmacology & Physiology Program*

I am humbled and appreciative of the fact that my dreams of becoming a clinical researcher will be achieved because of the fellowship.

This program will help propel me into the drug discovery industry, which bridges the gap between scientific experiments and the clinical use of drugs. I am excited and optimistic for this new journey.



**Celina Guzman**  
*Pharmacology & Physiology Program*

This fellowship has given me an opportunity to dedicate myself to cancer research. It will allow me to achieve my goals, promote my professional growth, connect me to a large network of peers and remove financial

limitations. Now I can confidently serve as the first person in my family to go to graduate school and enter the field of science.



**Desmond Lewis**  
*Drug Discovery & Development Program*

The fellowship will help me realize my goal of eliminating cancer by providing me with mentors and research experience in the pharmaceutical industry. The fellowship will also allow me to focus on my academics by

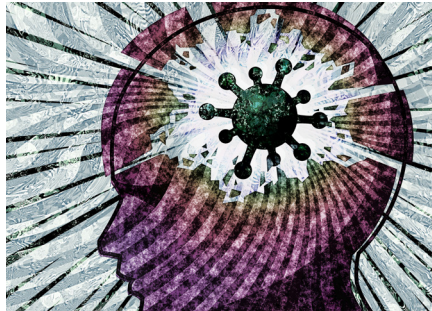
providing full financial support.



## Mental Health Awareness and Response Training

A mental health first aid course from the City of Philadelphia's Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services (DBHIDS) is now available virtually. The eight-hour class, split into two virtual sessions of four hours each, teaches attendees how to understand and address signs of mental and behavioral health challenges or crises. There are courses geared toward several populations, including undergraduate and graduate students.

Michael Bouchard, PhD, professor, Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, and director of the Graduate School's Division of Biomedical Science Programs, highly recommends the higher education training after having attended himself with a group of fellow faculty members from the Graduate School in 2019. "In a first aid or CPR course, you're learning how to stabilize someone in the moment of the emergency until an ambulance arrives or you can get them to a hospital, whichever they need," says



Bouchard. "The point of this training is exactly the same."

Faculty members who attend the training session will obtain information on various mental and behavioral health diagnoses and symptoms, and gain an understanding of how to be a safe, supportive person for students to go to if they need help. The training also covers which resources to direct students toward, and when.

Faculty, staff or students who complete the training are certified in mental health awareness and crisis response for three years, at which time they can take the training again. Bouchard keeps his certificate displayed in his office, in a place where students will see it. "My hope is that students would see that and it would help reduce the stigma around mental health, and make students aware that they can talk with the faculty," he says. "We want to let the students know that we know they're under a lot of stress, and we want to be able to provide a supportive environment."

Faculty, staff members or students interested in Healthy Minds Philly's mental health training can visit [healthymindsphilly.org](http://healthymindsphilly.org) for more information.

## Drexel Medicine Returns!

The College of Medicine has announced that two medical practices are back under the Drexel umbrella: Drexel Internal Medicine, operating at 219 North Broad Street, and Drexel Student Health, on Drexel's University City Campus at 3401 Market Street. These practices join the Partnership Comprehensive Care Practice and the Caring Together Program in offering health care services as Drexel Medicine.

Drexel Internal Medicine is a practice of eight

physicians, one nurse practitioner and one physician assistant. They treat patients ages 18 and up, providing a range of primary care services. The Student Health Center is led by Janet Cruz, MD, and employs 11 physicians, one nurse practitioner and one registered nurse. It is open to all Drexel students in need of care.

To learn more about Drexel Medicine, visit [drexelmedicine.org](http://drexelmedicine.org). Information about the Drexel Student Health Center is available at [drexel.edu/counselingandhealth](http://drexel.edu/counselingandhealth).

## LGBTQ+ Health Symposium

On Wednesday, June 30, College of Medicine community members came together to learn best practices for providing health care to LGBTQ+ patients during a virtual event organized by the College of Medicine and Tower Health.

The event received support from student volunteers and supervising faculty members from Drexel. Speakers included Drexel University and Tower Health experts who shared their knowledge and experiences, as well as speakers from outside institutions. Topics covered included basic terminology around gender and sexuality, the role of medical professionals in helping LGBTQ+ patients feel safe accessing care, eating disorders in the LGBTQ+ community, pelvic floor physical therapy following gender-affirming surgeries, the history of medical discrimination against LGBTQ+ people, health disparities and social determinants of health for transgender people, and best practices for conducting conversations with patients in a gender-affirming way.

Maryssa Lyons, MD, a psychiatry resident at Tower Health – Brandywine Hospital, was one of the lead organizers of the symposium, along with members of the

College of Medicine's LGBTQ Professionals in Medicine group. Lyons notes, "I definitely wanted the symposium to address physician competence and preventive medicine for LGBTQ+ communities. I also wanted it to cover stigmatization, especially around transgender people, among physicians and medical students."

During the symposium, Lyons referenced statistics

showing that many transgender people report experiencing discrimination from their health care providers, and that some choose to avoid the doctor's office altogether. "A world with these statistics isn't the world I want to see, but I'm not without hope," Lyons said at the event. "Symposiums like this, and people like all of you in attendance, are a big part of that hope — but I don't want it to stop here. We need to consider how to realistically apply what we've learned today, what next steps we're going to take, and how to create a world we all want to see."



## Recent Thesis Defenses

We congratulate the following master's and PhD students from the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences and Professional Studies on the successful defense of their theses.

### Jadwiga N. Bilchak Stroughair

Neuroscience PhD Program  
*Title:* Enhancing KCC2 Expression Restores Reflex Inhibition and Improves Locomotor Function After Spinal Cord Injury  
*Advisor:* Marie-Pascale Côté, PhD



### Emily M. Black

Neuroscience PhD Program  
*Title:* Hypocretin Receptor 1 Modulations on Specific Neuronal Subtypes in the Ventral Tegmental Area Impact Mesolimbic Dopamine and Cocaine-Associated Behavior  
*Advisor:* Rodrigo España, PhD



### Tylor Brewster

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program  
*Title:* Roles of Timeless in DNA Repair and Carcinogenesis  
*Advisor:* Eishi Noguchi, PhD



### Olivia Cipollini

Microbiology & Immunology MS Program  
*Title:* Investigating Microglial Innate Immune Responses to Amyloid-Beta Protein Ab(1-42) and Murine Betacoronavirus (MHV-A59)  
*Advisor:* Sonia Navas-Martin, PhD



### Tejsi T. Dhameliya

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program  
*Title:* The Role of KLF8 in Breast Cancer Stem Cells  
*Advisor:* Mauricio Reginato, PhD



### Emily Esquea

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program  
*Title:* Understanding the Role of the OGT/CDK5/ACSS2 Signaling Axis on Breast Cancer Brain Metastatic Growth  
*Advisor:* Mauricio Reginato, PhD



### Abdullah M. Izmirly

Microbiology & Immunology PhD Program  
*Title:* Pre-vaccination Microenvironment Impact Dengue Vaccine Response  
*Advisor:* Elias Haddad, PhD  
*Co-advisor:* Michele Kutzler, PhD



### Daniel Kantner

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program  
*Title:* Activity and Substrate Specificity of Cobinamide/Cobamide Amidohydrolase CbiZ in Diverse Bacteria  
*Advisor:* Joris Beld, PhD



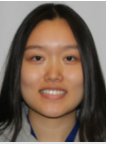
### Dana Lengel

Neuroscience PhD Program  
*Title:* Mechanisms of Hippocampal Dysfunction Following Pediatric Brain Trauma  
*Advisor:* Ramesh Raghupathi, PhD



### Rongrong Li

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program  
*Title:* Cell-Based Readouts of Copper-Modulated CK2 Kinase Activity  
*Advisor:* Todd Strochlic, VMD, PhD



### Megan E. Meuser

Biochemistry PhD Program  
*Title:* Pharmacological and Biological Inhibition of HIV-1 Entry  
*Advisor:* Simon Cocklin, PhD



### Hager Mohamed

Microbiology & Immunology PhD Program  
*Title:* Immunomodulation by Non-thermal Plasma: Toward Immunotherapies for HIV-1 Infection and Leukemia  
*Advisor:* Fred C. Krebs, PhD  
*Co-advisor:* Vandana Miller, MD



### Julia E. Oleksak

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics MS Program  
*Title:* Role of CADM1 in Reducing Viability of Melanoma Circulating Tumor Cells  
*Advisor:* Edward Hartsough, PhD



### Ankita Patil

Neuroscience PhD Program  
*Title:* Static Crosslinking and Motor-Driven Sliding Regulate the Organization of Axonal Microtubules  
*Advisor:* Peter Baas, PhD



### Amanda J. Platt

Microbiology & Immunology PhD Program  
*Title:* Characterization of Adenylating Enzymes and Domain Interactions Involved in Insect and Bacterial Non-ribosomal Peptide Synthesis  
*Advisor:* Joris Beld, PhD



### Omobukola Solebo

Microbiology & Immunology MS Program  
*Title:* The Biochemical Functionality and Cellular Importance of the Vacuolar H<sup>+</sup> Translocating Pyrophosphatase 1, PfVP1, in *Plasmodium falciparum*  
*Advisor:* Hangjun Ke, PhD



### Michelle L. Swift

Molecular & Cell Biology & Genetics PhD Program  
*Title:* Investigating the Role of Cell Cycle-Dependent Regulation of Sp1 in Double Strand Break Repair  
*Advisor:* Jane Clifford, PhD



### Shasha Yang

Neuroscience PhD Program  
*Title:* Thalamocortical Inputs Regulate the Development of Inhibitory Circuitry in the mPFC  
*Advisor:* Wen-Jun Gao, MD, PhD







## White Coat Ceremony

The MD program class of 2025 gathered at The Met in Philadelphia on Friday, August 6, to officially begin their medical school journey with the White Coat Ceremony, a symbolic commitment to the values and duties of the medical profession. This year's celebration

brought together the MD program's approximately 300 incoming students, who were chosen from 16,680 applicants.

With family and friends there to celebrate with them, students received their white coats and stethoscopes, and recited the Physician's Pledge. The event was also livestreamed to allow others to participate and share messages of support.

Leon McCrea II, MD, MPH, senior associate dean for diversity, equity and inclusion, was the keynote speaker. "In my mind there is no greater calling than one that requires you to be in service to others, especially when they are most vulnerable," McCrea said in his address. "There are days when I still pinch myself and reflect on how amazing it is to be able to wear this white coat."



## Meet the Woman One and D. Walter Cohen Scholarship Recipients

Four incoming MD program students were recently announced as the newest recipients of the Woman One and D. Walter Cohen Shared Leadership Scholarships. These scholars are talented underrepresented students who have been accepted at Drexel and who are committed to practicing in underserved communities. Learn more about these and other scholarship recipients at [drexel.edu/medicine/womanone](https://drexel.edu/medicine/womanone).



**Christianah Alli** is Nigerian-American and was born and raised in the Bronx. After college, she became a medical assistant at a pediatrician's office, which inspired her to pursue a career in medicine. She has been involved in many extracurricular and community organizations, including Mentoring

in Medicine Inc., with whom she engaged in community health events in underserved neighborhoods and taught third grade students about basic human anatomy and healthy nutrition.

Growing up in the Bronx impressed upon Christianah the impact of socioeconomic status on health incomes. She saw that many members of her community suffered from preventable conditions due to low quality of health care, inadequate education and lack of resources. Christianah wants to provide quality medical care to these communities to improve their health and empower them to take control of it. Because she sees health as a resource tied to opportunity and quality of life, she hopes to be a physician who inspires change in her patients' lives.



**Garvens Charles** was born and raised in Boston, of Haitian parents who immigrated to the U.S. He was involved with establishing the Student National Medical Association, Minority Association of Pre-Medical Students chapter in college. He also volunteered in the Emergency Department of UMass

Memorial Hospital and at a local soup kitchen. Because he yearned for a more clinical experience, Garvens began working as a patient observer at the Massachusetts General Hospital, where he worked in collaboration with nurses and physicians to provide constant observation for patients at high risk of self-harm.

Experiences in his Haitian community in Boston inspired Garvens to become a doctor. Several members of his family suffered from diabetes, and a prominent member of the community died due to complications of the disease. Not long after that, Garvens was hospitalized for a serious cardiac event. He was impressed with his medical team and realized others in his community might not have the same access to high-quality medical care, and this motivated him to become a doctor who will provide robust health care for underserved and disadvantaged communities in the United States and abroad, particularly in countries where mortality is high.



**Michelle Ehiriado** is Nigerian-American and was born and raised in Atlantic City, N.J. After volunteering in a pediatric office during high school, she was inspired to pursue a career in medicine. During college, Michelle participated in many community outreach and clinical activities, including a medical

mission trip to Nigeria that solidified her dream of becoming a doctor.

After college, she worked as a medical scribe and a clinical support counselor, assisting adults living with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She then got a master's degree, during which she conducted diabetes research, volunteered with the American Red Cross and mentored young girls interested in pursuing STEM careers.

As a physician, Michelle's goal is to improve the health of vulnerable and marginalized communities by increasing health literacy, minimizing economic and social barriers, and being the representation that these communities need.



**Abay Tadesse** was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and moved to the U.S. when he was 3 years old. He grew up in Montgomery County, Pa. He has been involved in many extracurricular and community organizations, including the Medical Reserve Corps, in which he worked alongside the Philadelphia Department

of Health with COVID-19-related projects including mass testing, vaccinations and information canvassing. He also worked with Tri-State Black Men in Medicine as an e-board member to promote medicine to underrepresented members of the community, with a focus on bolstering the number of Black men in medicine.

Having grown up in diverse communities, Abay had the opportunity to see firsthand the impact of health care disparities. While access is a critical component to changing the trajectory of this problem, Abay is convinced that education and community trust are also important factors. He says that as a young Black man in America, he understands both the hesitancy and lack of trust while also realizing the disconnect between the two communities. As a physician, he wants to help bridge that gap and create trust and accountability for his patients. He hopes his time at Drexel will provide the knowledge and the skills needed to help tackle this problem both in his hometown of Philadelphia and abroad in Ethiopia.





## 2021 Faculty Awards

Eleven deserving faculty members received Faculty Awards as part of Faculty Professional Development Day, held virtually on June 4, 2021. The winners and nominees were honored for their leadership, collegiality and dedication to teaching, clinical care and research excellence.



### Early Career Clinical Scientist Award

Debra Powell, MD,  
Department of Medicine



### Emerging Clinical Leader & Innovation Award

Kheyandra Lewis, MD,  
Department of Pediatrics



### Elias Abrutyn Mentoring Award

Michael Bouchard, PhD,  
Departments of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, and Microbiology & Immunology



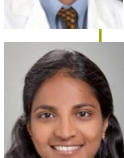
### New Investigator Award

Jessica Barson, PhD,  
Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy



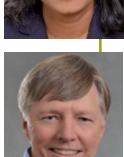
### Julian Marsh Faculty Scholar Award

Mauricio Reginato, PhD,  
Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology



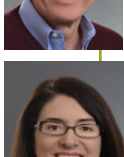
### June Klinghoffer Clinical Educator Award

James J. "Joe" Reilly, MD,  
Department of Medicine



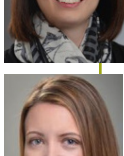
### Oksana Korzeniowski Patient Care Award

Susmita Paladugu, MD,  
Department of Medicine



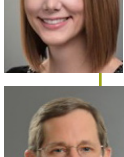
### Angelo Pinto Basic Science Educator Award

Paul McGonigle, PhD,  
Department of Pharmacology & Physiology



### William Likoff Clinical Excellence Award

Jill Farmer, DO, MPH,  
Department of Neurology



### Vincent Zarro Community Outreach Award

Sarah Lubber, DO,  
Department of Medicine



### Daniel V. Schidlow, MD, Transformational Leadership Award

John Houle, PhD,  
Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy

# Calendar

## Ongoing

Now–  
March

### Seat at the Table Exhibition

Kimmel Cultural Campus,  
300 S. Broad Street, Philadelphia  
View the multimedia segment at  
[women100/seatatthetable](https://women100/seatatthetable)  
Contact: [vision2020@drexel.edu](mailto:vision2020@drexel.edu)

## October

17

### AIDS Walk Philly

To join or donate to the Drexel Partnership Comprehensive Care Practice team, visit [aidswalkphilly.org/profile/team/3097](https://aidswalkphilly.org/profile/team/3097)

18

### Phyllis Marciano, MD, Woman in Medicine Award

Contact: Karen Berkowitz, MD,  
[kmb354@drexel.edu](mailto:kmb354@drexel.edu)

21

### Discovery Day

The College of Medicine's annual day of research  
Contact: Stephanie Schleidt,  
[ss3946@drexel.edu](mailto:ss3946@drexel.edu)

## November

4

### Marion Spencer Fay Lecture and Award Reception

Contact: Janine Barber,  
[jb48@drexel.edu](mailto:jb48@drexel.edu)

25 & 26

### Thanksgiving Holiday

## December

3

### Women's Leadership Summit

Contact: Karen Berkowitz, MD,  
[kmb354@drexel.edu](mailto:kmb354@drexel.edu)

24–31

### Winter Break

**Full calendar:** All College of Medicine events are available at [drexel.edu/medicine/news-events/events](https://drexel.edu/medicine/news-events/events).

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**Alumni:** For information about alumni events, please call toll-free 888.DUGRADS (888.384.7237), email [medical.alumni@drexel.edu](mailto:medical.alumni@drexel.edu) or visit [drexel.edu/medicine/alumni/events](https://drexel.edu/medicine/alumni/events).

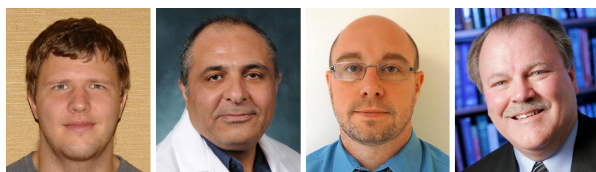




**Seena Ajit, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, participated in a July 21 panel discussion at the National Institutes of Health Virtual Workshop on Approaches to Effective Therapeutic Management of Pain for People With Sickle Cell Disease.

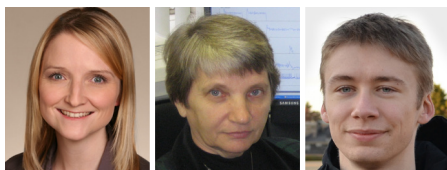
Her panel was "Molecular Mechanisms Underlying Acute and Chronic Pain, With Emphasis on Epigenetics." Ajit also presented "Xist Attenuates Acute Inflammatory Response by Female Cells" at the April 2021 Cell and Experimental Biology virtual meeting. Additionally, Ajit presented her research as an invited speaker for the Indo-US Workshop on Pain Mechanisms & Therapeutics in May 2021. The title of her talk was "Role of Small Extracellular Vesicles in Inflammation and Pain."

**Andrew J. Atkins, PhD**, former postdoctoral fellow, **Alexander Allen, PhD microbiology and immunology '20**, **Will Dampier, PhD**, assistant professor of microbiology and immunology, **Elias El Haddad, PhD**, professor of medicine, **Michael Nonnemacher, PhD**, professor of microbiology and immunology, and **Brian Wigdahl, PhD**, professor and chair of microbiology and immunology, published "HIV-1 Cure Strategies: Why CRISPR?" in *Expert Opinion on Biological Therapy*, June 2021.



**Dampier**      **El Haddad**      **Nonnemacher**      **Wigdahl**

**Jessica Ausborn, PhD**, assistant professor, **Natalia Shevtsova, PhD**, research assistant professor, and **Simon Danner, PhD**, assistant professor, all in the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, published "Computational Modeling of Spinal Locomotor Circuitry in the Age of Molecular Genetics" in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences*, June 2021.



**Ausborn**      **Shevtsova**      **Danner**



**Douglas Baird, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, collaborated with Cara Scharf, assistant director of community-based learning in Drexel's Lindy Center for Civic Engagement, during the spring 2021 semester to help pilot the Galaxy online system to

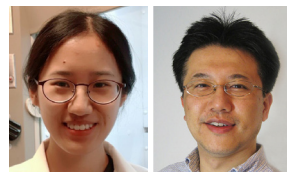
manage and track student volunteer service. The system simplified tracking student volunteer service projects during Baird's community-based learning course, Community Dimensions of Medicine. The 40 students in the course

last semester reported more than 1,000 volunteer hours online using Galaxy, and reflected on the impact of their service when reporting. Baird was selected as the faculty speaker at Lindy's year-end celebration and awards event. Baird was also selected as a featured partner and asked to speak at Philly Reading Coaches' year-end event honoring volunteers. More than 25 Pre-medical & Pre-health student volunteers who took Baird's course last year served with Philly Reading Coaches, reading each week with first, second and third graders in Philadelphia.

**Tatiana Bezdudnaya, PhD**, research assistant professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, was one of two recipients of the department's Christopher Reeve Award. Her proposal was "Role of Central Chemoreception in Developing Sleep-Disordered Breathing After Cervical Spinal Cord Injury."

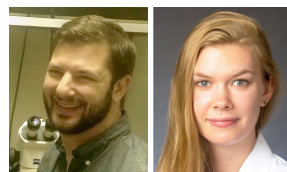


**Blazejewski**      **Bennison**



**Liu**      **Toyooka**

**Sara M. Blazejewski, PhD neuroscience '21**, **Sadie Bennison**, Neuroscience PhD student, **Xiaonan Liu**, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student, and **Kazuhito Toyooka, PhD**, assistant professor of neurobiology and anatomy, authored "High-throughput Kinase Inhibitor Screening Reveals Roles for Aurora and Nuak Kinases in Neurite Initiation and Dendritic Branching," in the April 14, 2021, issue of *Scientific Reports*.



**Brodnik**      **Lewandowski**



**Mortensen**      **Kortagere**



**España**      **Alonso**

**Zachary D. Brodnik, PhD neuroscience '18**, **Wei Xu, PhD**, research scientist, **Aashita Batra**, former research assistant, **Stacia I. Lewandowski, PhD pharmacology and physiology '21**, **Ole V. Mortensen, PhD**, associate professor of pharmacology and physiology, **Sandhya Kortagere, PhD**, professor of microbiology and immunology, and **Rodrigo A. España, PhD**, associate professor of neurobiology and anatomy, with colleagues at the University of California, Irvine, published "Chemogenetic Manipulation of Dopamine Neurons Dictates Cocaine Potency at

Distal Dopamine Transporters" in the *Journal of Neuroscience*, November 4, 2020. **Pamela Alonso, PhD neuroscience '21**, Kortagere, España, and colleagues at Universidad de Atacama and CUNY School of Medicine at the City College of New York, authored "Dopamine Transporter Function Fluctuates Across Sleep/Wake State: Potential Impact for Addiction," which appeared in the

journal *Neuropsychopharmacology* on October 8, 2020. **Jessica K. Shaw, PhD neuroscience '18**, **Bethan M. O'Connor**, research assistant, **Shaili Aggarwal, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow, Alonso, Lewandowski, Mortensen, España, and colleagues from the University of Pennsylvania, published "Individual Differences in Dopamine Uptake in the Dorsomedial Striatum Prior to Cocaine Exposure Predict Motivation for Cocaine in Male Rats," in the May 5, 2021, issue of *Neuropsychopharmacology*.



**Katie Bryant**, a Neuroscience PhD student, received an F31 fellowship from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, for her project "Low Dose Ethanol Effects on Reward Learning and Motivation."



**Charles B. Cairns, MD**, Walter H. and Leonore Annenberg Dean and senior vice president of medical affairs, was one of the authors of "Discriminating Bacterial and Viral Infection Using a Rapid Host Gene Expression Test," which was published in the April 28, 2021, issue of *Critical Care Medicine*.

**Dominic Cammarano, DO**, assistant professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology, and section head of gynecology at Reading Hospital – Tower Health, and colleagues created a surgical optimization program for preoperative identification and management of obesity, diabetes and anemia, which are indicators for increased surgical risks. They presented their findings at the American College of Surgery Quality and Safety Conference in July 2021.



**Theresa Connors**, instructor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, coordinated a hands-on training for emergency medicine residents, pediatric emergency medicine fellows and fourth-year medical students. The course was held in the Queen Lane Gross Anatomy Laboratory;

it was attended by residents from Crozer-Chester Medical Center, fellows from St. Christopher's Hospital for Children and Nemours/Alfred I. duPont Hospital, and medical students from Drexel, Temple and Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. The program was presented by **Mark Saks, MD**, professor of emergency medicine, and **Richard Hamilton, MD**, professor and chair of emergency medicine.



**Marie-Pascale Côté, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, delivered a talk, "Restoring Chloride Homeostasis to Decrease Spasticity and Hyperreflexia After Spinal Cord Injury," during a TRIP (translational research to inform clinical practice)

session at the American Spinal Injury Association 2021 Scientific Meeting held in St. Louis, on July 9.



**Garcia-Ramirez**



**Stachowski**



**Dougherty**

**D. Leonardo Garcia-Ramirez, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow, **Ngoc (Nesta) Ha, PhD neuroscience '19**, **Steve Bibu, PhD**, former postdoctoral fellow, **Nicholas Stachowski**, Neuroscience PhD student, and **Kimberly Dougherty, PhD**, associate professor, Neurobiology & Anatomy, published "Spinal Cord Injury Alters Spinal Shox2 Interneurons by Enhancing Excitatory Synaptic Input and Serotonergic Modulation While Maintaining Intrinsic Properties in Mouse" in the *Journal of Neuroscience* on July 7, 2021. Stachowski and Dougherty published "Spinal Inhibitory Interneurons: Gatekeepers of Sensorimotor Pathways" in the *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* on March 6, 2021. Garcia-Ramirez was also this year's recipient of the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy's Edward Jekkal Muscular Dystrophy Research Fellowship, for his proposal "Effects of CPG Stimulation on the Plasticity of Serotonergic Modulation of Locomotor Rhythm Generating Neurons After SCI."

## 2021-2022 Mary DeWitt Pettit, MD, Fellowship Recipients

Each year, the \$10,000 Mary DeWitt Pettit, MD, Fellowship is awarded to junior female faculty members in support of their research. The fellowship aims to help the recipient acquire additional credentials necessary to advance in academic rank. The 2021-2022 recipients are:



**Caitlin A. Howe, PhD**,  
**Assistant Professor,**  
**Neurobiology & Anatomy**  
*Accessing the Lab Remotely:  
Addition of Cadaveric 3D  
Models in Medical School  
Gross Anatomy Courses*



**Emily Levy, MD**,  
**Assistant Professor,**  
**Family, Community &  
Preventive Medicine**  
*CBD Salve for Knee OA: A  
Cross-over Placebo Control  
Pilot Study (CBD\_OA Study)*



**Priscila Y. Sato, PhD**,  
**Assistant Professor,**  
**Pharmacology & Physiology**  
*GRK2-Gender Differences in  
Diabetic Human Hearts and  
Adult Cardiomyocytes*



## WHAT WE'RE DOING

**Richa Gupta**, research associate; Pharmacology & Physiology PhD students **Xuan Luo** and **Zhucheng Lin**; **Yuzhen Tian**, research associate; and **Seena Ajit, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, published "Uptake of Fluorescent Labeled Small Extracellular Vesicles *In Vitro* and in Spinal Cord" in the *Journal of Visualized Experiments* on May 23, 2021.



Hall



Ehrlich

**Donald C. Hall Jr., PhD chemistry '20**, postdoctoral fellow, **Phillip Palmer**, Microbiology & Immunology PhD student, Hai-Feng Ji, PhD, professor of chemistry, College of Arts &

Sciences; **Garth D. Ehrlich, PhD**, professor of microbiology and immunology, and **Jarosław Król, PhD**, assistant professor of microbiology and immunology, published "Bacterial Biofilm Growth on 3D Printed Materials" in *Frontiers in Microbiology*, May 28, 2021.

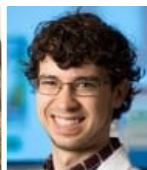


**Richard Huneke, DVM, MPH**, professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology and executive director, ULAR, was invited to present a talk, "Environmental Enrichment in Laboratory Animals" at the 16th Congress of the Brazilian Society of Laboratory Animal Science held along

with the 5th meeting of the Latin American Laboratory Animal Science Association. The meeting was held virtually August 11-13, 2021.



Irollo



Luchetta

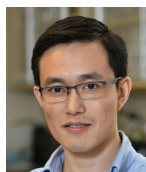
**Elena Irollo, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow in the Meucci Laboratory; **Jared Luchetta** and **Chunta Ho**, Pharmacology & Physiology program PhD students; **Bradley Nash, PhD pharmacology and physiology '17**,

scientific writer, and **Olimpia Meucci, MD, PhD**, professor and chair, both in the Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, authored "Mechanisms of Neuronal Dysfunction

in HIV-Associated Neurocognitive Disorders," which was published in *Cellular and Molecular Life Sciences* in May 2021.



Meucci



Wang

**Jun Liu, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow, and **Dong Wang, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, co-delivered a speech, "Fear of Heights Neurons in the Amygdala," at the Society for Neuroscience's Global Connectome Conference on January 12, 2021. Liu,

Wang, and a colleague at the Shanghai Key Laboratory of Brain Functional Genomics, published "Representation of Fear of Heights by Basolateral Amygdala Neurons" in the *Journal of Neuroscience* on February 3, 2021.

**Xuan Luo**, a Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student, **Renee Jean-Toussaint, PhD pharmacology and physiology '19**, Ahmet Sacan, PhD, associate teaching professor, School of Biomedical Engineering, Science & Health Systems, and **Seena Ajit, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, published "Differential RNA Packaging Into Small Extracellular Vesicles by Neurons and Astrocytes" in *Cell Communication and Signaling* in July 2021.

**Stephanie Matt, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow, **Emily Nickoloff-Bybel**, Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student, **Yi Rong, MS drug discovery and development '19**, **Kaitlyn Runner**, research assistant, **Hannah Johnson**, undergraduate researcher, **Margaret O'Connor, MD/PhD student**, **Elias El Haddad, PhD**, professor of medicine, and **Peter J. Gaskill, PhD**, associate professor of pharmacology and physiology, published "Dopamine Levels Induced by Substance Abuse Alter Efficacy of Maraviroc and Expression of CCR5 Conformations on Myeloid Cells: Implications for NeuroHIV" in *Frontiers in Immunology*, May 19, 2021.



Nickoloff-Bybel



Runner



Gaskill



**Andréia Mortensen, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, earned a Scholarly Materials and Research Equipment Award from Drexel's Office of Faculty Advancement. The award is open to all tenured and tenure-track faculty, and it funds the acquisition of materials, equipment, software, systems, library collections or other non-personnel items that will enhance the research enterprise.

**Olubunmi Ojikutu, MD**, assistant professor of pediatrics, and chair of pediatrics at Tower Health – Reading Hospital, has started a pediatric outreach program to children over 12 and their accompanying parents, in an effort to address vaccine hesitancy in the patient population in West Reading, Pa.

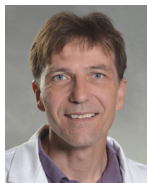
**Richa Pande**, Microbiology & Immunology PhD student; **Ayush Parikh, BS biological and biomedical sciences '19**, College of Arts and Sciences, former research assistant; **Botros Shenoda, MD, PhD pharmacology and physiology '17**, internal medicine residency '19; **Sujay Ramanathan, PhD**, former postdoctoral fellow; retired neurology faculty members **Guillermo M. Alexander, PhD**, and **Robert J. Schwartzman, MD**; and **Seena K. Ajit, PhD**, associate professor, Department of Pharmacology & Physiology, recently published "Hsa-miR-605 Regulates the Proinflammatory Chemokine CXCL5 in Complex Regional Pain Syndrome" in the journal *Biomedicine & Pharmacotherapy* in August 2021.

**Emanuela Piermarini, PhD**, postdoctoral fellow, was one of two recipients of the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy's Christopher Reeve Award, for her proposal "Mechanisms of Neurodegeneration in SPAST-Based Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia."

**Liang Oscar Qiang, MD, PhD**, assistant professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, was awarded a two-year, \$250,000 research grant from the Lisa Dean Moseley Foundation for "Using 'Mini-brains' From Patient Derived Pluripotent Stem Cells as the Models to Investigate Novel Microtubule-Based Mechanisms and Therapies for Tauopathies." Qiang also received a two-year, \$150,000 research grant from the Spastic Paraplegia Foundation for his project "Elucidate Impaired Autophagy as One of the Major Contributors to SPG4-Based Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia." He delivered an invited seminar, "Apply Veteran-Derived Cellular Models to Disclose the Underlying Molecular Mechanisms for Gulf War Illness," to Boston University School of Medicine's Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology on April 20, 2021.



**Jonathan Richards**, a Neuroscience PhD student, delivered a DataBlitz speech and poster presentation, "CCL2-Induced Macrophage Accumulation in the Dorsal Root Ganglia Correlates With Persistent Paw Hypersensitivity" at the National Neurotrauma Society meeting held virtually on July 12, 2021. Richards also presented "Spinal Cord Injury Causes Neuroimmune Mediated Affective Pain" at the Philadelphia Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience meeting held virtually on July 14, 2021.



**Christian Sell, PhD**, associate professor of biochemistry and molecular biology, received a one-year, \$310,000 grant from NIH for "Novel Longevity Enhancing Pathways Regulated by mTOR." In June 2021, Sell presented on the topic of aging at the Colonial Theatre in Phoenixville, Pa., in conjunction with a showing of *The Fountain*. The event was part of the national Science on Screen program, which pairs films from every genre with presentations from experts in STEM fields.



**Jonathan Snyder**, Pharmacology & Physiology program PhD student, **Atreju Lackey, PhD**, former postdoctoral fellow, **G. Schuyler Brown**, former research assistant, **Melisa Diaz, PhD**, research program director, **Yuzhen Tian**, research associate, and **Priscila Y. Sato, PhD**, assistant professor of pharmacology and physiology, published "GRK2 Contributes to Glucose Mediated Calcium Responses and Insulin Secretion in Pancreatic Islet Cells" in the May 2021 issue of *Scientific Reports*.

Sato

## PA Department of Health Spinal Cord Injury Awards

Researchers from the Marion Murray Spinal Cord Research Center in the Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy were awarded \$1M from the Pennsylvania Department of Health's recent call for spinal cord injury proposals. The funding is to be used over a period of two to three years. The findings from these newly funded research projects are expected to lead to further larger federal grants. Investigators receiving funding included:

**Tatiana Bezdudnaya, PhD**, research assistant professor: "Improving Breathing With Limb Muscle Stimulation After Cervical SCI" — three years, \$200,000

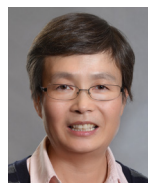
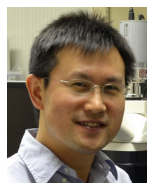
**Simon Giszter, PhD**, professor: "Enhancing Regeneration Efficacy After SCI With Robot-Rehab Coupled Optogenetics" — three years, \$200,000

**Shaoping Hou, PhD**, assistant professor: "Rebuilding Supraspinal Regulation to Restore Voluntary Micturition Reflex" — three years, \$100,000

**Ying Jin, PhD**, research assistant professor: "Glial Progenitor Grafts to Promote Regeneration and Functional Recovery After SCI" — three years, \$100,000

**Michael Lane, PhD**, associate professor: "A Novel Training Strategy to Enhance Respirator Recovery After SCI" — three years, \$200,000

**Liang Oscar Qiang, MD, PhD**, assistant professor: "Gene Therapy via Controlled Spastin Overexpression to Promote Axonal Regrowth for SCI Repair" — two years, \$200,000





## WHAT WE'RE DOING



**Veronica Tom, PhD**, professor, Department of Neurobiology & Anatomy, presented a seminar, "The Yin and Yang of Plasticity After Injury to the Nervous System," at the third biennial Patricia Levy Zusman International Workshop on Neuroregeneration in March 2021.



**Cameron Trueblood**, a Neuroscience PhD student, was awarded a \$46,036 NIH National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke F31 grant for "Elucidating Serotonergic Mechanisms Regulating Cardiovascular Recovery After Grafting Embryonic Raphe Neurons Into the Injured Rat Spinal Cord."



**Nielufar Varjavand, MD**, professor of medicine and director, Physician Refresher/Re-entry program, published "Medical Spanish in U.S. Medical Schools: a National Survey to Examine Existing Programs" with colleagues from the University of Illinois College of Medicine, Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, University of Michigan School of Medicine, Wake Forest School of Medicine and Harvard Medical School. The paper appeared in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine* on March 29, 2021.



**John Walker, MS**, a Neuroscience PhD student, presented a poster, "The Negative Impact of Nociception on Grasping Recovery in the Spinal Cord Injured Rat," at the National Neurotrauma 2021 virtual symposium on July 13, 2021, and at the Philadelphia Chapter of the Society for Neuroscience virtual meeting on July 14, 2021.



**Michael White, PhD**, professor of pharmacology and physiology, earned Drexel's Christian R. and Mary F. Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching. The award is given to full-time faculty members who have demonstrated the highest achievements in teaching over their careers.

**Qiaowei Xie**, a Pharmacology & Physiology PhD student, had her abstract selected for an oral presentation at the Philadelphia Chapter Society for Neuroscience meeting. Her presentation was "The Impact of EcoHIV on Cocaine Seeking Behaviors."



**Tell your colleagues what you're doing.**  
Email [CoM\\_Pulse@drexel.edu](mailto:CoM_Pulse@drexel.edu).

## In Memoriam



**Robert Schwartzman, MD**, emeritus professor and former chair of neurology, died on August 4, at the age of 81. Schwartzman earned his undergraduate degree at Harvard University and his MD at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. He completed a medical residency at Duke University and a neurology residency at the University of Pennsylvania, followed by a neuromuscular fellowship at the National Institutes of Health. He came to Drexel in 1995 and served as chair of neurology until his retirement in 2013. His area of focus was pain, in particular complex regional pain syndrome. His research led to a greater understanding of the clinical features of the illness, as well as its treatment with ketamine infusions.

Schwartzman was passionate about teaching the next generation of neurologists, having trained more than 300 residents and fellows, many of whom have gone on to successful careers in clinical and academic medicine. He was a prolific author, including 40 book chapters, more than 160 papers in peer-reviewed journals and two books. Also a dedicated clinician, he was beloved by his patients, in whom he inspired hope despite the challenges of their chronic pain. Schwartzman is survived by his wife, Denise; his children, Jane, Nancy and David; Jane's husband, Ray; and two grandchildren, Sarah and Evan.



**Bryce Templeton, MD**, emeritus professor of psychiatry, died on August 7. He was 89 years old. Templeton earned his bachelor of arts from Oberlin College, and his medical degree from Case Western Reserve University. He completed a psychiatry residency at University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. His interest in medical education led him to earn a master's in medical education from the University of Illinois. After serving at the National Board of Medical Examiners for 16 years, he began teaching medical students directly, first at Thomas Jefferson College of Medicine and then at Drexel University College of Medicine. He was instrumental in the establishment of new affiliations for training medical students, and he developed systems that improve the consistency of clerkship programs between sites. Templeton's son, James, was killed by a drunk driver, which led him to become extensively involved in the community education aimed at reducing the number of people driving under the influence.

He was a distinguished life fellow of the American Psychiatric Association and the American College of Psychiatrists, a member of Alpha Omega Honor Medical Society, and the recipient of the Vestermark Psychiatry Educator Award. Templeton is survived by his sister, Olive; daughter, Karen; and granddaughters Devon and Ava. In addition to James, he is predeceased by his wife, Dorothy.

# Get to Know...

Welcome to Get to Know..., a new feature of *Pulse*, in which we introduce you to someone you might not interact with in your day-to-day life at Drexel. If you'd like to let us get to know you, email [CoM\\_Pulse@drexel.edu](mailto:CoM_Pulse@drexel.edu).

## Who are you, and what is your current title?

My name is Karen Shulik, and my official title is Program Coordinator II, Career Advising.

## Explain what you do in under 50 words.

I work as part of the Office of Student Affairs and Career Advising to provide support and specialty exploration opportunities for our medical students through programming and one-on-one advising. Generally, I serve as an adviser to our pre-clerkship medical students in their first and second years at Drexel.

## Who do you interact with most on a daily basis? Students? Faculty? Other staff members?

Most of my interactions involve serving as a liaison between our students and the Office of Student Affairs and Career Advising, as well as other staff and faculty. It is my job to prepare programming and assist students, which requires a strong relationship and communication among all parties to provide the best resources and opportunities for our students.



Karen Shulik, MLIS

## What is your typical day like?

It can depend greatly on the day. Most of my time is spent sitting at my desk working on projects, answering emails or attending meetings (in person and virtually). I assist with large-scale events from our department, so on days such as Commencement, White Coat, Match Day, etc. I can go a whole day without sitting down, walking miles around a venue for set-up and coordination.

## How do you see your work fitting into the big picture of the mission of the College?

I think my role is very central to the mission of the College of Medicine. The point of the MD program is to produce well-rounded, prepared and successful physicians, and career advising plays a large role in that. First- and second-year medical students come to me for individual advising at various stages in their career planning. Some students have known what they want to do since they were 5. Others have been exposed to limited specialties and are unsure where they want to end up. I meet with students no matter

where they are on that spectrum. I advise students on extracurricular involvement, including leadership, community service and research, all of which can be very important to their residency application as a fourth-year student. I also am there to serve as a reassuring ear to their concerns and to debunk some of the myths they may have come into medical school believing.

## What are your favorite and least favorite tasks?

My favorite part of the position is interacting one on one with students in career planning. I am a trained librarian, and this position allows me to use my reference skills and guide students to resources. I am generally a quiet and reserved person, so I am not always confident in my public speaking during programming. I like that this position challenges me to improve on those skills.

## What is your educational background? How did it prepare you for what you do now?

I hold a BS in history with a minor in agricultural science from Truman State University in Missouri. I then earned a master's in library science with a concentration in archives management from Simmons College in Massachusetts. My educational

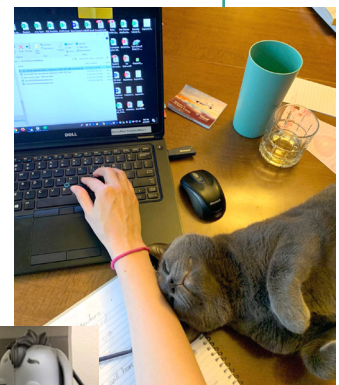
background has prepared me for the required information management and dissemination I use every day in my job.

## When you were working on site, did you bring your own lunch or eat out?

I work at the Queen Lane Campus, whose location provides very few lunch options besides the cafeteria. I almost exclusively bring my own lunch every day, as it is easier and saves money.

## What's one unusual or unexpected item in your home or office work space?

While working remotely, I have a cat colleague who often tries to lie across my computer to assist with productivity, though I feel like that has been an often-shared experience during the pandemic. At my office I have a small Eeyore figurine I received from my family, as they make fun of my ho-hum attitude.







DREXEL UNIVERSITY  
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**Medicine**

1505 Race Street, MS 484  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

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October 21, 2021

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