2024 is here!

As we begin a new year, it is important to take a little time to make plans for a productive and successful new year!

In this issue, we feature post-doctoral fellow Fumi Kuroda MD, PhD and doctoral student Kevin Newhall, along with LRI alum Dr. Avinash Kumar.

We successfully held our first Professional Development Conference (in association with CBTA) and Python Bootcamp (in association with RETC), and both events were a big hit! The LTA Mentorship and Advocacy committee recently held their quarterly seminar featuring 2023 Mentor of the year award winner, Dr. Jessica Williams, whose talk was titled "Mentoring: beyond manuscripts and grants!".

The 2024 Lerner Research Institute Buddy Program is starting and there is an upcoming career development series seminar on "Networking with Intent". We have also recently added an Opportunities section which summarizes all the funding and grant opportunities that have been advertised in LRI in the past and have upcoming deadlines.

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, please reach out to us at LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org.
Upcoming Events

2024 Career Development Series

WORKSHOP
Networking with Intention

Feb 1st 3:30PM - 4:45PM
In person: NE1-205

We often hear about how important networking is for our careers but are left wondering what effective networking really looks like. In this workshop, we’ll help you identify people already in your network as well as address ways to initiate and maintain meaningful and professional connections.

Speakers:
Kelsey Bohn, PhD
Postdoctoral Training and Programs

Priya Putta, PhD
Global Research Education

Research Education and Training Center
Lerner Research Institute

Scan QR code below to register

• Light refreshments will be served.
• Florida trainees may register by 1/31/24 to receive a link for a virtual option.

All postdocs, research scholars, and PhD students welcome!
Upcoming Events

Wear Red Day
at Lerner Research Institute

Friday, February 2
10 a.m. • Lerner Commons

Join us in celebrating the American Heart Association’s National Wear Red Day for women’s heart health. The event is part of American Heart Month. Grab free donuts and coffee and stay for a group picture to show our support.

10 a.m. Free donuts & coffee available.
10:30 a.m. Group picture - wear red!
Upcoming Events

Cleveland Clinic Campus Safety Awareness & Crime Prevention Training

SEMINAR
Hosted by the Research Education & Training Center

Feb 8th 2:30PM - 3:30PM
In person: NE1-205

Everyone at Cleveland Clinic plays an active role in creating a safe and secure working and healing environment. It can be overwhelming to know where to look for safety awareness and crime prevention resources. Attend this seminar to learn about preparedness and awareness tools for creating a safe working community.

Trainees who are new to Cleveland Clinic are highly encouraged to attend. All are welcome.

Speaker:

Officer Ashley Connole
Community Outreach and Crime Prevention Officer
Cleveland Clinic Police Department

Scan QR code below to register

- Light refreshments will be served.
- Florida trainees may register by 2/7/24 to receive a link for a virtual option.

All postdocs, research scholars, and PhD students welcome!
Recent Events

Final Lerner Linkup for 2023 with treats and Legos!

On December 12th, the Lerner Trainee Association (LTA) sponsored its last Lerner Lunchtime Linkup (LLL) for 2023 in the LRI Commons. In addition to the delicious treats from the Luna Bakery, we also wanted to remind everyone of the little things in life that give us joy – things like LEGOS! Thank you to all the trainees who showed up to make this event a huge success.

The monthly LLL event was first introduced by the LTA in July 2023, and the purpose of this event is to foster interactions between trainees across all 11 departments housed in the Lerner Research Institute. The idea is to give you an opportunity to interact with trainees outside of your academic circles, while having your lunch and coffee/treats from the LTA.

We have taken a short break from the LLLs for now, but we are hoping to get back to it soon! Also, keep an eye out for emails regarding other events like the Ice Cream Social from the LTA Social/Outreach subcommittee sometime later this year. Lots of good stuff coming soon, so please stay tuned!
CBTA Winter Clothing Drive for Bolton Elementary

Thanks to the generosity of our CCF, CWRU, and CSU communities, the LTA in partnership with the Cleveland biomedical Trainee Alliance (CBTA), CCF BME and Innovations collected over 600 winter clothing and personal hygiene items to clothe every student in need at the local Bolton Elementary School.
"Mentoring: Beyond Grants and Manuscripts!"
by Jessica Williams, PhD
LTA Mentorship and Advocacy Seminar

The Lerner Trainee Association Mentorship and Advocacy committee hosted their first seminar of the year on January 17th, 2024.

We were honored to have Dr. Jessica Williams, the 2023 recipient of the Lerner Award of Excellence in Trainee Mentoring, present on her mentoring philosophy. This talk named "Mentoring: Beyond Grants and Manuscripts" focused on the too often overlooked parts of mentorships.

The room NA1-140 was overflowing with trainees, graduate students, postdocs, technicians, and principal investigators, who listened raptly as Dr. Williams shared her insights. She walked us through her personal training history, important factors to consider when building a team, and her own approach to training her lab members.

Over twenty minutes was allotted for questions, and the entirety of this time was utilized by the audience. Dr. Williams was joined by two of her mentees, Rachel Tinkey & Kaitlin Kaiser, who answered some mentee-focused questions.

Lunch was provided at the event, so all in-person attendees enjoyed a variety of pizzas, salad, and sodas. A recording of the talk is available upon request!
Where are you from?

I’m from Aichi, Japan. Famous for being the hometown of Toyota motor company.

What is your educational background?

After completing medical school in Japan and practicing as an ophthalmologist, I pursued a PhD in ophthalmology at Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine, focusing on clinical and research aspects of eye health.

What did your graduate research focus on?

My PhD study focused particularly on glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration, and other retinal diseases. In my thesis, I focused on identifying biomarkers for the diagnosis and prognosis of glaucoma.

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

Luckily, I had a chance to meet Dr. Lin, who is my current lab PI. I always like to learn new things, and Dr. Lin’s research topic is exactly what I’m interested in. Also, I was interested in exploring ophthalmology research at CCF with connections to Cole Eye as many fascinating research projects are conducted at this institution.

What is your current research focus?

My current research focus is about autoimmune ocular diseases and the new therapeutic drugs related to complement system. It’s exciting to see the possibility that there could be a dramatic change in some diseases which have been thought difficult to treat.

Do you have any recent accomplishments in your current position?

I believe my current role involves continuous progress in ocular disease research. I have been able to perform some interesting animal experiments that will help to further delineate the role of complement in ocular diseases.

What do you like to do outside of the laboratory?

Outside of work, I enjoy playing with my beloved kids, hiking, watching shows on Netflix, reading manga, and playing music.
Meet your Graduate Student
Kevin Newhall

Where are you from?
I grew up in Massachusetts. I moved to upstate New York during my undergraduate years, then did a short stint in New York City during my gap years before starting graduate school here in Cleveland.

What is your educational background?
I received my bachelor’s degree in Neuroscience and Behavior from Vassar college in 2017. After undergrad, I worked at Weill Cornell Medical College for two years as a technician in a cancer genetics laboratory. In 2019, I joined the Case Western Reserve University Medical Scientist Training Program for my MD-PhD training. After doing two years of medical school coursework, I joined the lab full time for my PhD work. I’m currently in my third year of the graduate phase.

Which lab do you work in and for how long have you been a part of this team?
I am a member of Thaddeus Stappenbeck’s Laboratory in the Department of Inflammation and Immunity, and I have been working with the lab since the summer of 2020.

How did you decide on the Cleveland Clinic?
My program at CWRU had a brief course focused on orienting students to MD-PhD training, and one of the major topics was what factors to consider when choosing a PhD mentor. I got the advice to focus on mentorship style and laboratory environment over choosing a lab based on a specific research project. This allowed me to open my horizons to more than just my past fields of cancer genetics and neuroscience, and I found myself trying something new with micro biology and immunology during my rotation. I found Dr. Stappenbeck to be a highly supportive mentor that allowed me to be creative in my experiments and have ownership over my project and its next steps. I also appreciated the supportive postdocs in the laboratory at the time who helped me get familiar with new techniques. After my short rotation, I realized that this mentorship style and lab environment were a great match for the goals of my PhD training.

What is your current research focus?
Some patients with Crohn’s Disease, one form of Inflammatory Bowel Disease, have a yeast called Debaryomyces hansenii present within their intestinal ulcers. Mouse models of intestinal injury show that this yeast persists within macrophages and inhibits intestinal injury repair. My project focuses on the host-response mechanisms of macrophages to this yeast, and the microbial mechanisms that govern persistence. My hope is that this project increases our understanding of how this yeast, which is commonly not considered a pathogen, affects Crohn’s Disease, with the eventual goal of identifying new therapeutic targets to benefit patients.

What do you like to do outside of the work?
Outside of the lab I enjoy cooking projects like fermenting foods and baking. I like to listen to pop music and go out dancing with friends. In the warmer months, I love exploring the Metroparks with friends and their dogs.
Where did you obtain your PhD?
I have obtained my PhD in biological sciences from the Academy of Scientific and Innovative Research, New Delhi, India.

When did you work in Lerner and in which lab? What positions did you hold?
After my PhD in 2014, I started working at the Lerner Research Institute as a postdoctoral fellow in Dr. Dasarathy’s lab in the Department of Inflammation and Immunity. Later, I was promoted to Research Associate.

What did you work on at Lerner?
My work focuses on the molecular signaling, physiological perturbations and, most specifically, mitochondrial dysfunction in skeletal muscle. My primary focus was on physiological and pathological responses to hyperammonemia and ethanol exposure in vitro in a primary skeletal muscle line as well as in an in vivo global and muscle specific knockout mouse model.

What successes did you have at Lerner?
During my training at Lerner, grant writing with Dr. Dasarathy, helped me to get an independent grant from Indian funding agencies. I received the prestigious Ramalingaswami Grant for 5 years in 2021 from the Department of Biotechnology, New Delhi, and an investigator-initiated extramural grant from the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), New Delhi. Also, in 2018, I received the Oroboros Academic Travel Grant from Mitochondria and Cell Research, Innsbruck, Austria. My research at Lerner has led to the publication of 17 research articles, with 5 being first authors and 12 being coauthors.

What is your current position title and where are you now?
I am a scientist in the Department of Gastroenterology and Human Nutrition at All India Institute of Medical Science (AIIMS) in New Delhi, India.

What does your role in your current position entail and what is your favorite part?
My main roles are guiding the junior researchers, managing the research activity in the department, and grant writing. Helping the senior residents with their research theses is what I enjoy the most.

What about your time at the Lerner do you think prepared you for this position?
I had a very good time at Lerner. I learned a lot from the Institute, which helped me to become an independent investigator. I was fully prepared for new role in the research field due to my training at Lerner.

Is there something you particularly miss from your time at Lerner?
There are many activities that I miss, especially the nice research environment, core facilities, the ability to easily collaborate and, most importantly, our long weekly lab meetings.

In one sentence, what advice would you give current Lerner postdoc?
In addition to working hard and intelligently, it’s crucial to set both short-term and long-term goals at the same time and work towards both simultaneously.
Congratulations to Dr. Naoko Uno from the Ross Lab in the Infection Biology Department!
The recent article by Dr. Naoko Uno titled "Multivalent next generation influenza virus vaccines protect against seasonal and pre-pandemic viruses" was published in Scientific Reports.
https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-51024-0

Congratulations to Jacqueline Shaia from the Center for Bioinformatics Lab in the Cole Eye Insitute!
The recent article by Jacqueline Shaia titled "Changes in Prevalence of Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension in the United States Between 2015 and 2022, Stratified by Sex, Race, and Ethnicity" was published in Neurology.
https://doi.org/10.1212/WNL.0000000000208036

Congratulations to Dr. Xin Li from the Ela Plow Lab in the Department of Biomedical Engineering!
The recent article by Dr. Xin Li titled "Paired DBS and TMS Reveals Dentato-Cortical Facilitation Underlying Upper Extremity Movement in Chronic Stroke Survivors" was published in Neurorehabilitation and Neural Repair.
https://doi.org/10.1177/15459683231219265

We love celebrating trainee accomplishments! To submit your own news or to recognize someone else, email LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org
Congratulations to Dr. Anand Bhushan from the Tam Lab in the Department of Ophthalmic Research!
Dr. Anand Bhushan received the American Society of Cell Biology (ASCB) Travel Grant to attend the Cell Bio23 in Boston, Massachusetts. The title of the presentation was "Epithelial cytokeratin 6a regulates secretory autophagy of cytokines to control corneal inflammation".

Congratulations to Dr. Ryan Wexler from the Center for Research and Training in the Department of Wellness and Preventive Medicine!
The recent article by Dr. Ryan S. Wexler titled "Virtually Delivered Mindfulness-Oriented Recovery Enhancement (MORE) Reduces Daily Pain Intensity in Patients with Lumbosacral Radiculopathy: A Randomized Controlled Trial" is in press in PAIN Reports.

Congratulations to Dr. Brandon Smith from the William Lab in the Department of Neurosciences!
Dr. Brandon Smith recently received his PhD from Cleveland State University and got promoted to postdoctoral fellow in Jessica Williams’s lab in Neurosciences. His journey was featured in Lerner Research News.

We love celebrating trainee accomplishments! To submit your own news or to recognize someone else, email LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org
Opportunities

- **Lower Award:**
  
  William E. Lower, one of the founders of Cleveland Clinic established this award with the purpose of encouraging original investigation and professional excellence in the preparation of scientific papers. Postdoctoral research fellows are eligible to apply. Recipient receives $1000 cash award presented at the Annual GME Awards Dinner. **Deadline: March 8th at 11:59PM.** Apply [here](#).

- **Tarazi Fellowship Award:**
  
  The Tarazi Fellowship Award was established in memory of the late Dr. Robert C. Tarazi, former Vice Chairman of the Division of Research. The award's purpose is to recognize papers which make an outstanding contribution in Cardiovascular Research aimed at better understanding and/or treating cardiovascular disease. Postdoctoral research fellows are eligible to apply. Recipient receives $1000 cash award presented at the Annual GME Awards Dinner. **Deadline: March 8th at 11:59PM.** Apply [here](#).

- **Klingenstein-Simons Fellowship:**
  
  Awards in Neuroscience ($300,000/3 years) support early-career investigators engaged in basic or clinical research that may lead to a better understanding of neurological and psychiatric disorders. Areas of interest include cellular and molecular neuroscience, neural systems, and translational research. **Apply by February 15th.** For eligibility and to apply, click [here](#).

- **Cancer Research Institute Irvington:**
  
  Postdoctoral Fellowship Program ($186,000/3years) provides support to fund and train young immunologists and cancer immunologists. **Apply** [here](#) by **March 1st**.

- **Cancer Research Institute:**
  
  Immuno-Informatics Postdoctoral Fellowship ($186,000/3years) aims to support qualified young scientists who wish to receive dual training in immunology and data science. Fellowships will support both computational biologists who seek to strengthen their knowledge of immunology and cancer immunologists who seek training in computational biology, data science, and/or genomics. Click [here](#) to apply by **March 1st**.

We love celebrating trainee accomplishments! To submit your own news or to recognize someone else, email LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org
Happy 2024 LRI Trainees! 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.

For this issue, we wanted to introduce and highlight CCI's Julie Woda, Senior Director, Innovations Technology Development and Life Science expert by providing a Q&A. Please reach out to us, 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), with any questions and/or to discuss the innovations process or ideas you may have. Thanks!

What brought you to Cleveland Clinic Innovations? How long have you been with the team?

I have a PhD from Harvard in Cell and Developmental Biology and I did a postdoctoral fellowship at Mass General Hospital, working on Huntington’s disease. After I finished my postdoctoral fellowship, I realized I didn’t want to stay in academia, so I moved here to Cleveland for personal reasons. I believe Cleveland has a lot of potential to become a smaller biotech hub and the center of that. There’s Case Western Reserve and University Hospitals, but Cleveland Clinic is really the center of a lot of activity, including with Lerner Research Institute.

Once I moved back to Cleveland, I initially got a job at a local biotech company as a scientist and a senior scientist. A lot of what I did was translational, preclinical work, some
manufacturing, and then I was recruited to another spinoff, and I worked there as the Director of Translational Research where we moved the product through phase 1, phase 2 clinical trials and heart failure.

Following that role, I moved to an accelerator incubator, Biomotiv. We were the for-profit arm of the Harrington project. I was involved there as the equivalent of a Chief Operating Officer for some of their small companies.

One part of my position was looking for new technologies and how we can invest in companies. So, I did that and then I was recruited to Cleveland Clinic because they were looking for someone who knew the therapeutic space. Cleveland Clinic was traditionally more involved in medical device development, and they were looking to expand their therapeutics capabilities and so I was excited about the opportunity.

About a year into my role the Innovations department was restructured, and I ended up as the domain lead for therapeutics and diagnostics. So, unlike most of the people in Innovations who work in one of the verticals, I support across all the verticals almost as a pinch hitter to where we need different support. I work a lot with Ventures now to support the new companies that are coming up. I also have been asked this year to work a lot with Proof of Concept, so I work everywhere from initial ideas all the way through the innovation process towards the path of commercialization.

What do you find most inspiring about your job?

The thing that I really do have passion about is moving the scientific discoveries to things that can help patients, I believe that’s the most important thing to do. The advantage of Cleveland Clinic is we have many researchers who are some of the best people in the world in what they do and not just on the physician side. Pretty much everyone is looking at things that are patient-centric. We have the ability to do that because we are in a nonprofit and we have a timeline that is different than a small company or a venture-backed company where they have to come up with something, prove it’s going to work very quickly or you’re just out, or you can have changes in the market, or changes like another product takes off and they can just drop programs.

At Cleveland Clinic, we can look long-term at things that maybe in the short term look like the resources needed might not be quite worth it if you were at a pure for-profit. In the long term, yes, we can see that it could be a profit, but we’re willing to take the risk and time it’s
going to take to bring about the things that can improve patient health. It’s important to get the best deals possible for our technologies, but we also have a patient-centric focus and that puts us in a unique position. The idea of being able to develop things that could attract attention doesn’t just help Cleveland Clinic and patients; it helps the region, too.

I love learning about new discoveries too, and new things that we can do that have potential not just to help people but help with understanding more about the world. When solutions have implications that are even broader than what you initially think, that’s when things get really exciting.

Are there any technologies in particular that you’re excited about?

One that comes to mind right away is Stanley Hazen’s work for Zehna. What Dr. Hazen’s team has discovered is there’s a metabolite produced by gut bacteria that’s correlated with cardiovascular health. The more you have this metabolite, the worse outcomes you get in all sorts of cardiovascular readouts, so they’ve designed a compound to reduce that. Another is Thaddeus Stappenbeck’s work in Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) with Mobius. They are personalizing IBD therapeutic and diagnostic care through their proprietary AI tool. Their technology can also identify subsets of patients who are likely to respond favorably to an existing arsenal of well-characterized drug candidates. Dr. Stappenbeck is also looking at new therapeutics that can heal wounds in IBD patients. We’re also looking for a partner for a novel sunscreen booster developed by Vijay Krishna’s lab as well.

Another technology I’m excited about and is getting a lot of traction is a discovery by one of our ophthalmologists, Dr. Steve Wilson, who discovered that you could repurpose Losartan, which is a drug that’s currently delivered orally to treat high blood pressure. Dr. Wilson discovered that if you reformulate Losartan into an eye drop and put it in the eye it can reduce scarring in the eye. This received a lot of press recently and I think this is going to be a game-changing for patients because there’s nothing that currently works for corneal scarring. I think that’s one of the more exciting things coming from Cleveland Clinic.

What does your team do and how are they involved in the Innovations process?

I work with a lot of different teams, and many people have this concept that Cleveland Clinic Innovations is like a traditional tech transfer office in the sense that we receive ideas, and we get patents, and then that’s it, and then we’ll go look for partners or they’ll bring us partners.
Monthly feature

CCF Innovations

We do way more than that. We spend a lot of time hearing about discoveries, having discussions with potential inventors, and getting them to think about the research they’re doing. If there is potential open space in the market and the potential patient need is real, then we spend time with them. In the Proof-of-Concept office, if the technology is a little bit too early, then they don’t have anything patentable yet and it’s not ready to come to our office. We work with potential inventors to think about what experiments need to be done to make this worthy of getting a patent to make it a little bit further. From Proof of Concept to Ventures, there’s no one person deciding.

Almost everything has a large team looking at it, making arguments about the commercial potential, looking at the IP landscape to make sure there’s space, looking at the patient need and standard of care, and looking at what the commercial landscape is and if we could find a partner and what would need to be done in order to do so.

What publications and people do you follow?

I look at Endpoints News regularly. They share the latest developments in drug discovery, development, and commercialization. I read STAT+, for in-depth biotech, pharma, policy, and life science coverage and analysis. I read a lot of PubMed too and follow Scott Gottlieb as well. Scott used to work at the FDA as the 23rd commissioner, he’s a physician, investor, and media personality. Joe Thomas on our team, who is a Market Intelligence Analyst for therapeutics and diagnostics, has been great about sending out a lot of valuable resources, too, in terms of the IP landscape. I read a lot of newsletters as well to see what the latest updates are in the space.

What advice would you give to someone interested in inventing who may be intimidated by the process?

Cleveland Clinic Innovations is here to help anyone. Even if you just want to brainstorm, everything is confidential with our office. We don’t want caregivers to be nervous about the innovation process or think that anyone is out to take their idea. You can call us just to ideate even if you’re not going to submit anything for a couple of years. I like being available to talk to anybody who wants to talk about anything related to therapeutics. When you work with Innovations, we may have ways of looking at things or be able to put you in contact with other people in our department or in other institutes who might be helpful. I love talking about Innovations, so if you’re interested, please reach out to me or call me at any time, and I’ll be happy to assist and answer any questions!
Wellness Resources

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

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Daily Wellness Tools for YOU Program


**Meditation**
Monday 12:15 – 12:45 pm

**Fitness**
Friday 10:00 - 10:30 am

**Yoga - Therapeutic Chair**
12:15 - 12:45 pm
Tuesday - Level 1
Wednesday - Level 2
Thursday - Level 3

**Culinary Medicine/Nutrition**
Friday 12:15 - 12:45 pm
two times per month
(see event page for dates)

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

Join in on live virtual Yoga, Mediation, 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 to connect with us.

LTA Communications Team
Jason Ross, William (BJ) Massey, Anushruti Ashok, Swapnil Dey, Nam Than, Susan Afolabi, Lavanya Jain

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