Wishing you a very happy holiday season and new year!

With the blink of an eye, 2021 is about to become history as we embrace the arrival of the new year. As a community, we have accomplished so much, including ground-breaking research, publications, and fellowship awards as well as supporting each other through yet another very tough year. There is much to celebrate this holiday season. Keep up the good work and stay safe as we enter 2022!

In this month’s issue, we feature alumna Dr. Shweta S. Puntambekar and graduate student Yue Xu. We also recap the LEADERS session on small animal imaging, the recent career development seminar on scientific editing, and feature the finalists for the 2021 F. Merlin Bumpus Junior Investigator Awards. Congratulations to the first and second prize winners of the 2021 F. Merlin Bumpus Junior Investigator Award Dr. Xin Wu and Gabrielle Mey, respectively!

Finally, as the year approaches an end, the LTA Communications Committee also bids farewell to long-time member Dr. Morgan Rogers-Carter, who has accepted a position with a life science and biomedical consulting firm. Thank you for all you have done for the LTA Communications Committee and good luck at your new position Dr. Rogers-Carter!

Cheers (and Happy Holidays!),
Your LTA Communications Committee

Join our LinkedIn Group
The Lerner Postdoc and Grad Student Alumni Network on LinkedIn is a group of current and former postdoctoral fellows, research scholars and graduate students at Cleveland Clinic Lerner Research Institute. We share opportunities for career development, networking and highlighting our scientific achievements. We also post reminders about upcoming events, so be sure to turn on notifications! Request to join here.
Join the Lerner Trainee Association Communications Committee!

Are you interested in being a member of the team that writes and organizes the Lerner Trainee newsletter? We're looking for grad students and postdocs to join our committee!

This is a great opportunity to:

- Develop your writing skills
- Build your CV
- Network with colleagues
- Gain leadership experience

Please contact the Lerner Trainee Association (LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org) for more information or if you're interested in joining our team.
Meet our Alumni
Interview with Lerner Alumna
Shweta S. Puntambekar, PhD

"Don’t be afraid of asking the ‘stupid’ questions and using your voice. Your opinions (both in science and in matters of your scientific career) are valuable and they matter!"

Where did you obtain your PhD? I got my PhD from the University of California at Riverside under the mentorship of Dr. Monica J. Carson.

When did you work in Lerner and in which lab? What positions did you hold? In Lerner, I worked in the Department of Neurosciences. I worked as a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of Dr. Stephan A. Stohlman and Dr. Cornelia C. Bergmann from 2010 to 2015.

What did you work on at Lerner? The focus of my postdoctoral research was to identify the neuroprotective role of the cytokine IL-10 using a mouse model of coronavirus induced encephalomyelitis. In my research, I used techniques such as flow cytometry, in-vitro primary cell assays, ex-vivo T-cell activation assays and histological assays to identify unique populations of IL-10 producing CD4+ T cells during demyelination vs. remyelination. Using the conditional deletion of the IL-10 receptor on CNS resident microglia vs. CNS astrocytes, this research identified IL-10 as a key cytokine responsible for neuroprotective reactive astroglisis around demyelinating lesions.

What successes did you have at Lerner? During my time as a postdoctoral researcher at Lerner, I was fortunate to have projects that panned out to give exciting results. I was able to publish multiple first author and co-author manuscripts. My IL-10 project yielded a successfully funded R01 grant.

What is your current position title and where are you now? Currently, I am a Senior Research Assistant Professor at the Stark Neurosciences Research Institute (SNRI) at the Indiana University School of Medicine. I am also the Scientific Manager of the Flow Cytometry Core at SNRI.

What does your role in your current position entail and what is your favorite part? In my role as a Research Assistant Professor, I am responsible for the grant-writing and scientific management of projects related to investigating the role of microglia and astrocytes in shaping neurodegenerative pathology in Alzheimer’s disease (AD) using murine models of AD. Additionally, I also teach graduate level neuro-immunology courses. Lastly, I oversee training of SNRI personnel in flow cytometry techniques and consult on successful design and implementation of flow cytometry applications. I consider myself very lucky because I immensely enjoy all aspects of these diverse responsibilities, but if I had to choose, I would say that teaching and student interaction along with grant writing are my most favorite!

What about your time at the Lerner do you think prepared you for this position? My postdoctoral mentors, especially Dr. Stohlman, really helped shape my scientific writing through their heavy but constructive critique. I think this was the most important part of my scientific training that has helped me in my current role. I also learned a lot about effective data presentation, which has helped me in structuring my approach to science presentations and teaching in my current role.

Is there something you particularly miss from your time at Lerner? My lab mates during my postdoctoral tenure at Lerner were my family during my time in Cleveland and I miss those lab interactions immensely!
Meet your Graduate Student

Yue Xu

Yue Xu is a graduate student from the Biomedical Engineering PhD program at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) in Dr. Vijay Krishna's lab. Yue is originally from Guandong, China and completed his undergraduate work in biomedical engineering at Sun Yat-sen University in China. He began his graduate career by earning a master's degree in biomedical engineering at the University of Florida. After meeting Dr. Krishna at an open house at CWRU and finding overlapping interests, Yue joined the Krishna Lab. He has been at Lerner for the past two and a half years.

Yue’s research is focused on leveraging photonic nanoparticles in cancer treatment. Specifically, he is working to develop an in-situ cancer vaccine that will utilize photonic nanoparticles targeted with a near infrared laser to activate anti-cancer immunity. Currently, he is trying to delineate the activation of the immune response in the tumor microenvironment following treatment. Specifically, Yue is interested in the signaling and responses of antigen presenting cells.

Recently, Yue has presented his work with a virtual poster at the 4th Great Lakes Breast Cancer Symposium in October. The event was hosted by the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center in conjunction with The Ohio State University James Comprehensive Cancer Center, the University of Pittsburgh Hillman Comprehensive Cancer Center, and the West Virginia University Cancer Institute.

Outside of the lab, Yue enjoys being physically active by playing basketball and working out.

“We are trying to delineate the activation of immune response by our in-situ cancer vaccine, like understanding the immunological milieu in the tumor microenvironment after treatment and what signals are received by the antigen presenting cells.”
Upcoming Events

LEADERS 2022 Seminar Series

2022 LEADERS Seminar Series
Celebrating the careers of LRI alumni!

Save the Dates!
Sessions will take place on the second Monday of the month from 4 to 5 PM and will be given by former LRI trainees:

- January 10th
- February 14th
- March 14th
- April 11th
- May 9th
- June 13th
- July 11th
- August 8th
- September 12th
- October 10th
- November 14th
- December 12th

Hosted by the Research Education & Training Center
Upcoming Events

LEADERS 2022 Seminar Series

Career Topology: From LRI PhD Student to Independent Investigator

- Provides Lerner trainees with career development tools that will accelerate their professional development.
- Sessions open to all Lerner Research Institute trainees.
- 12 sessions in 2022

WHO: William Flavahan, PhD
Assistant Professor, Department of Molecular, Cell and Cancer Biology, UMass Chan Medical School

WHEN: January 10, 2022
4:00 - 5:00

WHERE: Zoom
Please see email invite from RETC for meeting ID and passcode.
Upcoming NIH Office of Intramural Training & Education Events

INDUSTRY: THE ORGANIZATION OF BUSINESS  
*Speaker(s):* Brad Fackler,  
*OITE Industry Advisor*  
January 10, 2022, 4:00 – 5:00 pm  
Virtual – register [here](#)

Are you thinking about a career in industry but do not know how businesses operate? This workshop examines the critical functions common to all companies and how those companies are organized to optimize the performance of these functions.

INTERVIEWING BLITZ: ANSWERING THE TELL ME ABOUT YOURSELF QUESTION  
*Speaker(s):* John Taborn, PhD,  
*Career Counselor*  
January 12, 2022, 3:00 - 4:00 pm  
Virtual – register [here](#)

Learn and practice about how to answer the interview question, "Tell me about yourself".

SKILL BLITZ: THE STAR INTERVIEWING TECHNIQUE – A MUST – HAVE SKILL FOR SCIENTISTS  
*Speaker(s):* John Taborn, PhD,  
*Career Counselor*  
January 31, 2022, 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm  
Virtual – register [here](#)

Learn and practice the STAR behavioral interviewing technique. This will help you answer tough questions on interviews like, "tell me about a time you struggled in lab," or tell me about your best example of leadership".

INTERVIEWING BLITZ: ANSWERING STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESS QUESTIONS  
*Speaker(s):* John Taborn, PhD,  
*Career Counselor*  
January 31, 2022, 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm  
Virtual – register [here](#)

Learn and practice how to answer these tough interview questions- "Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses".
Did you miss the virtual LEADERS seminar on ‘Small Animal Imaging’ presented by Charlie Androjna? Here is the recap!

The November Leaders seminar featured Charlie Androjna, D.Eng. discussing the services offered by the Small Animal Imaging Core (SAI), here at the LRI. Established in July of 2020, this core brought several instruments under the supervision of a single core facility with staff both here at Lerner as well as at CWRU. The primary office can be found in the Biomechanics and Imaging office LRI ND1-08. This core facility offers both the instrumentation for imaging as well as image processing software. Additionally, staff are available to assist with protocol development, image acquisition and analysis. A brief description of the instruments and imaging capabilities of the core follows, but feel free to contact Dr. Androjna at androjc2@ccf.org for assistance in determining what instruments and techniques are best suited for your needs. A recording of the presentation can be accessed from the intranet here.

**Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)**
Offering a non-invasive imaging approach for soft tissue, the Bruker uses non-ionizing radiation to excite protons, found mostly in water and fat, that in turn relax at different intervals depending on tissue type. This relaxation time is then measured and used to generate images of the tissue. The instrument allows for both T1 and T2 weighted imaging for structural anatomy as well as Diffusion Tensor Imaging.

**Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Nuclear Imaging**
The SAI houses a Mediso NanoScan PET That features < 0.7mm resolution, high count rate, and allows for the imaging of multiple subjects at once. Unlike MRI, which analyzes the relaxation time of protons, PET utilizes radiotracers that interact with various cellular mechanism and can therefore be used for both anatomical and functional imaging. SAI staff can assist in the selection and preparation of radioactive imaging agents using fluorine-18 and gallium-68.

**In Vivo Imaging System Spectrum -Computed Tomography (IVIS-CT)**
A Lumina IVIS Spectrum CT is housed in the barrier facility of the BRU, and can be used for imaging of bioluminescence, predominantly through the use of luciferases, and fluorescence. This instrument allows for 3D optical tomography and several probes and reporters are available.

**Computed Tomography (CT) Scanning**
CT scanning uses x-rays, both non-invasive and non-destructive in controlled doses, to image a variety of tissues. A GE eXplore Locus RS is available for use, as well as both the Medio NanoScan PET and the Lumina IVIS Spectrum having CT capabilities.

**About the Speaker**
Dr. Androjna received her Master’s degree in chemical engineering from Cleveland State University, followed by a PhD in chemical and biochemical engineering from the same institution. She joined CCF as a postdoctoral fellow and then transitioned to a research associate position in the Biomedical Engineering Department. In 2016, Dr. Androjna became a project staff/scientist in Shared Laboratory Resources.

During her talk, Dr. Androjna stressed the importance of both making and taking opportunities. She also highlighted the career section of the My Services tab on the CCF intranet as a place to find such opportunities. She highlighted groups such as the Group Of Aspiring Leaders (GOAL) and encouraged those looking to improve their career opportunities to search out and explore these and other resources available through CCF in order to both define and further their career goals.
Did you miss the career development seminar featuring Dr. George Inglis, an Associate Editor from Communications Biology? Here’s a brief recap summary of the seminar. [Click here](#) for the recording of the session.

Dr. George Inglis is an Associate Editor for Communications Biology. He received a BS in biology from Pennsylvania State University where he conducted research on the genetics of *S. aureus*‘s antibiotic resistance. He then went on to pursue a PhD in genetics and molecular biology from Emory University where he recently graduated in May 2020. As a PhD student, he worked on mouse models of voltage gated sodium channels dysfunction and the epigenomics of iPSC-derived GABAergic interneuron development. After his PhD, Dr. Inglis decided to become a scientific editor.

**So what exactly is a scientific editor?** In Dr. Inglis’ experience, a scientific editor is a PhD level scientist who has a broad interest across scientific disciplines. They are someone who loves to do research, critically evaluate papers, and help authors publish high-quality, robust science. As a scientific editor, most of your time will be spent on critiquing manuscripts for publication. However, reading is not the only part of a scientific editor’s role; they also need to constantly be aware of the latest popular topics. Acquiring information from a variety of sources is another important aspect of a scientific editor’s job. In addition to reading, they attend conferences, organize events, visit research institutions, etc. Is a career in scientific editing right for you? If you enjoy reading and assessing technical papers and research highlights then maybe give this career path some thought!

**So you’ve decided that you want to pursue a career as a scientific editor, what now?** As you pursue your studies as trainees here at LRI, look out for various opportunities to obtain experience editing scientific manuscripts. The most straightforward option is to ask your mentor if you can co-review one of their manuscripts. Other opportunities include reviewing for the Journal of Emerging Investigators (an online journal for high school researchers) and completing training programs such as the Nature Communications ECR Training Program which pairs trainees with editors at the journal. The Communications Biology Editorial Training Program is a 6-week program that goes through the entire editorial process with participants. As you near the end of your training tenure, begin searching and applying to scientific editor job advertisements. As you do, keep in mind the scope of the journal you are applying to, recent publications from that journal, and how your experiences fit with the position you are applying for.
Dr. F. Merlin Bumpus’ work contributed to the understanding of the role of angiotensin II in the pathophysiology of high blood pressure (a condition that affects almost one-third of adults worldwide). Dr. Bumpus also served as Chair of Research from 1966-1985. In his honor, the F. Merlin Bumpus Junior Investigator Awards were created to highlight excellence in basic and clinical research. Winners were announced at the 41st Annual Cleveland Clinic Research Day. In addition, we had the pleasure of listening to talks from Dr. Michaela Gack, Dr. Anthony Fernandez, and The Bernadine Healy Memorial Lectureship given by Dr. Akiko Iwasaki. Congratulations to all of the basic science Bumpus Award winners and finalists, featured below!

Click here to see the full list of winners.

Xin Wu, PhD (First Place)
Postdoctoral Fellow
PI: Jae Jung, PhD
Department: Cancer Biology
Presentation title: Viral mimicry of interleukin-17 by SARS-COV-2 ORF8
Summary: SARS-CoV-2 infection triggers cytokine-mediated inflammation, leading to a myriad of clinical presentations in COVID19. Patients infected with SARS-CoV-2 ORF8-deleted variants are associated with mild disease outcomes, but the molecular mechanism behind is unknown. Besides its activation of blood monocytes, ORF8 upregulated gene expressions for fibrosis signaling and coagulation dysregulation. This study discovers SARS-CoV-2 ORF8 as a viral mimicry of IL-17 cytokine to contribute COVID-19 severe inflammation.

Gabrielle Mey (Second Place)
Graduate Student
PI: Tara DeSilva, PhD
Department: Neurosciences
Presentation title: Monitoring the visual system as an indicator for neurodegeneration in autoimmune demyelinating diseases
Summary: This project is focused on multiple sclerosis (MS), which is a chronic inflammatory and demyelinating disease. Our lab aims to elucidate the underlying pathology of neurodegeneration. The visual system provides a unique way to monitor disease, as it demonstrates a clear relationship between myelinated axons and their corresponding neuronal cell bodies. Our data suggest that the visual system is an important indicator of neurodegeneration, and we plan to utilize this information in ongoing studies aimed at protecting against degeneration during autoimmune demyelinating disease.

Semi-Finalists

Chihiro Miyagi, MD
Postdoctoral Fellow
PI: Kiyotaka Fukamachi, MD, PhD
Department: Biomedical Engineering
Presentation title: Constant Torque Mode with the Left Atrial Assist Device: Initial In Vitro Results

Jesminara Khatun, PhD
Postdoctoral Fellow
PI: Abhishek A. Chakraborty, PhD
Department: Cancer Biology
Presentation title: Probing the Oncogenic Role of the SLC1A1/EAAT3 Dicarboxylic Amino Acid Transporter in Kidney Cancer

Sweta Parab, PhD
Postdoctoral Fellow
Current PI & Dept: Feng Lin, PhD, I&I
Previous PI & Dept: Ryota Matsuoka, PhD, CVMS
Presentation title: Identification of Key Molecular Factors Critical for Fenestrated Vessel Formation in Distinct Regions of the Brain
Now Hiring

Microbiology And Molecular Genetics Assistant / Associate Professor Tenure System | Michigan State University | East Lansing, MI

The Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics and the College of Veterinary Medicine at Michigan State University (MSU) invite applications for a tenure-track faculty appointment at the Assistant/Associate Professor level. Research in our department spans the microbial sciences, and we seek candidates utilizing molecular, genetic, computational, biochemical, ecological, or evolutionary approaches to address important questions in microbiology. Broad topics of interest include but are not limited to: microbial pathogenesis and host-microbe interactions (viruses, bacteria, fungi, parasites, or prions), antimicrobial resistance, host immunity and susceptibility to infection, genetic basis of host susceptibility/resistance, animal models of infection and disease, microbial disease ecology, and One Health. For more information click here.

Post-Doctoral Researcher - Department of Defense Virtual Lab School (DoDVLS) | Ohio State University | Columbus, OH

The Post-Doctoral Researcher - DoDVLS is an expert in early childhood development and education and will serve as the main coordinator of research and user feedback efforts relative to the DoD Child Development Virtual Laboratory School project (DoDVLS). This position will assist in grant development and conduct research related to the DoDVLS, which may include pilot testing of tracks and courses or pre/post-tests of efficacy in a community based setting. For more information click here.

Scientist (Immunology) | Athersys, Inc. | Cleveland, OH

A Scientist (Immunology) understands cellular immunology, immune tolerance, and autoimmunity. A Scientist (Immunology) will use their extensive laboratory experience with the culture, functional characterization and molecular profiling of human T-cells and monocytes/macrophages to design complex experiments with scientific rationale. For more information click here or contact rwmays@athersys.com.

Postdoctoral Fellow OR Staff Scientist | University of Washington | Seattle, WA

In the Fujise Lab, we work together as a team to characterize fortillin, a multi-functional protein that plays an important role in heart failure, atherosclerosis, and cancer. The PI is a physician-scientist who has mentored and developed a number of scientists and enthusiastic for the success of each and every lab member.

Scientists with expertise in molecular/cellular biology or rodent procedures in all career stages are encourage to apply. The Lab has multiple positions and offers you the most appropriate job title/position, according to your experience, expertise and preference. For more information click here.

Senior Scientific Writer | The University of Chicago | Chicago, IL

This position supports the development and management of programmatic initiatives for the University of Chicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center. This includes grant writing/editing for various funding mechanisms (e.g., NCI SPORE grants, Program Project Grants, and other multi-investigator grants). The position will also work closely with the UCCC Director of Communications and U Chicago Medicine Marketing to develop scientific content for external and internal publications The position will involve coordinating with program leaders, program members, and UCCC units to plan and execute grants applications, benefactor proposals and reports, internal funding opportunities and communications with other NCI designated cancer centers. For more information click here.
Accomplishments

Congratulations to Dr. Aniruddha Das from the Dana Lab in the Department of Neurosciences!

Dr. Das won the Trainee Professional Development Award (TPDA) at the 50th Annual conference of Society for Neuroscience (SfN) 2021 which occurred virtually this year and presented a poster titled "Cellular resolution, volumetric recording of neuronal activity over a large cortical area in freely-moving mice".

Congratulations to Dr. Young Jun Shim from the McCrae Lab in the Department of Cardiovascular and Metabolic Sciences!

Dr. Shim published his work “Polyphosphate expression by cancer cell extracellular vesicles mediates binding of FXII and contact activation” in Blood Advances. Click Here.

Congratulations to Dr. Lycia Pedral Sampaio from the Wilson Lab in Ophthalmic Research!

Dr. Sampaio recently published “Descemet’s membrane injury and regeneration, and posterior corneal fibrosis, in rabbits” in Experimental Eye Research Click Here.

Congratulations to Dr. Ian Houlihan from the Krishna Lab in the Department of Biomedical Engineering!

Dr. Houlihan was awarded a Caregiver Catalyst Grant for $100,000 for his project titled "Creating a novel, nanotechnology-based treatment for kidney stones that would reduce the risk of injury to the tissue when fragmenting the stone’s surface".
Accomplishments

Congratulations to Dr. Megan Zangara from the McDonald Lab in the Department of Inflammation & Immunity!

Dr. Zangara successfully defended her dissertation titled "The role of diet as a modifiable factor of inflammatory bowel disease." She is moving to the Department of Biochemistry and Biological Sciences at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. She will be a postdoctoral fellow in the lab of Dr. Brian Coombes.

Congratulations to Dr. Yee Peng Phoon from the Gastman Lab in the Center for Immunotherapy & Precision Immuno-Oncology!

Dr. Phoon received the Outrun the Sun Research Scholar Award as principal investigator for her project titled “Developing blood-based predictive biomarkers of MAD CD8+ T cells for ICI-refractory advanced melanoma”. The goal of this project is to develop a reliable blood-based predictive tool to help predict ICI (immune check point inhibitor) response to improve treatment decision making for melanoma patients. She also published her work titled “A high OXPHOS CD8 T cell subset is predictive of immunotherapy resistance in melanoma patients” in the Journal of Experimental Medicine. Click Here.

Alumnus Accomplishment

Dr. Ángel Reyes-Rodríguez was named one of the 2021 Crain's Cleveland Business 40 Under Forty honorees.

Dr. Reyes-Rodríguez is a former Lerner Research Institute postdoctoral fellow and currently serves as the Director of the McNair Scholars Program at Cleveland State University. Crain's 40 Under Forty highlights Cleveland's leaders who are making a difference in their companies and communities. Dr. Reyes-Rodríguez is recognized this year for his extraordinary work supporting underrepresented and “at-risk” undergraduates to successfully transition to graduate programs through the McNair Scholars Program. Click Here to read more. Congratulations, Dr. Reyes-Rodríguez!
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

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
Kelsey Bohn, PhD, Alan Chen, William (BJ) Massey, Anthony Santilli, PhD, and Juan Venegas, MD

Executive Board
Co-Presidents: Kelly Mitchell and Shilpa Rao
Coordinator: Priya Putta
Treasurer: position open!

Career Development and Resources
Co-Chairs: Christina Cajigas-Du Ross, Adya Sapra, Ki-Soo Jeong
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