As the fall season approaches with crisp and cool air, there are so many exciting things to look forward to! In this month’s newsletter, we will offer you some ideas of what to do in Cleveland this fall and the wonderful events to come at the Lerner Research Institute.

This month we feature Lerner alumnus Dr. James Hale, fellow Dr. Salma Ben-Salem, and graduate student Varadha Balaji Venkadakrishnan.

We also provide recaps of recent LEADERS seminars, an overview of National Postdoc Appreciation Week and upcoming events that you won’t want to miss.

Don’t forget to submit your accomplishments so they can be featured in our newsletter and, as always, stay active on our LinkedIn group.

Join our LinkedIn group

The Lerner Postdoctoral Association and Alumni Network is a group of current and former postdoctoral fellows, research associates and graduate students at Cleveland Clinic Lerner Research Institute. Our goals are to provide opportunities for career development, networking and highlighting our scientific achievements. We also post reminders about upcoming events, so make sure to turn on notifications.

Request to join today and tell all of your fellow trainees!
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MEET OUR ALUMNI
Interview with a Lerner Alumnus -Dr. James Hale

“In working for CCF gives one a strong sense of pride, as all are working toward a common goal of improved patient outcome.”

-Dr. James Hale

In which lab were you at Lerner? How long ago?
I worked in Dr. Justin Lathia’s lab and moved to my new position about 1 year ago.

What did you work on at Lerner?
I worked on the complex interplay between cancer stem cells and the microenvironment, primarily in the context of glioblastoma and triple-negative breast cancer. I was also part of the heart transplant research tissue procurement team under Dr. Christine Moravec.

Where are you now, and what do you work on?
I am currently at The Case Comprehensive Cancer Center where I am the Assistant Director of Research Programs. My primary responsibility is to serve as a subject matter expert on scientific and technical grant writing. I work closely with the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center Director and Scientific Program Leaders to foster a collaborative environment among members to identify and develop additional funding opportunities.

How did your time at Lerner prepare you for your current role?
As a postdoc, the time management and organizational skills that I picked up at Lerner allowed me to succeed in my current position.

Is there something you particularly miss from your time at Lerner?
I miss the culture and people at Lerner. I made some great friendships and was able to mentor many promising students who have since moved on to medical school or are pursuing their PhD. Working for CCF gives one a strong sense of pride, as all are working toward a common goal of improved patient outcome.

How was the transition to your current role?
It was interesting to go from doing bench work and shift gears to more of an administrative position. However, my transition was extremely smooth. I had the full support of my entire lab, and because of the close relationship between Case and Lerner, I was able to quickly adapt to my new role.

What is your favorite part of your current job?
My favorite parts are the independence that I am able to enjoy as well as the sheer variety of duties that I am responsible for.

In one sentence, what advice would you give current Lerner postdocs and graduate students?
I’ve heard this a hundred times and didn’t really take it to heart, but don’t underestimate the power of networking and make as many friends or acquaintances as you can.
MEET YOUR FELLOW

Dr. Salma Ben-Salem was born in Sfax, Tunisia where she completed her Masters and PhD in molecular and cell biology from the Faculty of Sciences. Dr. Ben-Salem’s graduate work focused on identifying genes and/or mutations that cause congenital disorders in humans. Her dissertation work allowed her to spend time in the United Arab Emirates University and Linkoping University in Sweden. Dr. Ben-Salem explains, “high consanguinity rate among Arabs, particularly in the Gulf region, increases the risk of inherited genetic disorders. I discovered several novel genes/mutations associated with various human diseases such as \textit{PRSS56} responsible for posterior microphthalmia and angle-closure glaucoma, \textit{DDHD2} which leads to complex spastic paraplegia, and \textit{PLCB3} which dysregulates phosphoinositide signaling in a new class of spondylometaphyseal dysplasia and corneal dystrophy.” Her graduate work led to an impressive 23 publications, including 13 as first-author. Along with her love for travel, she became interested in cancer research and pursuing a postdoc position at Cleveland Clinic, which would provide her with resources to study inherited diseases in patients. She currently works in Dr. Hannelore Heemers’ lab at the GU Malignancy Research Center in the Department of Cancer Biology, where she studies underlying molecular mechanisms of prostate cancer and its progression. Prostate cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths among western men. Androgen receptor (AR) has been the molecular target for metastatic prostate cancer owing to its central role in progression. Despite initial remission due to aberrant AR activation, patients develop resistance to AR-targeted therapies. Dr. Ben-Salem and colleagues identified the mitotic kinase citron kinase (CIT) as such a target. Their data so far show that CIT relies on its kinase activity to promote prostate cancer proliferation and they have determined the molecular mechanisms that regulate CIT expression. Dr. Ben-Salem has presented her work in national meetings such as Society for Basic Urological Research (SBUR) and recently won the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center (CCC) travel award to present a poster at the AACR Annual Meeting, as well as best poster award at the annual scientific retreat at Case CCC, which was one of the 2 abstracts selected for the trainee platform talk. Outside of the laboratory, Dr. Ben-Salem enjoys taking care of her indoor “mini-garden” and listening to music. She also likes to bake and watch movies.

“My graduate work in human genetics also led to a couple of publications in cancer. This sparked my interest in cancer and my taste for travel led me to the United States and to Cleveland Clinic, arguably the best hospital in the nation.”

-Dr. Ben-Salem
Varadha Balaji Venkadakrishnan is a graduate student who recently won the second place Graduate Student Award for Excellence for his paper titled “Protein Kinase N1 control of androgen-responsive serum response factor action provides rationale for novel prostate cancer treatment strategy.” Balaji was born and raised in Madras, India and earned his Bachelor of Technology in biotechnology from Anna University in Madras, India. Before beginning graduate school, he finished his capstone project in Advanced Centre for Treatment, Research and Education in Cancer (ACTREC) in New Bombay, India for his work on lung cancer and tobacco carcinogenesis which led to a co-authored publication in Molecular Carcinogenesis. Furthermore, he worked as a project assistant in Dr. Rahul Purwar’s laboratory at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay developing a CAR T-cell therapy for breast cancer. He moved to the US for graduate school in 2015 and joined the Regulatory Biology program at Cleveland State University, which he was drawn to by its strong, long-standing affiliation with Lerner and the Case Comprehensive Cancer Center. He joined the laboratory of Dr. Hannelore Heemers in the Cancer Biology Department where the lab focuses on non-canonical mechanisms of androgen-receptor action in prostate cancer. His dissertation research thus far, defines PKN1 as a druggable kinase in one such mechanism. He chose this lab to pursue cancer research and expand his knowledge in one specific subtype of cancer, as well as prioritize his training in a small lab environment. Outside of his research, Balaji enjoys playing the Indian bamboo flute, online chess, cooking, origami, and reading. He is also a beer enthusiast, concert lover, and a huge fan of cricket.

“The open floor plan discreetly instills a sense of community in all of us, which is one of the unique features of training at Lerner.”

-Varadha Balaji Venkadakrishnan
MEET YOUR LPDA EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Dr. Elise Baron is from the east side of Cleveland, Ohio. She received her bachelor’s degree from Ohio University and PhD from Cleveland State University. She is working in Dr. Jillian Beveridge’s Lab investigating the effects of ACL repair surgery on the biomechanics of the joint, as well as mechanical properties of the healing ligament. Dr. Baron is currently working on developing and integrating the motion capture and imaging methods for the first upcoming study. She chose to work at Cleveland Clinic for the opportunities to study biomechanics on a macro level. Outside of work she likes climbing, skiing, cycling, and hiking with her dog.

“Cleveland Clinic provides the opportunities to study biomechanics on a macro level.”
-Dr. Elise Baron, LPDA Treasurer

Dr. Nneha Sakre, originally from India, is a research associate in the Department of Translational Hematology and Oncology Research. Currently, she is studying the mechanisms underlying resistance of EGFR-specific tyrosine kinase inhibitors in lung carcinogenesis in Dr. Yogan Saunthararajah’s lab. Dr. Sakre received her PhD from Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Maharashtra, India. She came to the United States and worked as a postdoc at Case Western Reserve University in Dr. Afshin Dowlati’s lab. During her career, she published 22 papers in top-tier peer-reviewed journals. She enjoys working amongst culturally diverse colleagues at Cleveland Clinic. When she is not in the laboratory, she likes to go bowling, hiking, painting, learning Indian classical dances, and attending sporting events with friends and family. Her 10-year-old daughter is her pride and joy.

“Cleveland Clinic has cultural diversity and appreciation of talent.”
-Dr. Sakre Nneha, LPDA Secretary

MEET YOUR LGSA LEADERSHIP TEAM

Abigail Dooley is from Vineland, New Jersey and received her Bachelor of Science in biochemistry and biophysics from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in May of 2017. Abigail is a third year graduate student in the Molecular Medicine PhD program of Case Western Reserve University where she works in Christine O’Connor’s laboratory in the Genomic Medicine Institute. She is currently studying the role of the human cytomegalovirus-encoded G protein coupled receptor, US28, in order to define mechanisms underlying HCMV latency and reactivation and its potential involvement in pathogenesis of atherosclerosis. She chose Lerner and the Molecular Medicine PhD program for its unique focus on translational research and the opportunity to shadow physicians in the Transplant Infectious Disease Department at the Cleveland Clinic. Outside of her research, she enjoys running races and trail running throughout Northeast Ohio.

“Lerner provides a collaborative environment to bridge basic science and clinical research”
-Abigail Dooley, LGSA Public Relations Chair
UPCOMING EVENTS

Lerner Experience in Advanced Development of Educational and Research Skills (LEADERS)

Grant Writing Part 2

- Provides Lerner trainees with career development tools that will accelerate their professional development.
- Sessions open to all postdoctoral fellows and graduate students.
- 20 sessions in 2019
- Receive a certificate of completion if 75% of sessions are attended.

WHO: Charles Tannenbaum, PhD
Department of Inflammation and Immunity, LRI

WHEN: October 14, 2019
3:00 - 4:00 pm
WHERE: NE1-205

Grant Writing Part 3

- Provides Lerner trainees with career development tools that will accelerate their professional development.
- Sessions open to all postdoctoral fellows and graduate students.
- 20 sessions in 2019
- Receive a certificate of completion if 75% of sessions are attended.

WHO: Charles Tannenbaum, PhD
Department of Inflammation and Immunity, LRI

WHEN: October 28, 2019
3:00 - 4:00 pm
WHERE: NE1-205

Farmers Market - Main Campus

Every Wednesday from 10:30am - 1:30pm (June 5 - October 16)

Location: Crile Mall, Main Campus
UPCOMING EVENTS

The Lerner Postdoctoral Association
Career Development Seminar Series

My thoughts on Science Communication

Rosemary Teresi, PhD, RAC
Field Medical Director, Oncology, Pfizer

Friday, October 18th
NE1-205  2:00-3:00pm
UPCOMING EVENTS

Lerner Graduate Student Association
Town Hall

Have Questions?
Next Step?
Let’s Discuss Together

GRAD STUDENT TOWN HALL

Thursday, Oct. 10th
- 4:00pm to 5:00pm
- NE1-205
- Door Prizes
- Quick Presentation

Refreshments Provided

By Grad Students
For Grad Students
Did you miss the LEADERS seminar on ‘Networking’ by Justin Lathia, PhD? Here is a recap of the seminar!

During his seminar on the importance of networking, Dr. Justin Lathia stressed how we are all responsible for our own success. He reminded trainees that having exceptional publications and grant funding is not enough to get the job of your dreams (even though it certainly helps). You also need the “X factor”, which can be achieved through networking. Dr. Lathia explained that there are so many jobs out there that are never even advertised. Many posted positions are actually already filled and they’re offered to candidates who networked with members of the department. This highlights the importance of networking with your peers. Dr. Lathia suggested to talk to colleagues at conferences, meet with visiting scientists and invited speakers, and even network online using e-mail or social media sites such as LinkedIn, ResearchGate or Twitter. Perhaps you’ve read a new publication from a laboratory that you’re interested in joining or collaborating with, send them an email to congratulate them on their success!

Dr. Lathia advised trainees to never send generic emails. Avoid addressing the email as “dear sir/madam” and try to be specific. Keep the email short and to the point, while also being detailed about the situation. For example, if you intend to discuss a potential postdoctoral position with an investigator, write a short email expressing your interest in their work based on certain manuscripts or presentations, summarize your own work, and perhaps invite them to come visit your poster at an upcoming conference. Even an informational interview can spark excellent conversation, and more importantly grow your network. Perhaps you came to one of the seminars hosted by the LPDA career development subcommittee and are really interested in one of the careers that a presenter described, but have no idea where to start. If you communicate with them after their talk, or follow up with an e-mail or message on social media, they are more than likely willing to discuss this with you further and provide you with advice, or better yet, they may even know of an available position that has not been officially advertised.

The best way to “create your own brand” is to present your research at conferences as posters and talks, ask questions to others presenting their data, introduce yourself to others in your field, set up meetings at scientific events, and create an online presence for yourself using social media. Connections made early on in your career can help you land the job of your dreams down the road.
Dr. Agnieszka Gascoyne, PhD presented at the September LPDA Career Development Seminar during the National Postdoc Appreciation Week about her journey from academia to industry. Dr. Gascoyne received her Master’s Degree in molecular biology at Jagiellonian University in Poland. She went on to earn her PhD in biochemistry from the same institution while doing her graduate research with Dr. Andrew Larner from the Department of Immunology at Lerner and Dr. Colleen Croniger from the Department of Nutrition at Case Western Reserve University. Dr. Gascoyne completed her postdoctoral training with Dr. Ariel Feldstein in the Department of Cell Biology, then moved into industry as a Senior Research and Development Scientist at VWR Chemicals in Solon, Ohio. She currently serves as a Senior Process Development Scientist at Abeona Therapeutics in Cleveland, Ohio.

Dr. Gascoyne focused her talk on her transition from an academic career to one in industry. She emphasized that a change in mindset is critical when deciding to pursue career opportunities in the private sector. Postdoctoral fellows should immediately begin thinking about the future and the type of career they wish to seek. The answer should drive your actions during training. In addition, postdocs should try and find side projects or internships that will prepare them for industry jobs or look for PIs who have connections in industry. They should broaden their technical skill set to match those that are in demand. She also suggests that interested individuals should try and find research and development positions to make it easier to transition from academia to industry. She recommends that academics should remember that the main goal in industry is to develop a product with the help of other scientists that can be marketed and sold. Dr. Gascoyne highlighted the importance of meeting people face to face at events such as conferences or job fairs and the usefulness of online tools such as LinkedIn.

Interested academics should also be aware of some of the potential challenges one can encounter as they prepare to leave academia. In many situations, a PhD can leave a person overqualified for industry positions if they have no past experience. The pace of work is also very different and is composed of many short projects and deliverables that are subject to change. Never forget that the main goal in industry is profit for the company that you are employed by. Dr. Gascoyne mentioned that it is critical to be able to work in a fast-paced environment. The ability to multitask and quickly adjust to changing goals are also necessary qualities for a successful career in industry. Finally, it is important to note that generally, jobs in industry are often less stable than those in academia as companies respond to changing market conditions.
RECENT EVENTS

National Postdoc Appreciation Week
September 14th - September 18th
-Kelsey Bohn, PhD

Thank you to the members of the LPDA and RETC who made up the NPAW planning committee!

Last month, we celebrated the 10th annual National Postdoc Appreciation Week (NPAW), an event created and supported by the National Postdoctoral Association. The LPDA and RETC planned and organized career development and engagement events throughout the week to show their appreciation for the hard work and dedication of Lerner postdoctoral fellows. In addition to these events, postdocs were provided with free headshots through the Art and Photography Department and business cards through their respective departments.

Family & Friends Hike & Picnic

Wellness Event: Practical Office Yoga for Relaxation and Focus

Resumé Swap: Peer Review Roundtable
RECENT EVENTS

National Postdoc Appreciation Week
September 14th - September 18th

Coffee & Donuts:
Meet Your LPDA representative

Town Hall with Dr. Moravec

NPAW 2019 Social
RECENT EVENTS

AHA Heart Walk Cleveland

-Iris Smith, PhD and Kelsey Bohn, PhD

According to the American Heart Association, heart disease strikes someone in the United States about once every 42 seconds. Every fall, Cleveland Clinic participates in the Cleveland Heart Walk which is part of the nationwide American Heart Association (AHA) event. The funds that are raised help support the AHA in their goal of improving the cardiovascular health of all Americans by 20 percent by 2020. Research efforts like those underwritten by the Cleveland Heart Walk make great strides in decreasing the burden of heart disease and stroke on families and health care resources.

This year, the Lerner Research Institute trainees formed the LRI Trainee Pacemakers heart walk team made up of over 50 members. They joined thousands of people on Saturday, September 21st to walk and raised over $1,500 in donations. Congratulations to the Genomic Medicine Institute trainees who raised the most money and won a pizza party!
While it may not exactly feel like it yet, the first day of fall was officially September 23rd. As the days get shorter and the weather begins to turn chilly, trips to the beach, picnics, and BBQ’s will start becoming less attractive. However, don’t lament the passing of another wonderful summer, but embrace the beginning of change! Cleveland becomes its most colorful during autumn. From the beautiful natural artistry of the fall foliage to the start of the holiday season with Halloween and Thanksgiving Day, don’t let this amazing season pass you by without enjoying a few of the area’s most captivating attractions.

**Holden Arboretum**, located at 9550 Sperry Rd., Kirtland, OH 44094, is one of the largest botanical gardens in the United States. It covers more than 3,600 acres and features over 20 miles of trails. Among its most famous attractions is a Canopy Walk located 65 feet above the forest floor and the 120-foot tall Emergent Tower, offering breathtaking views of the entirety of the surrounding area. Bring your children and pets and witness the colors of fall in all of their natural beauty. You can visit the park daily from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Admission cost is $12 for adults and $8 for children aged 3-12. Tickets to the Canopy Walk and Tower are an additional $4 for adults and $2 for children. They are issued on a first come first serve basis, so be sure to come early. For up-to-date information on ticket availability, please call (440) 602-3838.

One of the most beloved traditions in town is **Boo at the Zoo**, hosted by the Cleveland Metroparks. Bring your children in costume to enjoy trick or treating as they tour, watch, and learn about their favorite furred, scaled, or feathery friends. Guests can also enjoy unlimited 4-D Theater movies, carousel, and train rides all while interacting with costumed characters. Be sure to stick around for the monster mash dance party! Each night the first 1,000 guests will receive a special treat bag so be sure to arrive early. Don’t miss this limited time event Fridays through Sundays October 11-27 from 5 to 9 PM. Advance tickets can be purchased online for $12 or in person at the zoo box office for $16.

The name says it all! On November 16th, 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm come and try over 50 different types of cheese and 40 types of wine at **Lago Custom Events** on the east bank of the Flats. Weather-permitting, the event will also include fire pits and tables allowing guests spectacular views of the lake. All cheese and wine samples are included in the price and are unlimited so come hungry! Prices are $45 Early Bird, $50 Regular, and $55 at the door, so don’t delay and reserve your tickets early.
LOOKING FOR A JOB? NOW HIRING!

Postdoctoral Associate (DNA repair, LMO2, Lymphoma Research) - University of Miami, FL
A Postdoctoral Associate position is available in the Department of Medicine, University of Miami, Miller School of Medicine, in Florida for a translational research project studying the role of LMO2 in DNA repair pathways in lymphomas and leukemias. Currently seeking a highly motivated postdoctoral fellow with in-depth knowledge and extensive skills in cellular and molecular biology to join the lab. PhD in cellular and molecular biology, cancer biology or related fields. Experience in a research laboratory setting. Evidence of scholarly ability (record of publication in peer-reviewed journals, etc.) is required.
For more details click here

Postdoctoral Scientist - Translational Neuro-Oncology Lab, Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Columbus, OH
The Rajappa Lab is accepting applications for a postdoctoral scientist. Applicants should have either a PhD or MD from backgrounds in neuroscience, tumor immunology or cancer biology. Backgrounds in molecular, cellular and developmental biology will also be considered. Experience with animal tumor modeling, cell sorting and flow cytometry is desired. Additional experience with Genomics/Bioinformatics/Statistics is a plus.
For more details click here

Postdoctoral Associate (Physiology and Biophysics-Neuroscience Research) - University of Miami, FL
Join a vibrant research program in sensory neuroscience. This position is funded by the National Institutes of Health and to continue long-term NIH-supported projects in the laboratory of Dr. Nirupa Chaudhari in the Department of Physiology & Biophysics. PhD in neuroscience, molecular biology/biophysics or related discipline or M.D. Recent PhD graduates are encouraged to apply.
For more details click here

Molecular and Computational Research Scientist (Cardiovascular) - Bayer, MA
Seeking a highly talented Doctorate or PhD in natural sciences (genetics, molecular biology, and bioinformatics), medical science or pharmacy with at least two years of research in an industrial or academic setting to join Bayer for advance disease biology understanding and target identification in cardiovascular diseases.
For more details click here

Post Doctoral Scientist - Translational Neuro-Oncology Lab, Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Columbus, OH
The Rajappa Lab is accepting applications for a postdoctoral scientist. Applicants should have either a PhD or MD from backgrounds in neuroscience, tumor immunology or cancer biology. Backgrounds in molecular, cellular and developmental biology will also be considered. Experience with animal tumor modeling, cell sorting and flow cytometry is desired. Additional experience with Genomics/Bioinformatics/Statistics is a plus.
For more details click here

Assistant Professor (Biological Sciences) - University of Toledo, OH
The University invites applicants for the position of Assistant Professor, Biological Sciences. The successful candidate will instruct primarily upper level undergraduate courses and will participate in teaching required graduate level courses. PhD in biological sciences, molecular biology, cell biology, biochemistry, neuroscience, immunology, or a closely related discipline. Relevant postdoctoral experience. Demonstrated track record of peer reviewed publications and research excellence. Experience in submitting and/or obtaining external grant support a plus. Demonstrated undergraduate teaching experience preferred Demonstrated graduate teaching experience preferred.
For more details click here

Genomics Field Application Specialist- BIO-RAD, OH
Bio-Rad has an immediate need for a Field Application Specialist. MS in Life Sciences minimum, PhD preferred. Minimum 3-5 years’ experience of qPCR techniques, qPCR assay design and optimization mandatory.
For more details click here
Congratulations to Dr. Defne Bayik from the Lathia lab in the Department of Cardiovascular and Metabolic Sciences!

Dr. Bayik received the VeloSano Catalyst Pilot Award as Principal investigator, titled “Therapeutic targeting of communication between systemic immunity and gut microbiome in glioblastoma.” The goal of this project is to identify the link between microbiome dysbiosis and immunosuppression in glioblastoma. Dr. Bayik was also selected to give a talk at Young Investigators Forum in Neuro-oncology in Atlanta, Georgia. The title of the talk was "Myeloid-derived suppressor cell heterogeneity drives glioblastoma progression in a sex-dependent manner.” For more details, click here.

Congratulations to Dr. Yoko O. Henderson from the Hine lab in the Department of Cardiovascular and Metabolic Sciences!

Dr. Henderson received the Glenn Foundation for Medical Research Postdoctoral Fellowship in Aging Research as Principal Investigator for the study “Determining the effects of late-life initiated caloric restriction on aging-related decline in cognition and increase in frailty and on hydrogen sulfide production.” The goals of this project are to determine the effects of caloric restriction when initiated late in life on multicomponent frailty, and the protectionary role of endogenous hydrogen sulfide on aging-related declines.

Congratulations to Dr. Daniel Silver from the Lathia lab in the Department of Cardiovascular and Metabolic Sciences!

Dr. Silver was selected to give a talk at The Society for Neuro-Oncology Young Investigators Forum in Atlanta, Georgia. The title of the talk was “Consumption of a High-Fat Diet Drives the Cancer Stem Cell Phenotype and Glioblastoma Progression.”
GET INVOLVED!

Did you publish a paper recently or receive a grant or award? We want to highlight your accomplishments in the next newsletter! As part of the LPDA, we strive to improve this organization to its maximum potential. To do so, we will need the participation and input of all postdoctoral fellows and research associates. If you would like to be involved with our events or have any suggestions or accomplishments we can highlight, please email lri-postdoc-assoc@ccf.org.

**LPDA Communications Team**

Kelsey Bohn, PhD
Mihyun Hwang, PhD
Isha Kapoor, PhD
Ashley Nemes, PhD
Maksim Sinyuk, PhD

**LGSA Communications Team**

Abigail Dooley