Lerner Trainee Newsletter

May 2022

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“Spring is made of solid, fourteen-karat gratitude, the reward for the long wait.”
- Barbara Kingsolver
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Our first week of 80°F weather has brought along blooming flowers and a little rain. With the nicer weather comes patio season! Many restaurants will soon be opening up their outdoor dining sections, allowing us to enjoy good food, drinks, and company in the sun!

In this month’s issue we look back on events from Graduate Student Appreciation Week. We will introduce you to postdoc fellow Dr. Nannan Gao and graduate student Rachel Hohe. We’ll also hear from Lerner alumna Dr. Monica Burgett.

As you proceed with your research, don't forget to check out upcoming events including the next LEADERS seminar on becoming a scientific writer. Wishing you a happy start to the warm weather!

Cheers,
Your LTA Communications Committee

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

Email LRTTraineem (at) ccf.org to connect with us.

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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.
Register for the 15th Annual NIH Career Symposium!

The 15th Annual NIH Career Symposium is being held virtually May 11th – 13th. The free NIH Career Symposium highlights the diversity of career choices available to our generation of biomedical researchers. Whether you are a new graduate student, postdoc, or clinical fellow just beginning to consider career options or a senior student/fellow ready to look for a job, the NIH Career Symposium is for you.

This event is open to any postdoc, clinical fellow, or PhD-level graduate student – you do not need to be at the NIH to participate. For more information and to register, please click here.
Announcements

National Postdoctoral Association Affiliate Membership

Lerner PhD students and postdocs are eligible for a **free** NPA affiliate membership!

Affiliate members can access programing such as the **SmartSkills** series for free as well as:

- **MEMBERS ONLY CONTENT**
  Exclusive access to research, data collection and reports for members on important postdoc policies, issues, and practices

- **LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES**
  Share and grow your expertise while volunteering with NPA committees and task forces

- **LEARN TO ADVOCATE**
  Participate in advocacy at the national level to fight for the interests of our member postdocs and their institutions

- **NETWORK NATIONWIDE**
  Connectivity for all members - join robust discussions helping to grow your career and progress the postdoc community

Contact [RETC@ccf.org](mailto:RETC@ccf.org) to claim your membership.
Announcements

Postdoc Judges Needed - Molecular Medicine PhD Showcase

The Molecular Medicine PhD Program is looking for judges for their annual Student Showcase. The event will be held on **June 3rd** and is currently scheduled to take place in LRI Commons from 3-6pm. Judging of the poster presentations will take place from around **4-5pm**. See below for schedule.

### Tentative Molecular Medicine Showcase Schedule

- **2:45-3:00** Registration
- **3:00-3:05** Welcome Remarks
- **3:05-4:00** Oral Presentations 1: 5th Year Students
- **4:00-4:05** Poster Session Kick-Off
- **4:05-4:55** Poster Session
- **5:00-5:45** Oral Presentations 2: 5th Year Students
- **5:45-6:00** Closing Remarks and Award Ceremony

Interested in volunteering? Please fill out this survey: [https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZQ78FXW](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ZQ78FXW)
Meet our Alumni
Interview with Lerner Alumna
Monica Burgett, PhD
“Do not undervalue your PhD!”

Where did you obtain your PhD?
I earned my Ph.D. in 2016 from the School of Biomedical Sciences, Kent State University, through the Kent State University/Cleveland Clinic collaborative doctoral graduate training program.

What does your role in your current position entail and what is your favorite part?
I analyze data and write/edit high-quality deliverables to support pharmaceutical and biotech clients. Typical projects in publications include drafting abstracts, posters, digital publication extenders, manuscripts, and accompanying plain language summaries. I also develop medical education materials such as FAQs and study slide decks. I really enjoyed working on a project that created a series of short videos to support authors and publication professionals with guidance on best practices for all stages of the publication process. Each day I work as part of a broader team, and I also engage and collaborate with clients. I provide strategic insights and innovative tactical recommendations to clients based on the competitive landscape to help organically grow business.

When did you work in Lerner and in which lab? What positions did you hold?
I trained from 2009 to 2016 in the lab of Dr. Candece Gladson, Department of Cancer Biology, as a graduate student.

What about your time at the Lerner do you think prepared you for this position?
That’s an interesting question, because I had to demonstrate that I had skills that would be applicable to a medical communication agency position without any prior industry experience. Only when I understood, and truly believed, that I had gained all the skills I needed during my academic graduate training, even without a post-doc, was I able to showcase to a prospective employer that I would be valuable to the growth and success of the company. These transferable skills included time and project management, fast iteration based on feedback, solid communication abilities, etc, which are an integral part of conducting a successful research project, beyond technical lab skills and scientific knowledge.

What did you work on at Lerner?
My research dissected the molecular mechanisms involved in the promotion of angiogenesis that is caused by the interplay between blood vessels and tumor stem cells within the perivascular niche in malignant glioma.

What successes did you have at Lerner?
The research I performed at the Cleveland Clinic LRI led to the receipt of both a poster and oral presentation award at the 29th and 30th Annual Kent State University Graduate Research Symposium, respectively, as well as a complimentary registration to the ASMB conference in 2014. In 2015, I was honored to receive the AACR Scholar-in-Training Award in recognition for meritorious work in cancer research and a third-place finish in the inaugural Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) Competition held at Kent State University. My first author paper was published in 2016, and I was a coauthor on multiple publications during my LRI tenure.

What is your current position title and where are you now?
I am an Associate Scientific Director at a medical communications agency.

Is there something you particularly miss from your time at Lerner?
I certainly miss my colleagues and the flexible schedule. But it is worth it—I am exploring the new frontiers in science each day and making a meaningful difference in the lives of patients. The ideas you have and the contributions you make are highly respected.

In one sentence, what advice would you give current Lerner postdocs and grad students?
Do not undervalue your Ph.D.—there is a world of career opportunities for you to discover, and a post-doc is not necessarily a prerequisite! If you’re looking to transition outside of research, make sure to tailor your resume to highlight soft skills with less emphasis on technical skills.
Meet your Fellow
Nannan Gao, PhD

Dr. Nannan Gao is a postdoctoral fellow in the Fariba Rezaee lab in the department of Inflammation & Immunity. She was born in Henan, China and developed an interest in life science during high school. That interest led her to major in Life Science and Biotechnology as an undergraduate student. After completing her undergraduate degree, she enrolled in one of the PhD programs in cell biology at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and went to graduate school at the Shanghai Institute of Biochemistry and Cell Biology. She came to the U.S. after she completed her PhD in 2017 to further her career in research.

Her graduate research was focused on the function of post-translational modification of α-tubulin in the development and function of the nervous system. During her PhD, Dr. Gao received training in biochemistry and cell biology. She particularly enjoyed setting up and optimizing the live-cell imaging methodology to study microtubule dynamics in living neurons. Her work revealed that α-tubulin acetylation mediated by MEC-17, the major α-tubulin acetyltransferase, restricts axon over-branching by constraining microtubule dynamics in neurons.

Dr. Gao’s background in cell biology and special interest in understanding how viral infection impacts the human body led her to the Cleveland Clinic. She thought that the environment at the LRI would allow her to explore opportunities for the next steps in her career while learning from the best scientists in the field. What helped finalize her decision to pursue a postdoc at Cleveland Clinic was discussing with Dr. Rezaee the projects studying airway barrier function that she could potentially work on with the lab.

Dr. Gao has been working in the Rezaee lab for the last year and a half and has found her team to be wonderfully supportive. The main focus of her current research is to understand how the respiratory syncytial virus breaches the first line of defense of the human body, the airway epithelial barrier, and how the viral infection is related to other diseases and conditions such as nutrition deficiencies.

Recently, she won an abstract scholarship to attend the American Thoracic Society 2022 International Conference in San Francisco this month. She will be presenting a poster about her work done here at LRI and is very excited to attend her first in-person conference since the pandemic started.

Outside of work, Dr. Gao enjoys hiking when the weather is nice. She also loves to spend time playing with her dog (Grace) and trying out new recipes from different cultures and places around the world.

"Cleveland Clinic is a highly supportive workplace for scientists where I can also find valuable mentorship and gain access to various funding opportunities.“ – Dr. Gao
Rachel Hohe hails from Indianapolis, Indiana. In May 2020, she graduated from Purdue University with her Bachelor's degree in Biochemistry from the College of Science and a Certificate in Entrepreneurship & Innovation from the School of Management. A few months later in July of 2020, she began her graduate school journey in the Molecular Medicine (MMED) PhD program here at Lerner.

She chose to pursue her studies in the MMED program after meeting current students and faculty. Each person had a diverse background with a contagious passion for their work. The unique opportunity to engage with world-class physicians at the Cleveland Clinic was another important factor given Rachel's desire for her research to have a translational aspect. Rachel is now a member of the Mark Brown Lab in the Department of Cardiovascular and Metabolic Sciences (CVMS) after officially joining the lab in May of 2021. In the lab, she is working to understand the role of ASTER-C, a member of a newly identified class of proteins involved in intracellular cholesterol transport.

With her work, she hopes to understand how ASTER-C might contribute to whole body cholesterol homeostasis in atherosclerosis and glucocorticoid-induced metabolic disturbance. To this latter goal, she has completed her first mouse experiment where she acutely treated wild-type and global ASTER-C knockout mice with a synthetic glucocorticoid receptor agonist.

Having passed her qualifying exam in January and recently presented her work at the CVMS Fellow's Seminar Series, Rachel is excited to continue her lab work, begin preparing grant applications for NIH and AHA predoctoral fellowships, and present her work at an academic conference or two this year.

In addition to her lab work, Rachel keeps busy hiking and mountain biking in Cuyahoga Valley National Park, experimenting with recipes, playing tennis, and cuddling with her cat, Miso.

“Each person [in the Molecular Medicine PhD Program] had a diverse background with a contagious passion for their work.”
Upcoming Events

LEADERS 2022 Seminar Series

LERNER EXPERIENCE IN ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT
OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH SKILLS

From LRI Trainee to Science Writer

- 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: Kymberleigh Romano, PhD
Assistant Scientific Director, ProEd Communications

WHEN: May 9, 2022
4:00 - 5:00 PM

WHERE: Zoom (Contact RETC@ccf.org for link)

Attend this session to receive credit towards the Science Communications Track certificate!
Save the date for our upcoming virtual Town Hall!
Dr. Erzurum will share leadership updates, including the latest on our space planning and constructions projects. Meet new staff who have recently joined LRI. Learn about the QHS Department from Dr. Mike Kattan in our new “Getting to Know” series, in which we’ll take an in-depth look at one of our departments.

Do you have questions for Dr. Erzurum or Dr. Kattan?
Email them to us at LRICommOffice@ccf.org

Thursday, May 12
11:00 – 12:00 p.m.

Join virtually on Webex
Link provided via email and on intranet.lerner.ccf.org
Upcoming Events

MMED Annual Student Showcase

Molecular Medicine PhD Program

12th Annual Student Showcase

Friday, June 3rd | 3-6pm | LRI Commons

Featuring posters from all students and oral presentations from 5th year students:

- Abigail Dooley
- Shuai Fu
- Stephanie Kim
- Gabrielle Mey
- Dean Pontius

Refreshments will be provided. Masking and social distancing required.

Questions? Contact molmedphd@ccf.org
Graduate Student Appreciation Week

- Alan Chen

Graduate Student Appreciation Week (GSAW) is an annual celebration of graduate students and all the hard work that they contribute. This year GSAW was held April 4th through the 8th. The Lerner Trainee Association (LTA) in collaboration with the Research Education and Training Center (RETC) came together and prepared several events throughout the week to celebrate graduate students. Graduate students at Lerner were able to explore a career development opportunity in industry by hearing from seminar speaker Dr. Andrew Whittle, sign up for a free professional headshot and cuddle with Lucy and Sparkle, two greyhounds brought by volunteers at CCF Caring Canines. Lerner graduate students were also able to participate in a daily raffle by answering questions on Cleveland trivia for a chance to win various prizes from backpacks to t-shirts to water bottles. Prizes were awarded to Ruipeng Wei, Kaitlyn Daff, Ellie Lamkin, Johnathan Sturgis, and Khalil Almotah. Congratulations to the winners and thank you to all who participated! Finally, aside from these events, graduate students were also sent daily “Grad-itude Grams” and were given goodie bags throughout the week. The following pictures are only a snapshot of the many messages of thanks that the students received this year! The LTA and RETC hoped that all graduate students had a great GSAW! Keep up the good work and we can’t wait to celebrate with you again next year!

Celebrating the Invaluable Contributions of 130+ Graduate Students
Happy Graduate Student Appreciation Week!

GSAW
2022

Week of April 4th - 8th, 2022
Now Hiring

Postdoctoral Positions in the Motion Study Laboratory | Cleveland VA | Cleveland, OH
Immediate NIH-funded Post-Doctoral Researcher positions are available in the Department of Biomedical Engineering at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland Ohio in the areas the design, optimization, and experimental demonstration of control systems for peripheral nerve stimulation for improving motor function after paralysis. Work will take place at the Motion Study Laboratory of the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center with a dynamic interdisciplinary team led by Drs. Musa Audu and Ron Triolo that conducts federally funded research ranging from basic neural control of movement to development and testing of advanced neuroprosthetic systems that automatically ensure seated, standing and walking stability. Candidates should have (1) good working knowledge and application of dynamic systems, feedback control theory, and optimization; (2) experience with collection and analysis of kinematic and kinetic data from able-bodied and volunteers with neuromusculoskeletal disabilities, and (3) familiarity with musculoskeletal modeling in the OpenSim environment and MATLAB/Simulink real-time control programming. Strong interpersonal and written/oral communication skills are required. Please send a 1) personal research statement, 2) full CV, 3) sample publication, and 4) list of three references to: CAREERS@APTCENTER.ORG

Staff Scientist I | Children’s National | Washington, DC
The Staff Scientist I is a junior career research position that reports to the principal investigator. The Staff Scientist I conducts research of significant scientific value in the basic or translational sciences and brings specialized skills, knowledge and experience to research programs or core laboratories. This position performs a variety of laboratory research, education and management tasks, including training technical staff, students, fellows and physicians in laboratory procedures and assisting the principal investigator in writing grant applications and publications. For more information click here.

Research Fellow – Gastroenterology & Hepatology | Mayo Clinic | Jacksonville, FL
The Postdoctoral Research Fellow will work on a novel, innovative, non-viral gene therapy technology under the leadership of Dr. Vivek Kumbhari. Such a non-viral gene therapy would serve as an alternative to viral vectors, including AAV, used in clinical trials today. The current research group consists of a team of MD/PhD-trained physician scientists from diverse specialties. The project would focus on developing gene therapy into the liver using ERCP, testing the technology in pig and non-human primate models. A major focus of the candidate will be developing a gene therapy for hemophilia B in addition to other rare diseases. For more information click here.

Lead Research Specialist | Dow | Midland, MI
As the Lead Research Specialist, you will support and/or lead projects of variable duration with a focus on fundamental understanding, experimental investigation, practical technology scale-up, and implementation to manufacturing. The projects will be time driven and involve working cross functionally with Product Development, TS&D, and Tech Center/M&E to develop customer-focused solutions. Previous experience with lab- and pilot-scale research and commercialization would be beneficial. It is essential that the candidate understands all aspects of safety, including process safety, reactive chemicals, and industrial hygiene. Opportunities exist for role expansion and becoming a subject matter expert based on development of relevant expertise. For more information click here.

Scientific Writer | Bristol Myers Squibb | Princeton, NJ; Berkeley Heights, NJ
To coordinate and author documents needed for regulatory submissions, ensuring the coordination and integration of the scientific, medical, and regulatory input from cross-functional team members.
Key responsibilities include: Coordinate and author regulatory documents ensuring the coordination and integration of the scientific, medical, and regulatory input from development team members; Participate in relevant document subteam(s) and ensure effective planning and management of timelines for all components of assigned documents. For more information click here.
Congratulations to William (BJ) Massey from the Mark Brown Lab in the Department of Cardiovascular and Metabolic Sciences!

BJ recently published a paper titled “Flavin-Containing Monooxygenase 3 (FMO3) Is Critical for Dioxin-Induced Reorganization of the Gut Microbiome and Host Insulin Sensitivity" in the journal Metabolites as part of their part of their special issue: Insights into How Gut Microbial Metabolites Regulate Innate Immune Responses. Click Here.

Congratulations to Dr. Lucas Osborn from the Mark Brown and Jan Claesen Labs in the Department of Cardiovascular and Metabolic Sciences!

Dr. Osborn is moving to Children’s Hospital Los Angeles to start a Medical and Public Health Microbiology Fellowship. This position includes training in clinical and public microbiology, infectious diseases, infection control and prevention, and laboratory administration. "This career track has been my goal for quite some time so having two mentors who were fully supportive was paramount."

Congratulations to Himanshu Dashora from the Jennifer Yu Lab in the Department of Cancer Biology!

Himanshu recently won the Society for Thermal Medicine (STM) Scholar-In-Training Award at STM Virtual Annual Meeting 2022. The title of the talk was "Clinical trial protocol: Is Expediting Laser Interstitial Thermal Therapy and Chemoradiation for Patients with High-Grade Gliomas Safe?"

We love celebrating trainee accomplishments! To submit your own news or to recognize someone else, email LRITraineeAssoc@ccf.org
Congratulations to Dr. Nicholas Sarn from the Charis Eng Lab in the Department of Genomic Medicine!

Dr. Sarn was recently awarded the Arthur F.W. Hughes Award in Development and Embryology from Case Western Reserve University for his work characterizing the function of PTEN in microglia. Previously unknown, he showed that PTEN is essential in regulating the process of synaptic pruning, phagocytosis and microglia activations in these cells.

Congratulations to Dr. Gaurav Chauhan from the Hannelore Heemers Lab in the Department of Cancer Biology!

Dr. Chauhan received the 2022 National Cancer Center Fellowship as the principal investigator for the project titled “Deciphering the role for PKN1-SRF signaling in deregulated gene expression and splicing events in treatment resistant prostate cancer”. The goal of this project is to understand altered transcriptional and post-transcriptional events under the control of specific factors in treatment sensitive and resistant prostate cancer conditions.
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](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, Kaitlyn Daff, William (BJ) Massey, Anthony Santilli, PhD, and Juan Venegas, MD

Lerner Trainee Association Leadership Council

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
Members: Sumit Bhutada, Ian Houlihan, and Priya Putta

Mentorship/Advocacy
Co-Chairs: Raneem Khedraki, Jia Liu, Morgan McGrath, Akhil Mohan
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