ACTION AGAINST RACISM AT NKI

Contributed by the NKI Action Against Racism Committee (AARC) *

Following the murder of George Floyd during the summer of 2020, there ensued national and global protests calling for social justice and, specifically, an end to racism against Black Americans. The Nathan Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research (NKI) responded to this call. Institute Director Dr. Don Goff, and Dr. Crystal Lewis, Division Head of Social Solutions & Services Research, convened a cross-department advisory group to address issues related to the pursuit of diversity and equity at NKI. The NKI Anti-Racism Workgroup consists of ten members who are socially and demographically diverse across ages, races and ethnicities, genders, immigration histories, and religious backgrounds. On September 23, 2020, the workgroup began virtual meetings to share experiences at NKI and build consensus on strategies to create an antiracist organizational culture at NKI, and to identify overarching target areas for the applications of these strategies.

To aid in this effort, the workgroup developed an assessment that can serve as the foundation for Recommendations for Institute Leadership comprised of actionable strategies to build a diverse and equitable work environment at NKI.

Join an AARC workgroup!
- Women in Science
- Education & Training
- Brown Bag / Journal Club
- Seminar / Grand Rounds

Implementation of the NKI Cultural Climate Assessment

In February 2021, the NKI Anti-Racism Workgroup drafted and finalized the NKI Cultural Climate Assessment, which was administered to NKI employees using a web-based survey platform (REDCap). This voluntary 50-item survey ascertained information across the following domains: (1) experiences of institutional characteristics relating to respect and appreciation; (2) level of diversity and representation; and (3) experiences of stigma and discrimination in the
workplace. The assessment was completed in December 2022 and included a total of 193 surveys, of which 90% (n=173) were completed and analyzed by an independent data analyst. On February 28th, the NKI Cultural Climate Assessment results were presented to a “standing room” only conference room including approximately 100 employees, some of whom viewed the town hall virtually. These results will later be shared in a final report format.

The Cultural Climate Assessment has already begun shaping initial steps in our journey to create a more welcoming, inclusive, and equitable work environment at NKI. First, the Anti-Racism Workgroup will now officially exist as the NKI Action Against Racism Committee (AARC) and will support four interest groups open to all NKI staff:

(1) Women in Science  
(2) Education & Training  
(3) Journal Club  
(4) Seminar/Webinar/Roundtable Series.

And second, the NKI-AARC will work more closely together with the Community Building Committee (CBC) to share support resources given our similar overarching goal of creating a healthy work culture at NKI.

If you would like to join our efforts and can carve out time on a Wednesday afternoon at 3pm (monthly or less) to develop and organize our efforts for one of the four AARC interest groups, please notify Stuart Moss.

*NKI AARC Members:*

Crystal Lewis (Chair)  
Don Goff (Co-Chair)  
Alexandre Franco  
Matthew Hopmman  
Helen-Maria Lekas  
Katlyn Nemani  
Karya Ottey  
Kerstin Pahl  
Tarek Sobeih  
Sharifa Williams

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**GRANTS RECEIVED**

**NIH National Institute on Aging**

Dr. Stephen Ginsberg (Dementia Research), in collaboration with co-PI Grace E. Stutzmann (Rosalind Franklin University), received a three-year RF1 from the National Institute on Aging titled “Septohippocamal connectome dysfunction in Down syndrome associated with Alzheimer’s disease pathophysiology.”

**NIH National Institute of Mental Health**

Dr. Robert Sears (Emotional Brain Institute) received an R01 from the National Institute of Mental Health titled, “Brainstem modulation of proactive coping,” with a subcontract to NKI.

**Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development**

Dr. Catia Teixeira (Emotional Brain Institute) received an R01 from the Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development entitled “Role of PFC Activity in the Behavioral Deficits Induced by Maternal Separation,” with a subcontract to NKI.

**SAMHSA Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

Dr. Crystal Lewis (Social Solutions & Services), in collaboration with Flushing Hospital, received a grant from SAMHSA titled “Community-Driven Approaches to Address Factors Contributing to Structural Racism in Public Health.”
**Ralph Nixon**, Director of the Center for Dementia Research, was one of the scientific organizers of a recent Keystone Symposium held at Snowbird Resort in Utah. The topic of the three day symposium was “Autophagy and Neurodegeneration: Mechanisms to Therapies”. In addition to organizing, Dr. Nixon gave a presentation and co-chaired two workshops.

Dr. Nixon notes that “The links between neurodegenerative diseases and autophagy disruption as a pathogenic driver in many cases have been broadly recognized. This meeting represents the first major international conference dedicated to the rapidly evolving progress toward targeting these processes therapeutically. The program offered initial glimpses of promising clinical translation originating from surging industry interest in autophagy modulation as therapy in the field of neurodegeneration. It featured new findings from a multidisciplinary panel of academic and industry speakers and a combination of conceptual themes spanning from basic biology of neuronal and glial autophagy to translational medicine and therapeutics. Appreciation of the brain’s special vulnerabilities to autophagy dysfunction has grown and promising therapeutic responses to autophagy modulation in major neurodegenerative disorders are emerging from preclinical studies.”

Training sessions were held last month in the library for new equipment received by the Center for Biomedical Imaging and Neuromodulation (C-BIN). These are the first pieces of equipment purchased with a 2022 S10 grant (Transcranial focused ultrasound platform for noninvasive neuromodulation). Steve Frey from Rogue Research in Canada provided the training on a neuronavigation system called **Brainsight**, which allows for MRI-based brain navigation to plan the placement of Transcranial Focused Ultrasound stimulators or TMS devices. The system enables real-time navigation around a subject to see where the devices are pointing at in the brain.

Training was offered to members of the community who are interested in neuromodulation, including Emily Stern’s lab, Arielle Tambini, and C-BIN.

*Contributed by Arnaud Falchier, PhD*
Helen Scharfman and Swati Jain (Dementia Research) are coauthors of this open access paper published in Neuron.


Matthew Hoptman and colleagues (Clinical Research) published their latest findings in this letter in Schizophrenia Research. The authors found that emotion-related impulsivity (urgency) is related to suicidal ideation in schizophrenia. Dr. Hoptman notes that “urgency mediated the relationship between depressed symptoms in schizophrenia and suicidal ideation, consistent with his prior work in violence (Hoptman et al., 2014), and suggests that urgency plays an important role in emotionally dysregulated behavior.”


Laura Bragdon, Goi Khia Eng, Nicolette Recchia, Katherine Collins, and Emily Stern (Clinical Research) published this review in the March issue of Psychiatric Clinics of North America.


Marcin Leszczynski, Charles Schroeder, and other members of the Translational Neurosciences Lab (Center for Biomedical Imaging & Neuromodulation) published their latest work recently in Current Biology.


Donald Wilson, Director of the Emotional Brain Institute, coauthored this article in The Neuroscientist with Wen Li of Florida State University.

**Michael Milham**, Director of the Center for Biomedical Imaging & Neuromodulation, is a senior author of this report in *Child & Adolescent Psychiatry & Mental Health*.


**Dr. Milham** is also a coauthor of this international study on COVID-19 and autism appearing in *Molecular Autism*.


**Vinod Yaragudri, Henry Sershen, Janelle Cange**, and **Ria Sah** are coauthors of this article published in *Frontiers in Pharmacology*, reporting the finding of a sex-dependent effect of psilocybin on ethanol consumption in mice.


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**Alzheimer's Research & Therapy**

This open access article appearing in *Alzheimer's Research & Therapy* is by **Daniel Javitt, Antigona Martinez, Pejman Sehatpour, Dalton Bermudez** (Schizophrenia Research), and colleagues.


**Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews**

Another recent paper by **Dr. Javitt** (Schizophrenia Research) and colleagues was published in *Neuroscience & Biobehavioral Reviews*.


**Xiuli Zhang** (first author), **Mariko Saito** (corresponding author), and several NKI coauthors (Neurochemistry, Emotional Brain Institute) published this new paper in *Neurochemical Research*.

This recent paper by Renée Hartig and Henry Evrard (Biomedical Imaging & Neuromodulation), along with their colleague from the Max Planck Institute, appears in Frontiers in Neuroscience. Dr. Hartig notes that “This paper presents quantifiable characteristics of the macaque monkey gustatory connectome in the central nervous system and its organization as a tri-modular network, which may reflect the general medial-lateral-subcortical organization of salience and interoception processing networks.”


INFO UPDATE

The Network of the National Library of Medicine (NNLM) recently held a series of four 90-minute online classes on the topic of How PubMed Works. These classes are now available on demand, and recordings of the classes can be found on YouTube. The four class modules (with video links) are:

1) Introduction
2) Selection
3) MeSH (Medical Subject Headings)
4) ATM (Automatic Term Mapping)

ClinicalTrials.gov, a resource provided by the U.S. National Library of Medicine, is a database of privately and publicly funded clinical studies conducted around the world. The site is being revamped, and you can learn about these changes in the upcoming ClinicalTrials.gov Modernization Public Meeting, which will provide a detailed look at the current beta site and share overall progress on modernization. This virtual public meeting will take place on Tuesday, April 25 from 12:30 p.m. to 3 p.m.

The NKI librarian is always available to assist with literature searching, citation searching (Web of Science, Scopus), bibliographic reference management, and the like. When you have any information needs, or questions about available resources, don’t hesitate to turn to us.

The library offers a comfortable, quiet space for reading, work, and small meetings. To use the library’s Wi-Fi network, ask the library staff for the password.

You can link to the NKI Library’s website from myNKI. The Library site includes quick links to the NYU Health Sciences Library and to the New York State Library, as well as links to NKI’s own library resources (journal finder, online catalog, etc.).
**EVENTS AND SEMINARS**

**Center for Dementia Research Neuroscience Seminar Series**

Held on Thursdays in the NKI conference room.

Yadong Huang, MD, PhD
Gladstone Institute of Neurological Disease

*ApoE4 and Alzheimer’s Disease: Potential Mechanisms and Therapeutic Strategies*
April 20th, 10:00 am

Martin Picard, PhD
Columbia University

*Mitochondrial Psychobiology and the Brain*
April 27th

**Center for Biomedical Imaging and Neuromodulation Science Series**

Held on Mondays at 11 am via Zoom

https://childmind.zoom.us/j/2142826575?pwd=dXISeDRCaW9RNWRpZ2R5Y0dPQkw4UT09

Shervin Savafi, PhD
Max Planck Institute
June 5th

Jeremy Barry, PhD
University of Vermont
June 12th

**NKI Science Day**

Tuesday, May 16th, 2023
1:00 am – 5:00 pm

*From Live Brain Imaging to Electron Microscopy, and Everything in between, we do it here at NKI! Come and see what your fellow NKI Researchers are studying!*

Science Day will bring together faculty, staff, and trainees from all departments at NKI to raise awareness of the ongoing research activities throughout the Institute.

**Statewide Grand Rounds**

The New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) regularly hosts an interactive video broadcast covering the latest research, technology, and treatment implementation in the fields of psychiatry and psychology. These programs are recorded, and the archived Statewide Grand Rounds programs can be viewed on the OMH website.
NYU Langone Health Annual Psychopharmacology Review

NKI faculty were among the presenters at the 2023 NYU Langone Health Annual Psychopharmacology Review held on March 4th. Dan Iosifescu (Clinical Research) presented on unipolar depression; Ayana Jordan (Social Solutions & Services) presented on substance use disorders; and Jean-Pierre Lindenmayer (Manhattan Schizophrenia Research) presented on schizophrenia.

Pasquale D’Acunzo, PhD (Levy Lab, CDR) presented at the NYU Neuroscience Weekly Group Meeting in February on “Chronic Cocaine Exposure Perturbs the Mitochondrial, Endosomal, and Extracellular Vesicle Pathways in the Brain”.

2023 Eastern Association of Electroencephalographers (EAEEG)

Christos Lisgaras, PhD (Scharfman Lab, CDR) presented at the 2023 Eastern Association of Electroencephalographers (EAEEG) Annual Meeting in February in Burlington, Vermont.

Dr. Lisgaras also recently gave a talk online for Open Box Science. His presentation on “A Novel Electrophysiological Biomarker in Animal Models of Alzheimer’s Disease” can be viewed on YouTube.

NKI PUBLICATIONS UPDATE

Below is a list of references that have been added to the NKI publications database since the previous update. The full database contains over 7,100 items dating back to 1995 and can be searched from the myNKI website.


