

Women in Neurosurgery

Summer 2024 Newsletter





Executive Leadership



Chair: Maryam Rahman, MD
University of Florida Health, Gainesville, FL



Chair-Elect: Laura Snyder, MD
Barrow Neurological Institute, Phoenix, AZ



Secretary: Kimberly Price Kicielinski, MD
Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC



Treasurer: Rupa Juthani, MD
Neurosurgeons of New Jersey, NYU Langone, New York, New York



Member-At-Large: Aurora S. Cruz, MD, MBA
University of Louisville, Louisville, KY



Member-At-Large: Corinna Zygourakis, MD
Stanford Medicine, Palo Alto, CA



Faculty Editor: Alia Hdeib, MD
Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH

Additional Contributors



Marissa Kruk, MS4
WINS Medical Student Committee Newsletter Coordinator

- Reyna Escalante, OMS2
- Sangami Pugazenthi, MS4
- Erin Walker, MS3

Chair's Message

We stand on the shoulders of true giants. Due to the resilience and work by female leaders in neurosurgery in the prior decades, Women in Neurosurgery (WINS) is now an established AANS/CNS section. This feat was achieved through hard work by BABs, who continue to lead the field of neurosurgery. WINS now boasts of almost 600 members, administers 10 annual awards that support women at all stages of training, and has a robust portfolio of programming. Our programming includes the online “Residency match series” and “Introduction to Neurosurgery” series. At the CNS and AANS we offer multiple interactive seminars. WINS also has a newly developed medical student committee (MSC) which has injected our organization with tremendous energy and creativity.

The time is now for us to determine what we are to do with our newly found privilege. In the United States, the barriers for women to choose a career in neurosurgery have never been lower. The momentum around promoting women to achieve in heavily male-dominated industries is at all time high. We can harness this momentum. We must harness this momentum. WINS members are high-achieving and are capturing the attention of people inside and outside of neurosurgery. What should we do with our collective power?

This has become a question that all of us will need to answer over our lifetimes, individually and collectively. My goals for this next year will be to use the communal influence and power of WINS to lift those are early in their struggle to be accepted in the field of neurosurgery. The barriers for those affected by systemic racism, biases based on sexual orientation, and others are still enormous. Overcoming these barriers will require hard work and collaboration with other groups who share our vision of having a diverse neurosurgical work force that delivers the highest quality patients care to those from all backgrounds. Please join us in this work. You can get involved with WINS through the medical student or resident committees, or by attending our biannual executive committee meetings at the AANS and CNS annual meetings, joining our online educational series or reaching out to me via email.

I am in awe of the people on the ground, doing the heavy-lifting of taking care of patients, teaching, performing research and advocating for underrepresented groups in neurosurgery. Keep fighting the good fight. Win with WINS.

Sincerely,

Maryam Rahman, MD

Maryam Rahman, MD
Department of Neurological Surgery
University of Florida

CNS 2024 *Preview*

Mark your calendars! We hope to see you in Houston, Texas for the WINS Events at the 2024 CNS Annual Meeting. Attendings, fellows, residents, and medical students of all genders are welcome to attend:

Sunday, September 29th

- **SYM18A: Maximizing Your Neurosurgical Employment Opportunities**
- **SYM18B: Harnessing the Power of Media to Cultivate a Parallel Career and Augment Your Practice**
- **WINS Executive Committee Meeting**
 - 1:30-3:30PM, Sugarland A/B Room, Floor 3, Marriott Marquis Houston

Monday, September 30th

- **WINS Volunteering Event**
 - 7:00-10:00AM, Beacon of Houston
- **M03: Career, Kids, Loss and Chaos: Managing Neurosurgery and Life**
- **WINS Reception**
 - Time and Location to be Announced
- **WINS Medical Student Social**
 - 7:30-9:00PM, Location to be Announced

Tuesday, October 1st

- **LGBTQIA+WINS Breakfast Seminar**
- **T16: Optimizing Neurosurgical Excellence: Strategies for Peak Performance**
- **Interactive Poster Presentation Sessions**

Wednesday, October 2nd

- **Navigating Organized Neurosurgery: Pathways for Medical Students**
- **Building your Personal Value Proposition within an Evolvingly Diverse Landscape: Leadership, Advocacy, and Carving a Space for Minority Perspectives in Neurosurgery**

Scan this QR code to learn about the WINS events at CNS 2024, view the WINS website, and more:



Community Updates

Attendings

WINS Women of the Month

Enjoy these highlights and photos from our recent WINS Woman of the Month social media posts:



Dr. Zarina Ali

Dr. Ali serves as the Chief of Neurosurgery at Penn Presbyterian Medical Center. She is Co-Director of the multidisciplinary Penn Nerve Center, an Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery at the Perelman School of Medicine, and a Senior Fellow of the Leonard Davis Institute of Health Economics. When asked about the challenges she has had to face as a woman in neurosurgery, she reflected on the fact that most people, including patients, are surprised that women neurosurgeons exist. She also discussed the biases surrounding working moms that add an additional layer of complexity to challenging social norms. Despite this, she finds that her value as a neurosurgeon is enhanced by both her gender and role as a mother.



Dr. Sophia Shakur

Dr. Shakur currently practices at Tidal Health in Salisbury, MD. She was awarded the Louise Eisenhardt Award in 2014 and 2016 by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons and the Sherry Apple Award in 2015 by the Congress of Neurological Surgeons. Her favorite surgical case to perform is clipping a brain aneurysm, because it is an elegant procedure. When asked what advice she would give for women pursuing a career in neurosurgery, she stated: "You can accomplish anything if you set your mind to it."



Dr. Rushna Ali

Dr. Ali is an Associate Professor and Director of the Stereotactic and Functional Neurosurgery Fellowship at Mayo Clinic, Rochester. She decided to pursue neurosurgery because it is a perfect interplay of complex anatomy and physiology with advanced technical skills. When asked what accomplishment she is most proud of, Dr. Ali described how helping patients get their quality of life back through constant innovation and clinical excellence has been a true privilege and joy. A fun fact about Dr. Ali is that she has taken up skydiving to overcome her fear of heights!



Dr. Amanda Sarartsis

Dr. Sarartsis is an Associate Professor of Neurological Surgery and Pediatrics at Indiana University School of Medicine. Her favorite surgical cases to perform are a tethered cord release and a posterior fossa decompression for Chiari malformation. When asked about the challenges she has had to face as a woman in neurosurgery, she discussed her experience blazing a trail as the only female in her residency training program. She also reflected on the challenges she faces as a female clinician-scientist. Despite being underestimated or undermined and having to fight to protect her writing and intellectual property, she has built a strong research program with NIH funding. A fun fact about Dr. Sarartsis is that she was almost cast in the Mickey Mouse Club at the height of its popularity in the 90's!

Spotlight on



A Celebration of Success:

- Congratulations to **Dr. Isabelle Germano** for serving as the first female President of the AANS/CNS Section on Tumors
- Congratulations to **Dr. Deborah Benzil** for being honored with the SNS Distinguished Service Award.
- Congratulations to **Dr. Linda Liao** for her receipt of the prestigious Winn Prize, the highest scientific honor the SNS can bestow on a neurosurgeon.
- Congratulations to **Dr. Sarah Woodrow** for being honored at the national meeting of the Society of Ethiopian Neurological Surgery Professionals for 17 years of volunteerism in spine care.
- Congratulations to **Dr. Roberta Glick** for being awarded the Mark Rosenblum Distinguished Service Award
- Congratulations to **Dr. Kate Drummond** for receiving the Global Neurosurgery Oncology Award

Community Updates

Fellows + Residents + Medical Students

Congratulations

Corner:

· Congratulations to **Dr. Josephine Volovetz** for being honored with the Shelly Timmons Leadership Award.

· Congratulations to **Dr. Gabriela Ruiz Colon** and **Sangami Pugazenthi** for receiving the Karin M. Muraszko Award.

Congratulations to the newly appointed WINS Resident and Medical Student Committee Members:

Resident Committee:

Dr. Nora Kim – Co-Chair
Dr. Nina Yoh – Co-Chair
Dr. Lily Kim – Diversity
Dr. Nicole Silva – Diversity
Dr. Shivani Baisiwala – Events
Dr. Jovanna Tracz – Events
Dr. Megan Cosgrove – Membership
Dr. Katie Kearns – Membership
Dr. Rachel Moor – Research
Dr. Hannah Weiss – Research
Dr. Kathryn Becker – Social Media
Dr. Jessica Campos – Social Media

Medical Student Committee:

Sangami Pugazenthi – Senior Co-President
Erin Walker – Junior Co-President
Anna Kimata – Membership Chair
Yasoda Satpathy – Diversity Chair
Kathleen Botterbush – Research Chair
Megan Bauman – Senior Events Co-Chair
Vidhatri Raturi – Junior Events Co-Chair
Reyna Escalante – Communications Chair
Hannah Black – Events
Aastha Bhavsar – Events
Mackenzie Hagood – Events
Alexandra Demetriou – Events
Angela Mitchell – Events
Alex Kramer – Events
Emilija Sagaityte – Events
Pooja Vanaketesh – Events
Jennifer Ho – Events
Allie Heneiman – Events
Taylor Niznik – Events
Guldaml Kalender – Events
Rosa Burroughs – Communications
Oishika Das – Communications
Marissa Kruk – Communications
Charlotte Michaelcheck – Communications
Liliana Ladner – Communications
Valeria Heredia – Communications
Brooklyn Brekke-Kumley – Communications
Betsy Vasquez – Diversity
Zaynab Sidi Mohamed – Diversity
Christina Rogers – Diversity
Jenna Koenig – Research
Makayla Cox – Research
Logan Muzyka – Research
Regan Shanahan – Research
Taylor Vadset – Membership
Kate Gelman – Membership
Nikki Barrington – Membership
Vidhi Bhatt – Membership

Trainee Tuesday Features



Dr. Jenna Meyer

Dr. Jenna H. Meyer is a PGY-3 at Mayo Clinic Arizona. Her clinical interests include critical care, spine, and pediatrics. She is very passionate about student and resident education, and the prevalence of strong women in neurosurgery. Dr. Meyer loves being outside, sunsets, live music and photography. Given the challenging nature of neurosurgery, she is grateful for friends and family that keep her grounded and help put everything in perspective to allow her to be as good of a team player and provider as possible in the hospital.



Dr. Emma Celano

Dr. Emma Celano is a PGY-7 at The MedStar Health, Georgetown University Hospital. Her clinical interests include skull based surgery, particularly tumors. Dr. Celano has felt a lack of female mentorship in neurosurgery and she hopes to be a good mentor to females who are entering the field.



Dr. Erin Graves

Dr. Erin Graves is a PGY-7 and enfolded endovascular fellow at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia, PA. She is currently a LCDR in the US Navy reserves and will be returning to active duty after graduation. She hopes to maintain a diverse neurosurgical practice, but her clinical interests include stroke and carotid revascularization, cerebral aneurysms and traumatic cerebrovascular injuries. She is a fierce believer in the importance of mentorship in neurosurgery. Dr. Graves is grateful for her husband and two sons, who inspire her everyday!



Dr. Melissa Lannon

Dr. Melissa Lannon is a PGY-4 at McMaster University. Her research interest is in access to neurosurgical care and functional neurosurgery. Her clinical interests include functional neurosurgery and neurocritical care. Dr. Lannon is grateful for organizations like WINS for celebrating women in neurosurgery. As a new mother to an already strong-willed daughter, she is delighted to see such incredible women paving the way for young girls like her in the future, whatever her aspirations may be.



Dr. Megan Finneran

Dr. Megan Finneran is a PGY-6 at Carle Bromenn Medical Center. She has come to love central Illinois and will be remaining there to practice after graduation. Her clinical and research interests focus on maximizing patient outcomes and minimizing recovery time after elective spine surgery. She recently wrote and illustrated a children's book, My First Brain Book, to inspire young girls to see themselves in our amazing field. Outside the OR, Megan loves planning family Olympic events, eating her husband's Italian cooking, and long walks with a good book.



Dr. Rose Fluss

Dr. Rose Fluss is a PGY-4 at the Montefiore Medical Center in the Bronx, NY. She is invested in medical education and minimally invasive spine techniques. As a former teacher, she plans to design and introduce innovative curriculum and training programs. Her main interest is in improving the efficiency of surgical techniques and practices while building effective communication between surgeons and patients. Outside the hospital, she is a proud mother to two beautiful children who, along with her husband, bring more joy into her life than she ever imagined. In her free time, Rose enjoys hiking and yoga and aspires to hold the title of the best mezze-making neurosurgeon.



Dr. Angie Zhang

Dr. Angie Zhang is a PGY-5 at The University of California Irvine. She is interested in tumor, skull base, and spine surgery, but really loves it all! Dr. Zhang has really enjoyed mentoring and getting to know her "WINies", and has felt it has been a privilege to reflect on and share her experiences as a woman in neurosurgery and help foster a supportive environment for women physician surgeons. In her free time, she enjoys being outdoors, traveling, hiking, and paddleboarding. She is very excited for two major life updates: getting married in June and starting chief year in July!



Dr. Diane Aum

Dr. Diane Aum is a PGY-6 at Washington University in St. Louis. Her interests include pediatrics, functional neurosurgery and neuro oncology. In her free time, Dr. Aum enjoys hiking, playing guitar, gardening, and hanging out with her two dogs. Dr. Aum shares that she would not be where she is today if it were not for all the support and encouragement of her mentors. She is forever grateful and hopes to do her best to pay it forward.

WINS Legacy Interview

Featuring Dr. Edie Zusman

How would you describe your journey in neurosurgery?

My interest was originally in learning and memory – I was fascinated by how people think. I thought I would become a neurologist, but I love working with my hands. Once a scalpel was put in my hands, I never gave it back!

I was raised with strong values of giving back to the community. These have continued to guide my career as I care for patients and serve as an educator. Today, I continue to enjoy the day-to-day work of neurosurgery as well as the fulfillment that comes with opening the door for other women in the field.

Throughout the course of your career, what are some of the accomplishments you are most proud of?

In 1999, I served as the 10th Chair of WINS. At that time, there had never been a female neurosurgeon on the AANS Board of Directors. I invited Lynn Martin, former United States Secretary of Labor, to be our WINS speaker. She had worked with companies like Mitsubishi and Deloitte to investigate why women were not being retained and promoted to the C-suite – she found that they were leaving for better job opportunities! We were seeing the same trends in neurosurgery where women were not able to advance based on their merit. Many leaders in field of neurosurgery, including AANS President Stan Pelofsky, attended this WINS meeting. After an inspiring discussion about recruiting the best and brightest in neurosurgery by recruiting from a diverse applicant pool, the WINS Liaison position was created on the AANS Board of Directors. Stan Pelofsky selected me to be the first to serve in this role. I created a rotation for the position where the Immediate Past WINS Chair would assume the role each year. I am proud to say that many incredible women have gained experience in organized neurosurgical leadership through this avenue!

During the COVID pandemic, I realized the shocking prevalence of abuse-related brain injury that has gone unrecognized. I started a non-profit, Safe Living Space, focused on addressing this issue on a national and global scale. I am so proud of this work and would love to collaborate with anyone interested – you can contact me as edie.zusman@neurosciencepartners.org.

As a trailblazing woman in neurosurgery, what are some of the challenges you faced? How did you overcome them?

The biggest challenge was the surprise that even though I had all the wall plaques and credentials, they did not speak for me or make me automatically equal to my male counterparts in neurosurgery. Every day, I had to recognize that I had a double responsibility – one was to be the best neurosurgeon I could be, and the other was to recognize that I was constantly educating patients, colleagues, and staff about the fact that women can be neurosurgeons.

When it comes to working in a biased environment and creating social change, the most important thing is to be excellent. I have found that when you carry the identities of being both a neurosurgeon and a woman, you have an added layer of responsibility.

What does the “Spirit of WINS” mean to you? How have you embodied that throughout your career?

To me, the “Spirit of WINS” means opening the door and holding it open for other women. I have strategically worked to create opportunities for female neurosurgeons. Through my roles in organized neurosurgery, I have collaborated with a team that ensured we were developing, mentoring and promoting very qualified women. In many ways our Women In Neurosurgery organization served as an incredible training ground – where future women leaders developed and advanced their skills necessary to thrive in the top tiers of neurosurgical leadership such as leading parliamentary procedure, organizing value driven meetings/good use of time, developing resources to benefit all of neurosurgery. Together through WINS, we helped empower women leaders in neurosurgery who have and will truly shine.

Through WINS, I have found my Good Old Girls Network (GOGN) – Deb Benzil, Karin Muraszko, and Gail Rosseau. We were all women neurosurgeons who were married with two kids, starting out on the academic ladder, and looking to find our place in the field. We came from four different parts of the country, but by sharing our experiences with each other we found that the challenges we faced were not unique to us as individuals, but often were system issues that needed system solutions. There is nothing compared to the power of having this group of women as my colleagues and dear friends.



What are your aspirations for the future of WINS and the field of neurosurgery as a whole?

When WINS was created, many of us thought it would be senescent within 15 - 20 years. We imagined that one day women would become a mainstream part of the field of neurosurgery. WINS continues to be an essential opportunity for networking and development of leadership skills among women to work towards equitable representation in all aspects of neurosurgery.

What words of wisdom would you like to share with WINS members?

Most of us went into neurosurgery to be the best neurosurgeon we can be. Gender is not a differentiator for the quality of a neurosurgeon that you become. However, our journey includes our identity as women. There is an opportunity to embrace that and recognize that we are educating others every day. This role also comes with the added responsibility of opening the door for the next generation of women neurosurgeons.

What is your most cherished WINS memory?

One of my most cherished WINS memories was when Karin Muraszko became the first female Chair of a neurosurgery department in the United States. It was so inspiring and showed that all of the hard work we put in as women in neurosurgery can pay off.

AANS 2024 *in Review*

We hope you enjoyed the WINS events at this year's AANS Annual Meeting! It was truly an incredible time to connect with colleagues as well as meet new members of the WINS community in Chicago, Illinois.

Our AANS events kicked off with the WINS Executive Board Meeting on Friday, May 3. WINS leadership reviewed updates across the faculty, resident, and medical student committees. We were so impressed by the strides the WINS organization has made in promoting growth and diversity in the field of neurosurgery.

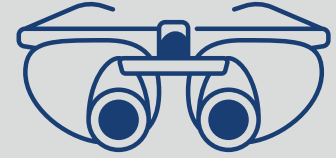
The Women in Neurosurgery Breakfast was held on Saturday, May 4. We were so pleased to be joined by the 2024 Louise Eisenhardt Lecturer Margaret Hoover. Hoover is a political commentator, strategist, media personality, author, host of PBS's Firing Line, and great-granddaughter of Herbert Hoover, the 31st President of the United States. She has served in The White House under President George W. Bush, in the Department of Homeland Security, on Capitol Hill, and on two presidential campaigns. Attendees enjoyed an inspirational, empowering discussion along with a lovely breakfast buffet!

The WINS AANS Reception on Saturday, May 4 was a truly beautiful event with stunning views of the Chicago skyline. It was filled with networking and refreshments atop the 22nd story terrace at VU Rooftop. The WINS community thanked Dr. Ben-Haim for her work this past year as WINS Chair and welcomed Dr. Rahman as incoming Chair. Thank you to our amazing sponsors for supporting the event: Glioblastoma Foundation, Stryker, Medtronic, Medivis, RapidAI, Rosman Search, Thieme.

Our WINS Mentorship in a Minute Program was a continued success at the AANS Annual Meeting. Mentorship in a Minute pairs female medical students with residents or fellows for a 15-minute in-person meeting to discuss their interest in neurosurgery and invaluable career advice. Thank you to the residents and fellows who volunteered to mentor medical students at AANS! We sincerely appreciate your time and advice – you are inspiring and empowering the next generation of WINS.



Stay in the Loupe



Read the latest update on WINS social media initiatives and events:

#WINSxResearchMonday

Have you seen some of the incredible work featured on our WINS social media pages using the hashtag #WINSxResearchMonday? We recently highlighted “A Systematic Review of the State of Neurosurgical Disparities Research: Past, Present and Future” where Pugazenthi et al. bring attention to the need to move beyond solely identifying neurosurgical disparities and toward applied solutions. In “Most Influential Women Neurosurgeons on Twitter”, Raturi et al. analyzed the impact of female neurosurgeons on social media by examining followers, original posts, likes, and retweets. Authors found correlations between H-index, follower count, and post engagement. Furthermore, Adachi et al. explored the importance of retaining female neurosurgery graduates to address the physician shortage and gender inequality in “In-State Retention Rates of Female Neurosurgery Graduates”.

We also featured “Dear Program Director: An Evaluation of Implicit Bias in Letters of Recommendation for Neurosurgery Residency” by Coyle et al. In this study, the linguistics of 827 neurosurgery LORs were retrospectively evaluated to compare themes between male and female applicants. The team found no statistically significant difference between letters for men and women, but that letters for female applicants trended toward more comments centered on personality traits. Notably, <4% of LORs were authored by female neurosurgeons.

Are you conducting research related to diversity, health equity, and novel science in neurosurgery? Share your work with our WINS team by adding #WINSxResearchMonday to your posts!

WINS Medical Student Committee Residency Match Series

The WINS Medical Student Committee Residency Match Series continued with Delivering an Impressive Sub-Internship Research Presentation featuring Dr. Christina Notarianni and Dr. Oren Sagher on June 12. Perspectives On the Neurosurgery Personal Statement: Translating Your Story to Paper was held on July 22. Thank you to Dr. Heather Spader and Dr. Kathryn Kearns for sharing your advice on this essential part of the neurosurgery residency application!

WINS Medical Student Committee Introduction to Neurosurgery Series

The WINS Medical Student Committee Introduction to Neurosurgery Series held an insightful discussion during the newest segment in the series: Work-Life Balance in Neurosurgery. The event was held via Zoom on May 22 and featured Dr. Betsy Grunch and Dr. Lindsay Lasseigne.

How to Get Involved

Are you passionate about equity, diversity, and representation in neurosurgery? Would you like to stay connected with the WINS community? Become a member of WINS! Attendings, fellows, residents, and medical students can follow these instructions to become an official member of the WINS roster:

<https://neurosurgerywins.org/membership/>