



Women in Neurosurgery

Winter 2024 Newsletter



Executive Leadership



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Chair's Message

2024 was a momentous year for WINS. I invite all of you to join in the online webinar series and to peruse this and prior newsletters to get a sense of how much work is being done to increase visibility of women in neurosurgery!

From the Women of the Month series you will learn that even within WINS there is incredible diversity from race, ethnicity, practice type and journey to neurosurgery. These are inspirational stories of women who overcome barriers to achieve great things and use their privilege to help others to achieve their goals as well.

We at WINS pray that you have a peaceful holiday season full of joy, prosperity, success and good health! See you in 2025!

Sincerely,

Maryam Rahman, MD
Department of Neurological Surgery
University of Florida

Community Updates

Attendings

Have you seen our WINS Woman of the Month features? Enjoy these highlights and photos from our recent posts:

Dr. Diana Wilson



Dr. Wilson is a practicing spine surgeon and founder of Fort Worth Neurospine in Texas. When asked what led her to pursue neurosurgery, she described that it was the ability to both work with your hands and use your mind. Dr. Wilson reported that her proudest accomplishments include developing a successful private practice and raising three daughters. Her advice to women pursuing a career in neurosurgery is to develop supportive relationships – with fellow neurosurgeons as well as with friends and family. A fun fact about Dr. Wilson is that she started her academic career as a music major at Northwestern University where she studied saxophone on a scholarship.

Dr. Renée Reynolds



Dr. Reynolds serves at the Residency Program Director and Medical Director of Pediatric Neurosurgical Outreach at the University at Buffalo. Her favorite surgical procedures to perform are her craniofacial cases. When asked what accomplishments she is most proud of, she reflected on building strong, lifelong relationships with patients and mentoring students and residents on their journey into neurosurgery. In addition, she is incredibly proud of having a successful career and family life. She described how there were so many people along her journey who were discouraging and made it feel like it would be impossible to have both. However, she now has five children! She truly believes that being a mother makes her a better physician and having a mom who values her career also instills certain positive attributes into her children.

Do you know a practicing neurosurgeon who we should feature as a WINS Woman of the Month? Scan the following QR code for submissions:



Spotlight on



A Celebration of Success:

- Congratulations to the WINSxMission:Brain Scholars **Dr. Mabel Banson** and **Dr. Winny Mapour**.
- Congratulations to **Dr. Galerah Zadeh** for her impressive publication in Nature Medicine on identifying DNA changes in lung cancer that predict brain metastasis risk.

Career Satisfaction Survey Opportunity:

We are excited to announce a new research project led by Professor Leeat Granek from York University, Toronto focusing on career satisfaction among female neurosurgeons and cardiothoracic surgeons.

Study Details

- Lead researcher: Dr. Leeat Granek, York University
- Method: One-on-one Zoom interview
- Scheduling: Flexible, conducted at your convenience

This study allows a unique opportunity to share your experiences and contribute to a deeper understanding of fulfillment in our demanding specialty. To express your interest or request more information, please contact Dr. Leeat Granek (leeatg@yorku.ca).

Community Updates

Fellows + Residents + Medical Students

Congratulations

Corner:

- Congratulations to **Dr. Lily Kim** for receiving a first-place award for Basic Science Research at the 2024 Korean American Medical Association Scientific Convention “Collaboration in Healthcare” in Seoul, Korea.
- Did you see our Hispanic Heritage Month posts featuring these incredible rising stars in neurosurgery? Read the summary below!



Dr. Catherine Garcia is currently a PGY-4 at Cedars Sinai. As an Afro-Latina in neurosurgery, she described how her identities have shaped both her journey and perspective in the field. Her experiences have driven her to push past barriers, knowing that representation matters – not just for herself, but for others who aspire to be in this space. When asked what advice she has for women pursuing a career in neurosurgery, she said “Your unique background is valuable in medicine, so embrace it to bring diverse perspectives to neurosurgery.”



Dr. Nasya Mendoza-Elias is a PGY-6 at the University of Chicago. When reflecting on how her identities have shaped her career in neurosurgery, she said “It has definitely been exciting to see a patient’s face light up with relief, since I could translate their pathology, and they could finally understand it.” Dr. Mendoza-Elias encouraged women pursuing neurosurgery to remain humble and kind and integrate your experience of being a woman into your practice. A fun fact about Dr. Mendoza-Elias is that she loves dachshunds – she grew up with them, and she can’t wait to get one when she graduates!

Trainee Tuesday Features

Dr. Elvira Lekka



Dr. Elvira Lekka is a PGY-6 at UT Health Houston. Her clinical interests are Oncological Neurosurgery as well as Vascular Neurosurgery. Her research interest is in brain tumors and she completed a 3-year research degree on chemosensitivity testing in malignant gliomas. Her residency with UT Houston is her second, as she completed her first Neurosurgery residency in Manchester, UK where she did her Neurosurgical Oncology Fellowship. Dr. Lekka then moved to the US for family reasons and completed the Endovascular Fellowship at UT Houston prior to starting Neurosurgery residency in 2021. Her message to all the WINS community is: never give up! Outside of Neurosurgery, she enjoys classical music, traveling, playing tennis and spending time with her husband and two daughters.

Dr. Hannah Weiss



Dr. Hannah Weiss is currently a fifth-year neurosurgery resident at NYU Langone. She is interested in pediatric neurosurgery and neuro-oncology. She is currently in her research year, focusing on clinical neuro-oncology projects. She also has an interest in global neurosurgery and enjoys these efforts in her spare time. Dr. Weiss was recently appointed as the Research Co-Chair of the WINS Resident Executive Committee. Outside of neurosurgery, she enjoys exploring surrounding neighborhoods in Brooklyn, going for walks in Prospect Park, visiting the farmers market, playing the cello and going to yoga. She is incredibly grateful to her mentors for providing support and inspiration and she recognizes this is just the beginning, but is excited for the career ahead of her.

Dr. Laura Zima



Dr. Laura Zima is a PGY-6 at UT Health Houston in Houston Texas. She is interested in neurotrauma, and her research interests include TBI, especially the role of epigenetics in TBI. In her spare time she loves exercise: yoga, running and peloton, and reading. Her guilty pleasure is reality TV and early 2000s shows. Dr. Zima wants to convey that learning to be a neurosurgeon is the most incredible honor, and thanks the WINS community for being a source of mentorship and inspiration!

Dr. Victoria Scott



Dr. Victoria Scott is currently a second-year resident at University of Texas Houston. Her clinical interests include pediatric and functional neurosurgery, and she hopes to combine them in her professional practice in the future. In research, Dr. Scott investigates CSF flow dynamics in post-traumatic pediatric patients. She would like to emphasize that having strong mentors is one of the most important aspects of training for her and finding faculty members and co-residents that will support you in your professional and personal goals makes all the difference in neurosurgical education and growth. Dr. Scott loves to ski, hike and try new bourbons as a Kentucky native.

Stay in the Loupe



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

#WINSxResearchMonday

Our WINS Outreach team continues to share findings from recent articles on our social media pages using the hashtag #WINSxResearchMonday! Each week, we are impressed with the new research shedding light on gender-related issues impacting both our neurosurgical workforce and patient population.

We highlighted incredible work that is bridging the gap in surgical mentorship globally, especially for women in low- and middle-income countries. In “Implementing a global mentoring program: A call to action for mentorship in surgery”, Chen et al. describe how by enhancing mentorship programs and combating gender biases, we can empower more women to pursue surgical careers, ultimately strengthening surgical care and improving health outcomes worldwide. We also recently featured “Evaluating neurosurgical society award recipients: An analysis of awardee characteristics with respect to gender, race, education, geographic location, and neurosurgical society”. In this study, Hey et al. found that significant differences exist among winners of neurosurgical society awards with respect to gender, race, ethnicity, degree type, and geographic location – overall, award winners were more likely to be men (83%), Caucasian, and based in the Northeastern United States. Furthermore, Kearns et al. shed light on gender-related publication trends in neurosurgery in “Academic Neurosurgery Gender and Authorship Trends in the United States”. The authors found that women have fewer first-author publications, but they may achieve similar academic recognition through higher-impact publications.

Recent #WINSxResearchMonday posts featured several impressive papers that enhance awareness of gender-related issues in neurosurgical care. In “Gender differences in spine surgery for degenerative lumbar disease: prospective cohort study”, MacLean et al. found that surgery benefitted patients of both genders among a cohort of 5,038 individuals, but female patients were more likely to report increased pain and diminished quality of life. The authors proposed that identifying and addressing gender bias in medical decision-making and outcome reporting may facilitate more equitable healthcare delivery. In addition, we featured a paper that provided new insights into treatment approaches for patients with brain metastases from HER2+ breast cancer. In “Intracranial outcomes following neurosurgical resection in patients with brain metastases secondary to HER2-positive breast cancer versus other subtypes”, Rashid et al. found that patients in this group may benefit from earlier neurosurgical resection compared to other subtypes. Another study called “Association Between Moyamoya Revascularization Surgery and Neurologic Events During Pregnancy: Systematic Review” focused on the intersection of moyamoya disease and pregnancy. Lai et al. found that women who had revascularization surgery before pregnancy had fewer neurologic events during pregnancy, while delivery method did not impact outcomes.

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 Events

The WINS Medical Student Committee has had an extraordinary year, marked by impactful initiatives that have enriched the neurosurgery community and empowered future neurosurgeons. The committee's programs focused on mentorship, education, and advocacy, fostering growth and addressing critical barriers in the field.

One of the committee's signature achievements has been the Residency Match Series, designed to guide students through the complexities of the neurosurgery match process. The session "Neurosurgery Sub-Internships 101: The Logistics," held on November 25th, featured insights from Megan Bauman, Liliana Ladner, and Hannah Black, providing practical advice for excelling in sub-internships. Another session, "Neurosurgery Post-Interview Actions: Communication, Letters, and Rank Lists," on for December 11th, featured Dr. Kerry Brega, Dr. Libby Infinger, and Dr. Akash Patel, addressing crucial post-interview strategies to enhance applicants' success.

The committee also recognized the importance of research in neurosurgical training, hosting "Getting Started on Research: Finding Mentors and Projects" on December 5th. Dr. Rachel Moor and Dr. Jessica Chen shared valuable guidance on initiating impactful research endeavors, offering students actionable steps to develop their academic portfolios.

Beyond these technical aspects, the committee demonstrated its commitment to inclusivity and career exploration through its session "Navigating Neurosurgery: An Insight into Different Practice Types." Featuring Dr. Rachana Tyagi, Dr. Susan Pannullo, Dr. Joan O'Shea, and Dr. Radaline Barnett. This event provided a diverse perspective on practice settings, helping attendees envision their own career paths.

These events, along with the committee's ongoing initiatives, underscore its dedication to fostering a supportive and educational environment. By addressing barriers and enhancing access to resources, the WINS Medical Student Committee has not only prepared its members for neurosurgical careers but has also made a significant impact on the broader neurosurgery community. The committee's efforts continue to inspire and empower, paving the way for a more inclusive and innovative future in neurosurgery.

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/>

WMS wishes you

a happy & healthy

New Year!

