

Women in Neurosurgery

Fall 2025 Newsletter



Chair's Message

Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It is with pride and excitement that we open this edition of our newsletter by again celebrating remarkable women who are making history in neurosurgery. Their skill, dedication, and perseverance are transforming the field and inspiring the next generation of surgeons. Your accomplishments remind us that excellence knows no boundaries — and we congratulate each of you for the extraordinary work you do in the operating room, in research, and in advancing patient care.

We are also delighted to welcome our newly elected officers. Your commitment to service and leadership will help guide us into the future, building on the achievements of those who came before you. We look forward to your ideas, energy, and vision as we continue to grow together.

To our outgoing officers, and specifically to our outgoing Chair, Maryam Rahman, M.D., we extend our heartfelt gratitude. Your hard work, wisdom, and dedication have been instrumental in shaping our progress. You have set a high standard of leadership, and your contributions will be felt for years to come.

As we celebrate the trailblazers among us and embrace the future with new leadership, let us continue to support one another in our shared mission: advancing neurosurgery, celebrating differences in backgrounds and experiences, and delivering the highest possible standard of care for our patients.

With appreciation and respect,

Laura Snyder, MD

Chair, AANS/CNS Joint Section of Women in Neurosurgery

Professor of Neurosurgery

Barrow Neurological Institute, Phoenix, AZ



CNS 2025 Preview

We hope you will join WINS in Los Angeles, CA for the 2025 CNS Annual Meeting!
We have a jam-packed week of events; all attendings, fellows, residents, and medical students of all genders are welcome!

Sunday, October 12th

SYM10A: Navigating Practice: Lessons for Early Career Success and Changing Jobs
8:00-12:00 pm

SYM10B: Maximizing Neurosurgical Careers: Utilizing Expertise, Integrating APPs, and Advancing Career Opportunities
12:45-4:15 pm

Monday, October 13th

WINS/LGBTQ+ Breakfast Seminar: Neurosurgical Leadership: Owing Your Voice at the Table
7:00-8:30 am

WINS Executive Meeting

12:20-1:50 pm, JW Marriott Los Angeles L.A. LIVE – Diamond Ballroom Salon 4

Interactive Poster Presentation Session

4:30-6:00 pm

WINS CNS Reception

6:00-7:30pm, JW Marriott Los Angeles L.A. LIVE – Diamond Ballroom Salon 3

Tuesday, October 14th

Interactive Poster Presentation Session

4:30-6:00 pm

Wednesday, October 15th

Neurosurgical Medical Student Session: Prepared by Medical Students for Medical Students
1:50-3:50 pm

Scan this QR code to learn about the WINS events at
CNS 2025, view the WINS website, and more:



Community Updates

Attendings

WINS EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP



President:
Laura Snyder, MD
Barrow Neurological
Institute, Phoenix, AZ



President-elect:
Kimberly Price
Kicielinski, MD
Medical University of
South Carolina,
Charleston, SC



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



Secretary:
Rushna P. Ali, MD
Mayo Clinic,
Rochester, MN



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



Member-at-Large:
Angela M. Richardson,
MD, PhD
Indiana University,
Indianapolis, IN

Spotlight on



A Celebration of Success

- Congratulations to **Dr. Sepideh Amin-Hanjani** on her role as 2025-2026 AANS Vice President
- Congratulations to **Dr. Renée Reynolds** for her induction as the inaugural Dr. Kevin and Janet Gibbons Endowed Chair
- Congratulations to **Dr. Deborah Benzil** for receiving the Leibrock Lifetime Achievement Award

WINS Woman of the Month Feature

Dr. Nisha Gadgil



Dr. Gadgil is a pediatric neurosurgeon at Texas Children's Hospital and Assistant Professor at Baylor College of Medicine. She finds her most rewarding moments are when her patients come for follow-up visits and show marked improvement. She has succeeded in building a research group, clinical partnership, and surgical program, all the while balancing this with her two children at home! Her advice to future women neurosurgeons? Do not underestimate yourself, be a leader to your peers, and be your #1 cheerleader rather than your biggest skeptic.

Community Updates

Fellows - Residents - Medical Students

Trainee Tuesday



Dr. Kristina Kurker

Dr. Kurker is a 2nd year resident at the University of Illinois - Chicago. She has a clinical interest in Pediatric Neurosurgery. Her research interests include the impact of social determinants of health on neurosurgical outcomes as well as the integration of technology and artificial intelligence in neurosurgical practice. Outside of medicine, Dr. Kurker enjoys weightlifting, dancing, and exploring new restaurants with friends. She is also a proud cat mom!

Resident Initiatives

SCRUBBED OUT

The WINS resident committee introduced "Scrubbed Out" on September 21st, a casual space for medical students to connect with neurosurgery residents, ask questions, and learn about the field in a no-pressure, no-scrubs-required session!

Students were also able to gain valuable mentorship and build connections through the WINS Mentorship Program. Medical student and resident/fellow matches will be meeting throughout the year to discuss how to navigate medical school, residency, and all things neurosurgery!



Medical Student Initiatives

This year, WINS kickstarted the Neurogenesis Leadership Program, a 3-month peer-to-peer initiative that assists medical students without home programs to gain leadership, neurosurgical exposure & hands-on skills. We look forward to seeing what these students accomplish!



Clairice Pearce, MS3
WINS MSC
Newsletter Coordinator

Additional Contributors

- Mackenzie Hagood, MS3
- Editor: Reyna Escalante, OMS3

Congratulations Corner

- Congratulations to **Dr. Kristen Scheitler** for receiving the \$50,000 Neurosurgeon-Scientist Training Program grant
- Congratulations to **Dr. Kathryn Becker** for receiving the Neil Peart Neurosurgery Research Award
- Congratulations to **Dr. Whitney Muhlestein** for receiving the Sonya R. Jacobs Women's Leadership Impact Scholarship

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

Resident Committee:

Dr. Cordelia Orillac – Chair
Dr. Danielle Golub – Diversity
Dr. Nicole Silva – Diversity
Dr. Megan Bauman Graves – Events
Dr. Shivani Baisiwala – Events
Dr. Megan Cosgrove – Membership
Dr. Katie Kearns – Membership
Dr. Rachel Moor – Research
Dr. Kristine Ravina – Research
Dr. Sangami Pugazenthi – Research
Dr. Molly LaFuente – Social Media
Dr. Jessica Campos – Social Media
Dr. Vaibhavi Shah – Social Media

Medical Student Committee:

Erin Walker – Senior Co-President
Vidhatri Raturi – Junior Co-President
Anna Kimata – Membership Chair
Betsy Vasquez – Diversity Chair
Kathleen Botterbush – Research Co-Chair
Jenna Koenig – Research Co-Chair
Emilija Sagaityte – Events Co-Chair
Guldamlal Kalender – Events Co-Chair
Reyna Escalante – Communications Chair

WINS Legacy Interview

Dr. Roxanne Todor

Chief of Neurosurgery at NYC Health + Hospitals/Bronx Healthcare Network
Neurosurgeon at NYC Health + Hospitals/Harlem
Clinical Assistant Professor at Albert Einstein College of Medicine



How would you describe your journey in neurosurgery?

Unexpected, but life changing. When I started out as a medical student, neurosurgery consisted of all men. They were manly men, the cowboys of the medical world. If you wanted to go into neurosurgery, you had to *know* you wanted to go into neurosurgery. There was an underlying message of, “don’t even think about it. As a woman, you’ll never do it.” My medical school did not offer neurosurgery as an elective during my surgical rotation, and so instead I started with trauma surgery. Most people didn’t like it, because it was very scut heavy. In NY, our service had lots of patients. There were vegetative patients who would sit for months, sometimes years, waiting for placement. We had to take care of all of them. There were old fashioned ventilators that you had to troubleshoot. I placed all of the NG tubes. But when I saw my first craniotomy, it sounds cheesy, but when I saw the brain for the first time, it was love at first sight. Still, when I’m taking off dura, I think, wow I can’t believe I’m doing this. When I was on trauma, I found that hard work is appreciated no matter the gender. People on my service were supportive and encouraged me to switch to my interest in neurosurgery.

I took an extra PGY2 year to get the requisites, learned useful skills like how to handle subdurals and drains independently, and I was able to take an open neurosurgery residency position in NY. When I completed residency, I moved to Cleveland Clinic for my Cerebrovascular fellowship, and I later returned to doing neurotrauma back in NY. Right now, my practice mostly consists of neurotrauma, pediatrics, and general neurosurgery. I love teaching and have contributed a lot to the neurotrauma world for the past 30 years.

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

My fellowship at Cleveland Clinic was 2 years long and paid, with 1 year devoted to research, and the other on clinical development. They were very productive years for me. I managed to obtain 4 research abstracts, 2 research awards, and several papers, including my project where we created aneurysms in rats. I also investigated the role of matrix metalloproteinases within aneurysm dome cell walls and saw how they contributed to the inflammation pathways responsible for rupture. I took Cleveland’s microsurgery course to hone my skills. One of my proudest achievements was taking out a very complex AVM by myself. My attending came in at the end, and confirmed I had done a good job, and no additional revisions needed to be made on his end.



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

Despite the impact WINS has made throughout the country, gender disparity within neurosurgery plagues us to this day. I remember instances where I've been talking to the patient, and at the end of the conversation, the patient goes, "and when will the doctor come in?" I remember the first job after my first child, I was working per diem, and the patient asked if I was the neurologist. I responded with, "no, I operate". There is this implicit bias within medicine, but it's now transitioning. WINS has helped us get over the blatant hurdle which was getting women into neurosurgery, but work still remains. Whether you are married or not can determine whether you will be working holidays at some institutions. There is a tendency for women to get stuck doing "mommy care" positions, that is, being part of committees, resident training, and teaching. The pay scale continues to be less than men. We need to address this, because we need to be addressed for the equals we are. I've had my share of frustration over the years, but I try to use a collaborative spirit when I work. I think about all the support I've had and carry it back to my job.

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

To me, the "Spirit of WINS" is a group of strong women trying to improve the lives of patients while simultaneously supporting colleagues and families. We have evolved as a section from just having people to talk to at conferences to addressing the practical aspects of being a neurosurgeon, like growing your own practice (men are interested in these things too!). From there, it was a natural fit to have mentorship follow. I started the initial WINS mentorship program, and at the time, I had no support. I remember I had 50 folders of medical student mentee information and had to find someone in each student's area who would be willing to mentor them. This was very limiting, and I couldn't find a mentor for everyone. But as others got involved, we transitioned to databases, and we now have the mentorship program you see today. AANS even came over and "copied" our ideas! We've grown so much. I see us growing the "Spirit" by continuing to provide mentorship and collaborative interaction.

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

Given the current political climate, I find the role of WINS very necessary. While we have made great strides, there is still work to be done. Neurosurgery reinvents itself; there are new clinical procedures, new technologies, new outcomes. WINS mirrors that. We are a section that evolves. From our first efforts in providing a niche and teaching practical aspects to neurosurgery not taught in medical school, to providing mentorship for medical students, to promoting diversity within the field, we have come so far and will continue to push forward our efforts for gender equity.

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

I am getting ready to drive my child to college this weekend, and I would like to share what I tell them to WINS: No matter how overwhelming it feels at times, you are strong and resilient to have gotten to this point in your life. It is hard to keep a straight path when everything seems to be pulling at you. When you are stressed, it is so easy to fall into bad habits. Balance is important. Break things down into manageable tasks. Make a priority list. Establish boundaries, and follow through. Learn to say no. You don't want regrets.

What is your most cherished WINS memory?

I was incidentally president of WINS for 2 years due to Sherry Apple's passing. I remember during my second year I had brought my youngest, then an infant, to a meeting. I had come with my mother and needed to make sure I had time to breastfeed. It was stressful work; I had organized the WINS reception and worried no one would come. However, before I knew it, the room was filled. There were groups of women chatting. Men in neurosurgery, the "friends of WINS", attended. We were able to recruit women who were initially resistant to joining WINS. They didn't want to be associated with a group of women who needed a "support group" and felt like men would not take them seriously. But we were able to recruit many of these women. My mom came by with daughter. I thought, this is exactly as it should be: we were strong women able to sit and talk about our greatest cases in neurosurgery as well as our families. You could feel like you could do both. WINS stood for women who were just like them. We are women that love neurosurgery and our families.

Dr. Todor, thank you for sharing your accomplishments in and out of the OR!

AANS 2025 in Review

WINS kicked off AANS 2025 on Saturday, April 26th, with our Annual WINS Breakfast. We were honored to be joined by guest speaker Asma Khan, the 2025 Louis Eisenhardt Lecturer, for an inspiring talk on her path to success. Like many women pursuing powerful positions, Asma faced pushback when she set out to open her own restaurant, with banks refusing to give her the support she needed to pursue her dreams due to her late career switch as a woman. However, through her resilience, Asma Khan opened the first Indian restaurant with only women chefs in the kitchen. Hearing her journey was an incredible reminder to all of us that no matter the barriers, we should continue to pursue our dreams if for nothing else than to pave the way for the next generation.



We wrapped up Saturday evening with our Annual WINS x AANS Reception. We were privileged to hear from one of our founding members, Dr. Karin Muraszko, MD, Professor and Former Chair of Neurosurgery at the University of Michigan. Dr. Muraszko reflected on how despite there being such few female neurosurgeons in the past, she received unwavering support from them in her leadership pursuits within neurosurgery. With this support, she became the first female Chair of an academic neurosurgery department. This talk gave us an incredible reminder of the power of community and the challenges we can stand through with the support of one another.



AANS 2025 in Review

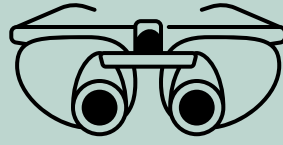


Throughout the weekend, our Mentorship in a Minute program connected resident mentors with medical student mentees. Every year, we are excited to see this program grow. At AANS 2025, we had over 54 participants! The connections built through this program continue to guide the future of neurosurgery as students navigate entering the field as eager learners.

AANS 2025 was an incredible meeting that brought together the many members of our community. Keep an eye out for our events as we approach CNS 2025 in October- it will be a conference to remember!



Stay in the Loupe



Read the latest update on WINS social media initiatives and events

#WINSxResearchMonday

Have you been keeping up-to-date with the latest neurosurgical research? Keep your eyes peeled for our highlighted #WINSxResearchMonday publications that shed light on critical issues in neurosurgery!

“Evaluation of diversity, equity, and inclusion information on US neurosurgery residency program websites”, by Kabangu et al. found that among the 115 neurosurgery residency programs, only 35 met at least one DEI criterion, emphasizing the need for greater transparency and commitment to DEI initiatives within neurosurgical training. “Female authorship in high-impact spine surgery journals”, by Deaver et al. showed that publications with a female senior author yielded a higher proportion of female first authors, underscoring the need for targeted strategies to overcome barriers to female advancement in spine surgery. In “From interest to advancement: confronting structural inequities facing women in spine surgery” Charles et al. discuss actionable strategies to address gender inequities and promote systemic change across institutions, training programs, and professional organizations.

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

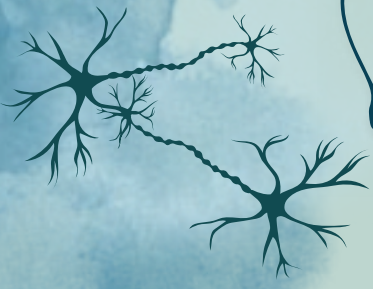
WINS Medical Student Committee Events

The WINS Medical Student Committee has continued to inspire and equip medical students for their careers in neurosurgery through hosted online events. On July 29th, “Storytelling Through the Neurosurgery ERAS Application: Personal Statement & Supplemental Questions” featured Dr. Renee Reynolds and Dr Erin McCormack and provided students insight on how to communicate their own path to neurosurgery. Over 90 medical students attended!

To further prepare our rising M4s for application season, Drs. Judy Huang, Wenya Linda Bi, Kathleen Dlouhy, and Bethany Andrews led our session “Navigating ERAS: Strategies for Success” on September 2nd. Be sure to check out “Acing Your Interview” in October!

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:



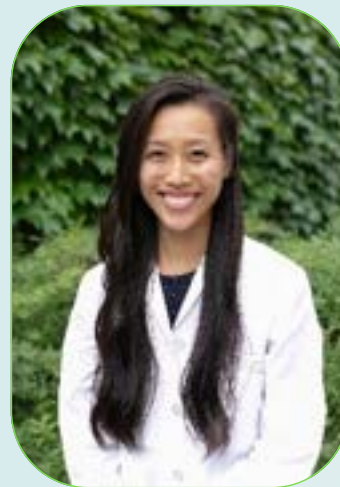


Pathways to **SUCCESS**



Clinical Pearls and Day-In-The-Life Tips for Budding Neurosurgeons

My biggest tip is to develop an efficient workflow as an intern/junior resident. It takes practice and time to get used to the demanding level and volume of work expected of a neurosurgery resident and establishing good habits early is essential for long-term success. As your efficiency improves, you gain more time daily to focus on learning anatomy, indications, technique, management, etc.



Sophia Peng, PGY 7
University of Illinois -
Chicago

Dr. Peng is in her final year of residency and is currently pursuing an enfolded neuroplastics fellowship. She is a strong proponent for patient advocacy and plans to pursue general neurosurgery upon graduation. She enjoys the great outdoors and has visited all US national parks!

My 2nd tip is to always put your patients first. Collegiality is important, however, you do not show up to work to be friends with everyone - never be afraid to speak up or advocate for your patients and the care they deserve.

Lastly, respect your senior residents and attendings and develop positive relationships early - they have already walked the path you are on and can provide valuable insight on how to succeed, especially at your specific program, as well as be connections for future jobs.

