

Women in Neurosurgery

Fall 2026 Newsletter

Chair's Message

Welcome to the Fall WINS newsletter. We have so many exciting things happening. We are looking forward to a special time together at the Congress of Neurological Surgeons Annual meeting in Washington D.C. We are hard at work to make the WINS program and events the best yet.

We are excited to honor this historic moment with Martina Stippler, former WINS Chair, as the first female president of CNS. You should see videos dropping on our social media channels during the meeting about what mentorship and sponsorship mean to our WINS members. The WINS social will feature time to network, celebrate, and invited words from our former joint section Chairs. WINs worked with Dr. Stippler to bring a special symposium to the meeting from renowned coach Dr. Sasha Shillcutt. The NSPA/WINS breakfast will feature outside experts in an interactive format about bystander intervention. Look for new ways to connect at the WINS hub in the exhibit hall, as well as the Executive Committee meeting, and the medical student social. I can't wait!

As I reflect on this exciting time, and the theme of this year's meeting, Evolution, I'm reminded how far we have come. The ranks of WINS have exploded from a table of trailblazers, to a joint section with invaluable programming, which instills the skills, mentorship, and sponsorship to continue to grow and support the women in neurosurgery. Having women in leadership is essential, and I thank Dr. Stippler for taking on and using her role as CNS President to the benefit of us all. She has started a conversation, centuries in the making, and it's the job of each of us to continue the dialogue. There is more work to be done, but I've never been more confident in the colleagues beside and behind me to continue the charge.

Kimberly Kicielinski, MD, MSPH, FAANS
Chair, AANS/CNS Joint Section of Women in Neurosurgery
Associate Professor of Neurosurgery
Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC



Community Updates

Attendings

WINS
EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP



President:
Kimberly Kicielinski, MD, MSPH, FAANS
Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, SC



Vice President:
Rupa Juthani, MD, FAANS
Neurosurgeons of New Jersey | NYU Langone, Ridgewood, NJ | New York, NY



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



Treasurer:
Analiz Rodriguez, MD, PhD, MBA, FAANS
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Little Rock, AR



Member-at-Large:
Lara Massie, MD, FAANS
Allegheny Health Network, Monroeville, PA



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

Spotlight on *WINS*

A Celebration of Success

- Congratulations to **Dr. Line Jacques** on receiving the Diane D. Ralston Clinical and Basic Neuroscience Teaching Award!
- Congratulations to **Dr. Eleonora Spinazzi** on receiving the NJBIZ 2026 Health Care Hero!

Woman of the Month



Julia Sharma, MD, FRCSC, FAANS
Dr. Sharma is an Associate Professor at University of California, Davis. She was the first woman to graduate from the University of British Columbia neurosurgery residency program. Subsequently, she built UC Davis' Global Neurosurgery Program, which has enabled her team to bring resources to Bolivia and Ethiopia. Her favorite surgical case is a functional hemispherotomy. She encourages all potential applicants to explore all specialties before deciding on neurosurgery. Outside of the OR, she loves the mountains and rock climbing!



Tiffany Perry, MD, MPH, FAANS
Dr. Perry is an Associate Professor at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. She credits her journey in neurosurgery to her mentors who have spanned from her undergraduate years to her neurosurgery department at UNC-Chapel Hill and beyond. Her greatest accomplishment is raising her daughter and urges those interested in neurosurgery to "remember your positive impact, to lean on mentors and colleagues you trust, and to remember to have gratitude for today." She enjoys operating on intradural intramedullary tumors. She also loves cross-country skiing and is a trail ultramarathoner!

Community Updates

Residents & Medical Students

Meet the Newly-Elected Resident & Medical Student Committees Leadership!

We hold our own application cycle for the WINS Resident and Medical Student Committees, with each branch fully dedicated to empowering the next generation of female neurosurgeons. Check out the new team that makes all of this possible!

2026-27 WINS Resident Committee



MOLLY LAFUENTE, DO
Resident Committee Chair



AMANDA CUSTOZZO, MD
Education Co-Chair



MADELEINE SMITH, MD
Education Co-Chair



DANIELLE GOLUB, MD
Diversity Co-Chair



SHIVANI BAISIWALA, MD
Events Co-Chair



MEGAN BAUMAN GRAVES, MD
Events Co-Chair



KRISTINE RAVINA, MD
Research Co-Chair



CAMILLE MILTON, MD
Research Co-Chair



SAMANTHA SPELLICY, MD
Research Junior Co-Chair



KRISTIE LIU, MD
Education Junior Co-Chair



OLIVE JUNG, MD
Diversity Junior Co-Chair



KATHERINE WANDA ZEREBIEC, MD
Diversity Co-Chair



LIZZY WICKS, MD
Events Junior Co-Chair



VAIBHAVI SHAH, MD
Social Media Co-Chair



CRINA MIRELA PETERSON, MD
Social Media Co-Chair



JOVANNA TRACZ, MD
Social Media Junior Co-Chair



VICTORIA SCOTT, MD
Education



AUDREY DE PAEPE, MD
Education



SABRINA BEGLEY, MD
Education



NICOLE WENGER, MD
Events



KATIE KERNS, MD
Events



ELSA NICO, MD
Research



SARAH HAMIMI, MD
Social Media

2026-27 WINS Medical Student Committee



VIDHATRI RATURI
Senior Co-President



ANNA KIMATA
Junior Co-President



TAYLOR VADSET
Membership Chair



JENNA KOENIG
Research Senior Co-Chair



GREACE HEY
Research Junior Co-Chair



MASHAAL SYED
Diversity Chair



GULDAMLA KALENDER
Events Senior Co-Chair



HELEN HEO
Events Junior Co-Chair



MACKENZIE HAGOOD
Events Junior Co-Chair



BROOKLYN BREKKE-KUMLEY
Communications Chair



GNANESWARI KARAYI
Membership



ALEXA BREWSTER
Membership



EMILY HARVEY
Membership



FAYE YANG
Membership



HANNA MINNS
Research



CAROLINA LOPES
Research



EMMA HARTMAN
Research

DIANA FELER
Research

ECE ERDER
Research

EESHA GURAV
Diversity

CRYSTAL PERAZA
Diversity

TEYA LEBLANC-HILL
Diversity

DELANEY GRAHAM
Diversity

EMILY HALE
Events

ZAINAB SAYLA
Events

NAWSHIN MALEEHA
Events

AASTHA BHAVSAR
Events

SHELBY SABOURIN
Events

SYDNI ROSENFELD
Events

WENWEN GUO
Events

DANIELLA LORMAN
Events

SINDHU DAGGUPATI
Events

TALA CURRY-KOSKI
Events

TIFFANY SAN
Events

STEPHANIE CISNEROS
Events

ASHLESHA BHOJANE
Events

CELINA YANG
Events

LISA WALSH
Events

LILY BEATTY
Events

DEONDRA MONTGOMERY
Communications

OISHIKA DAS
Communications

MAGY DECKARD
Communications

MIA SCRABIS
Communications

CHINMAYI BALUSU
Communications

SAMEENA RAHMAN
Communications

CLAIRICE PEARCE
Communications

REYNA ESCALANTE
Communications

KRISHIE DESAI
Communications

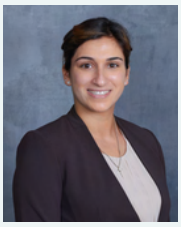
Community Updates

Fellows - Residents

TRAINEE TUESDAY

Check out what our trainees are saying about their residency experience below!

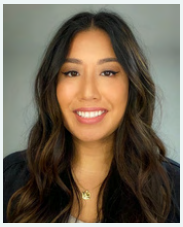
Dr. Roxana Beladi, PGY-6



Dr. Roxana Beladi is a sixth-year neurosurgery resident at Henry Ford Health Providence Hospital – Michigan State University with an interest in spinal degeneration and deformity.

"The greatest challenge often is believing something is possible in the first place, the hard work follows. Man or woman, don't let your doubt hinder you, but rather allow your will and perseverance guide you to achieve the impossible."

Dr. Iris Charcos, PGY-6



Dr. Charcos' clinical interests are in cerebrovascular and global medicine. Outside of the hospital, she enjoys traveling, cooking and hosting dinner parties, and spending time with her dog, Brisket, and cat, Sushi.

"One of the greatest lessons I've learned is that you do not have to have everything figured out to belong in neurosurgery. As a Filipina immigrant, there were times I questioned whether I belonged. What kept me going was showing up, staying curious, and learning from those around me. I'm grateful for the mentors who believed in me, and I hope to mentor and encourage more women to pursue careers in neurosurgery."

Dr. Hayden Greene, PGY-3



Dr. Hayden Greene is a PGY-3 at Albany Medical Center. Her clinical interests are in neuroendovascular surgery, though she aims to develop a diverse practice in the future. She firmly believes in the importance of mentorship to support aspiring women neurosurgeons. Outside of medicine, she enjoys weightlifting, running, and gardening alongside her husband and dog Peanut.

Dr. Jamila Godil, PGY-3



Dr. Jamila Godil is a third-year resident at the Oregon Health & Science University. Her clinical interests are in spine surgery, with a particular focus on spinal oncology. She is also interested in research focused on optimizing post-operative management and resuscitation strategies for spine surgery patients, with the goal of improving peri-operative outcomes, reducing complications, and enhancing recovery. Outside of medicine, she enjoys running and is currently training for the annual Hood to Coast Relay in Oregon. She also enjoys exploring new restaurants, attending concerts, and spending quality time with her family and friends

Congratulations Corner

- Congratulations to **Dr. Casey Jarvis** for receiving the R. Michael Scott Pediatrics Award from 2026 New England Neurosurgical Society annual meeting!
- Congratulations to **Dr. Shivani Baisiwala** for receiving the CNS Pediatric Neurosurgery Best Basic Science Award!

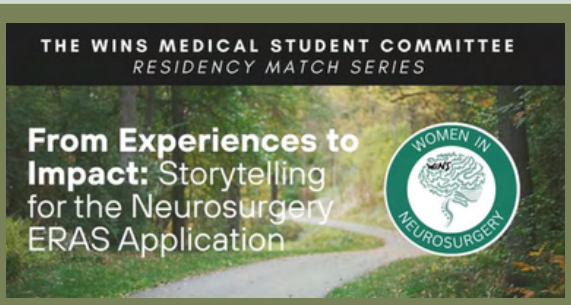
Resident Initiatives

"**Scrubbed Out**" is an ongoing, monthly resident-led initiative that connects medical students with neurosurgery residents in a relaxed, no-pressure setting. Through casual conversations and mentorship pairings, students can explore the field, ask questions, and gain valuable guidance on navigating medical school, residency, and neurosurgery.

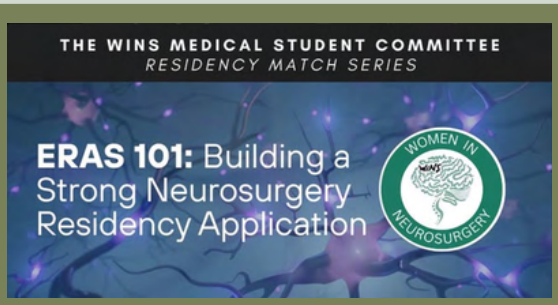
Community Updates
Medical Students

Medical Student Initiatives

Neurosurgery doesn't get summer break! This summer, our WINS Medical Student Committee equipped future neurosurgery applicants with the knowledge to take on this year's application cycle!



"**From Experiences to Impact: Storytelling for the Neurosurgery ERAS Application**" with Drs. Joanna Kemp, Christina Notarianni, and Brittany Grace Futch was held on July 28th. Medical students preparing their ERAS applications were able to gain insight into what residency programs look for in a compelling personal statement.



"**ERAS 101: Building a Strong Neurosurgery Residency Application**" with Drs. Sharona Ben-Haim, Rushna Ali, and Angie Lung was held on August 18th. For this session, our panelists discussed how their respective departments approach the daunting task of selecting applicants for neurosurgery residency and gave tips and tricks on how to tackle the new changes to the ERAS application.



"**Speed Networking: Building Mentorship in Neurosurgery**" with our MSC senior medical students was held on August 24th. In this session, our audience had the opportunity to build relationships, learn how to get involved in research, and figure out if neurosurgery is the field for them from our more seasoned upperclassmen.



"**Guide to Acing Your Neurosurgery Residency Interviews**" with Drs. Libby Kosnik Infinger and Laura McGuire was held on September 15th. To prepare our M4s for the interview season, our panelists shared insight into what really goes on behind closed doors, and how applicants can best communicate their fit for a program.

WINS Research Consortium

Research mentorship runs deep within our section. We are excited to announce our recent publications from across institutions!

"Grief in Neurosurgery: Reframing Loss and Identity Through Lived Experience" was published in Neurosurgery Practice on October 7th, 2026 by Erin N Walker, Vidhatri Raturi, Kathleen S Botterbush, Anna R Kimata, Sangami Pugazenthi, Megan M J Bauman, Ian Parney, Kimberly Kicielinski, Karin Muraszko, Violette Recinos, Shelly Timmons, Laura Snyder, Susan C Pannullo, Rupa Juthani, Angela M Richardson, and Maryam Rahman!

"Women in U.S. Neurosurgery Residency Programs: Trends, Leadership, and Program-Level Associations" was published in World Neurosurgery on September 12th, 2026 by Vidhatri Raturi, Laura Snyder, Sharona Ben-Haim, Conrad Z. Graf, Rushna Ali, J. Dawn Waters, Amanda Watters, Erin Walker, Nicholas Norman, Michelle Miller, Kevin Schneider, Michael Cesarek, Erin McCormack, Gabriel Owusu, and Sassan Keshavarzi!





Clairice Pearce
Senior Newsletter Coordinator

Reyna Escalante
Junior Newsletter Coordinator

Thanks to all who participated!

Community Updates

Mentorship Program



WINS Mentorship Program

Susan Pannullo, MD, FAANS, FAAN, FCNS

WINS Mentorship Program Mentor

Mentorship and coaching are so important to successful navigation of life as a neurosurgeon. Much of this activity occurs organically and informally but it is sometimes nice to put some structure and formality around these special conversations. It has been a pleasure working and collaborating with Martina this past year. Although the WINS Mentorship Program is designed to create a one-year relationship, Martina and I will continue to stay in touch. I look forward to seeing her grow as a talented and forward-thinking neurosurgical leader.



Martina Mustroph, MD, PhD

WINS Mentorship Program Mentee

The WINS mentoring program connected me with my mentor, Dr. Pannullo. Having previously served as a mentor to medical students in the program, I understood the value of mentorship, but having Dr. Pannullo as a resource during my first year as an attending has been truly incredible.

She has helped me refine which aspects of practice building to focus on, provided a sounding board for new ideas, and offered thoughtful guidance whenever questions or challenges have come up. We have been able to connect through monthly Zoom meetings and phone calls, but she has also always made herself available when I have needed her perspective outside of those scheduled conversations.

Dr. Pannullo has been a trusted resource and has been incredibly generous with her time, expertise, and insight. She is clearly a passionate advocate for women in neurosurgery, and I feel incredibly fortunate to have found not only a knowledgeable mentor, but also someone who genuinely champions my success.

I cannot thank Dr. Pannullo and WINS enough for bringing us together. This mentorship has been invaluable to me during such an important transition in my career.

Special thanks to Executive Committee member Dr. Rushna Ali, residents Drs. Kathryn Kearns and Caren Steube, and medical students Hayley Granberg and Mary-Katharine Pontarelli for making the WINS Mentorship Program possible!

CNS 2026 Preview

Build lifelong relationships in Washington, D.C. at the 2026 CNS Annual Meeting! Attendings, fellows, residents, and medical students of all genders are welcome to join our WINS community!

Sunday , November 1st

WINGS 2026 Program in Collaboration with Mission Brain Foundation
8:00 – 1:00 pm EST at Independence Salon D at Marriott Marquis DC

Special Symposium 07: Power, Protection, and Professional Longevity: Boundaries in Neurosurgery with Dr. Sasha Shillcutt
12:45 – 4:15 pm EST at 140A-140B at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Honored Guest Introduction with Dr. Deborah Benzil and Dr. Karin M. Muraszko
5:27 – 5:32 pm EST at Exhibit Hall E, Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Honored Guest Presentation with Dr. Gail Rosseau
5:33 – 5:53 pm EST at Exhibit Hall E, Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Monday , November 2nd

LGBTQIA+ and WINS Breakfast Seminar: Bystander Effect and Allyship
7:00 – 8:30 am EST at 149A-149B, Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Resident Social
9:40 – 10:40 am EST at Compass Coffee

Honored Guest Lunch: Gail Rosseau: Lead From Where You Are
12:20 – 1:50 pm EST at 145A-145B, Walter E. Washington Convention Center

M03: Navigating Leadership Pitfalls: Stories of Mistakes and Growth
Monday, November 2, from 12:20 – 1:50 pm EST, 149A-149B at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

WINS CNS Reception
6:00 – 7:00 pm EST at Salon 1 and 2 Marriott Marquis DC

Medical Student Social
7:30 – 8:30 pm EST at Salon 1 and 2 Marriott Marquis DC

Tuesday , November 3nd

WINS Executive Meeting
12:30 – 1:50 pm EST at Marquis Salon 12, Meeting Level 3 at Marriott Marquis DC





CNS Presentations

Our WINS leaders are driving groundbreaking initiatives to help shape the future of neurosurgery. Join us at CNS to hear from these trailblazers and discover the ideas, research, and innovations moving our field forward!

Attending Presentations

How the World Does Neurosurgery: The International Symposium
Presenter: Dr. Gail Rosseau
Saturday, October 31, from 8:00 – 4:15 pm EST
103A at Walter E. Washington Conve

Special Symposium 08: From the OR to the Office: Pathways to National Leadership in Neurosurgery
Presenter: Dr. Deborah Benzil
Saturday, October 31, from 1:08 – 1:21 pm EST
102A at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Pain Neurosurgery in 2030: Technologies, Targets, and Transformations
Presenter: Dr. Justine Pearl
Sunday, November 1, from 9:20-9:35 am EST
158A-158B at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Scalpel to Pen: Cutting a Path Book Discussion
Presenter: Dr. Sheri Dewan
Monday, November 2, from 1:10 – 1:20 am EST
102A at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

What Is the Value Proposition for Robotics in Neurosurgery?
Presenter: Dr. Stavropoula Tjoumakaris
Monday, November 2, from 1:40 – 1:50 pm EST
140A at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

CSNS 1: A Way Forward in a Consolidating Healthcare Landscape
Presenter: Dr. Deborah Benzil
Monday, November 2, from 2:50 – 3:15 pm EST
158A-158B at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Thoracic Outlet Syndrome/Ulnar Neuropathy vs. C8–T1 Radiculopathy
Presenter: Dr. Zarina S. Ali
Tuesday, November 3, from 12:26 – 12:36 pm EST
103B at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Translational Development of Cortical Interneuron Transplantation for Epilepsy
Presenter: Dr. Sharona Ben-Haim
Tuesday, November 3, from 3:00 – 3:10 pm EST
147B at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

CNS Research Spotlight

WINS is committed to increasing representation and diversity within the field of neurosurgery. Be sure to keep an eye out for our research posters and presentations highlighting this cause at the CNS meeting!

Oral Presentations

Women in US Neurosurgery Residency Programs: Current Representation and Program Level Distribution of Residents
Presenter: Vidhatri Raturi
Monday, November 2, from 5:00 – 5:03 pm EST
Podium 4 in Ballroom ABC at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Gender Representation In NSIG Leadership And Association With Neurosurgery Match Outcomes
Presenter: Grace E. Hey, WINS Research Consortium
Tuesday, November 3, from 5:00 PM – 5:03 pm EST
Podium 4 in Ballroom ABC at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Posters

Women in US Neurosurgery Residency: Contemporary Trends in Resident and Applicant Representation
Presenter: Vidhatri Raturi
Monday, November 2, from 4:30 – 6:00 pm EST
Ballroom ABC at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Trends in Neurosurgery Department Chairs and Female Resident Representation in US Academic Neurosurgery Residency Programs 2005-2026
Presenter: Vidhatri Raturi, WINS Research Consortium
Monday, November 2, from 4:30 – 6:00 pm EST
Ballroom ABC at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Call Burden During Pregnancy In Residency Training: A Systematic Review With Implications For Neurosurgical Trainees
Presenter: Grace E. Hey, WINS Research Consortium
Tuesday, November 3, from 4:30 – 6:00 pm EST
Ballroom ABC at Walter E. Washington Convention Center

Maternal Exposure to Extreme Ambient Heat During Early Pregnancy and Risk of Spina Bifida: A Systematic Review.
Presenter: Dr. Daniela A. Perez-Chadid
Digital Poster





WINS Legacy Interview

Dr. Aviva Abosch

Deputy Director of Miami Neuroscience Institute Baptist Health
Director of Epilepsy Surgery
Co-Director of Functional Neurosurgery
Esernia Endowed Chair in Surgery for Epilepsy and Movement Disorders
Chief of Neurosurgery, Florida International University

How would you describe your journey in neurosurgery?



It was accidental. I was an undergraduate at Bryn Mawr College, studying biology, math, and French literature. I signed up for a psychology class in the hopes of learning about human thought, consciousness, and brain function…but I wasn't as satisfied with the nature of the questions that were being posed in Psychology, or by the methods available within the field that could be brought to bear to answer such questions. Then, as a senior, I enrolled in a developmental neurobiology seminar course, which focused on the embryonic development of the mammalian brain, and was awestruck by how finely orchestrated this process was. Neuroscience seemed very reductionist at the time: it got down to a molecular and genetic level to explain brain development, and I remember wondering if this approach could ultimately yield answers to questions such as how we think, how we are aware of our own mortality, and what it means to be conscious?

At any rate, by the end of college, I wasn't sure what to do with this neuroscience interest or whether to pursue medicine, instead. So, I took a position at a research lab at Rockefeller University (Manhattan). I wanted to work with human subjects and one of the researchers I admired cautioned me that to fulfill this aspiration with a PhD alone, I would always have to work under an MD. Following this advice, I applied to Pittsburgh and hedged my bets by enrolling in the MD/PhD program. Although I did not enjoy the first two years of medical school, I spent the next three years in a neuroscience lab and loved the experience and the challenges. I remember then sitting down with the Dean of Student Affairs, who had to convince me to return and complete the final 2 years of medical school. Interestingly, I ended up truly enjoying my interactions with patients in the third and fourth years of medical school and was overwhelmed by the trust that patients place in us to care for them. My PhD work had focused on the development of the nervous system, as I sought to unravel how the brain sets itself up, reproducibly and accurately, across mammalian intrauterine development. All my clinical mentors during this graduate work were pediatric neurologists, and I thought that was where my destiny lay. During 3rd year clerkships, I found psychiatry fascinating, but other than diagnosing and then suppressing symptoms, there did not seem to be much we could do for patients at the time. Pediatric neurology, which I had pinned my hopes on, was depressing for me. It was hard to make a diagnosis and then hand the child back to his/her parents and tell them there was little we could do for their child. During my general surgery rotation, I signed up for two surgical subspecialty electives: ophthalmology, because the eye "is the window into the central nervous system", and neurosurgery, because it is a crucial part of the clinical neurosciences.

On my first day of the neurosurgery rotation, I walked into the OR, was handed a drill, and told to make a burr hole. Within minutes, I was looking at the surface of the human brain and was struck by the realization that immediately in front of me were the billions of neurons and their interconnections that are responsible for thought and consciousness and all the other uniquely human aspects of higher brain function. I learned as I followed patients to the OR, through their surgeries, and into the recovery phase, that there were many things that neurosurgeons could temporize but not yet fix. And these opportunities really appealed to the scientist in me.

Throughout the course of your career, what are some of the accomplishments you are most proud of?
Without question, I am most proud of the people I've trained. Medical students, residents, fellows, junior faculty… Helping others realize their career aspirations is the most meaningful aspect of what I do. You learn a lot from the people around you, from your fellow residents, from your peers nationally … You realize we are not in this by ourselves —for instance, we care for patients as a team. It is also important to have role models. These are often people ahead of you from a career standpoint but can also be people who answer up to you. I learned so much from my mentors: Charlie Wilson, who was Neurosurgery Chair at UCSF in the early and mid-portion of my residency, Mitch Berger over the last couple of years of residency, André Olivier who was my fellowship mentor at the Montreal Neurological Institute, and Andres Lozano, an internationally known functional neurosurgeon, and my fellowship mentor at the University of Toronto. It was Dr. Lozano who showed me how to efficiently combine my clinical and research interests in a single career focus. Basic science is a full-time job. You need to find your niche as a surgeon-scientist—a focus that you, as a neurosurgeon, are able to address because of our unique skill sets and patient access, and you have to keep up your clinical skills. I had important non-neurosurgeon mentors, as well. These included Dr. Nancy Ascher, who was head of the UCSF transplant program when I was an intern on the liver transplant service. Dr. Ascher was a supremely effective surgeon, scientist, and leader. And of course, my parents who were academicians, instilled in me the primacy of education, and how investing in your education is an investment in your future.

As a trailblazing woman in neurosurgery, what are some of the challenges you faced? How did you overcome them?
I remember rotating on Dr. Ascher's liver transplant service as a general surgery intern at UCSF, and we were up all night taking care of a patient. He was quite coagulopathic and required multiple transfusions to survive his surgery but somehow the team got him through the procedure and off to the ICU. In the morning, Dr Ascher and I changed our scrubs, grabbed coffee, and rounded on the patient in the ICU. I followed Dr. Ascher into the patient's ICU bay, and watched in horror as he looked up at her and asked, "Honey, can you help me get off the bedpan?"



I was prepared for fireworks, but instead, Dr. Ascher calmly put on gloves, helped the patient off the bedpan, and re-introduced herself as the surgeon who had fought to keep him alive overnight. She must have noticed the shock on my face and when we left the room warned me that, "you can get upset over these types of incidents, but you will spend much of your career upset…or you can just roll with it and move on to the task at hand." She was right. It's 2026, and there are still situations in which society looks at you and wonders where the neurosurgeon is. I think of my daughter and young women of her generation whenever someone reaches out to ask me to consider throwing my hat in the ring for a leadership position. The world doesn't change unless we shoulder these roles—neurosurgery resident, department chair, president of a professional society, but you have to understand that people aren't going to embrace you for the effort. You have to deliver, contend with the extra scrutiny, and ignore the slings and arrows.

What does the "Spirit of WINS" mean to you? How have you embodied that throughout your career?
I was guilted into attending my first Women In Neurosurgery (WINS) meeting by Judy Rosman. Judy had created and for many years run a very successful neurosurgery and neurology recruiting firm, and I had known Judy and her husband, Dr. Michael Vogelbaum, since graduate school. I ran into Judy at a CNS meeting, and she asked me why I wasn't heading to the WINS Meeting that was about to take place. I told her that I had other plans and that "WINS wasn't really who I am." Judy rejected my response and schooled me on the importance of an advocacy group for female neurosurgeons attempting to navigate a male-dominated profession, and the fact that there is strength in numbers when it comes to addressing the common barriers. And so I walked into my first WINS meeting as the election for officers was being held. I was voted in as Secretary of WINS! What I quickly learned was that WINS sent liaisons to the AANS and CNS annually, to serve as ex officio board members of these two crucial societies—which allowed me to meet the leaders of organized neurosurgery. I owe my entry into organized neurosurgery, in large part, to WINS. WINS has evolved over time, transforming from a committee to a joint section of the AANS/CNS, similar to the Tumor section. WINS has maintained its focus on promoting the training, education, and career aspirations of women within neurosurgery, which is crucial for the field.

What are your aspirations for the future of WINS and the field of neurosurgery as a whole?
It would be nice to be able to sunset a group like WINS because there is no longer a need for a women's advocacy group, but we are not there yet. Search committees expect neurosurgeons to look a certain way and judge you based on these preconceived notions. My male colleagues are less likely to care that I'm a woman than is a typical academic search committee or search firm. Biases remain. For the time being, WINS has a mission which is making sure bias is recognized and addressed—and not just at the resident level. WINS focuses on what happens at both ends of the pipeline, as well. WINS has begun tackling the root of the problem, by promoting STEM in elementary schools, because if you are not making good decisions about course selection prior to high school, you place yourself at a disadvantage in college, which in turn limits your potential to get into medical school, and so on…These are difficult problems to tackle, requiring hard work and significant timelines to fix. My hope is that the younger generation of female neurosurgeons who are rolling up their sleeves to take on these challenges, can move things over the finish line.

What words of wisdom would you like to share with WINS members?
Reach out for advice and, importantly, be coachable. Listen to the advice that you have solicited! People who go the farthest realize that advice can be hard to receive, but it is important to consider and internalize it. Use it to your advantage. Looking back on my career, things that seemed like tremendous obstacles at the time turned out to be the greatest opportunities. If we present two people with the same problem, one person will see it as a closed door and the other will view it as an opportunity. I regret having spent emotional valence on being frustrated by an obstacle rather than seeing it as an opportunity. If you can spend less time being angry and feeling sorry for yourself, you can get to the next success that much quicker.

What is your most cherished WINS memory?
My most cherished WINS memories come from the people I've met along the way… I had the privilege of following Dr. Susan Pannullo as WINS President, and then handing the baton to Dr. Shelly Timmons, who handed it to Dr. Odette Harris... These are extraordinary neurosurgeons and people who remain my friends, colleagues, and confidantes… I took some time away from WINS executive meetings when I completed my term as WINS President, and when I came back, the room was filled with people I didn't know. The membership has grown exponentially and the ranks have swelled with trainees and younger neurosurgeons. This fills me with optimism about our field and it suggests WINS is both fulfilling a need and doing good things.

Dr. Abosch, thank you for paving the way for future leaders in neurosurgery!

Pathways to SUCCESS

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

It's that time of year when you're settling into the new academic year — the fumbling of the first few months behind you, the workflow and expectations finally starting to feel familiar. With that in mind, my advice for this season is simple: the skills that made you successful last year may not be the ones that carry you forward this year.

The tools that made you an excellent sub-intern aren't necessarily the ones that get you through intern year. Your sub-internships were probably the most exhausting monthlong interviews you'll ever conduct — your free time belonged to the service, "yes" was on every exhale, and uncertainty loomed over everything. As an intern, the work is different, but the stakes feel higher: seven years stretch out ahead of you like an eternity.

Protect your time outside the hospital. Sleep, hydrate, recharge — grocery shop, work out, call your people. And when you're off service, use that time to study, plant the seeds of a research idea, and rest up for the siege that is your time on the neurosurgery service. Saying yes to everything won't protect that time, so be intentional about your goals, and lean on your senior residents often.

If I could leave you with one thing, it's this: be coachable. Sleep deprivation and exhaustion cloud how we hear feedback, and it can feel like criticism of you as a person — it isn't. You will be a phenomenal physician, and you have a world of support behind you. Be grateful for the mistakes where a senior colleague or attending was there to catch them, because one day they won't be — but the memory of their advice will, and it might be what helps you evade panic and save someone. For the feedback that does feel personal, lean on your friends and close confidants to remind you how far you've come.

None of us gets here alone. It takes more than a village to raise a neurosurgeon — the knowledge and skills I have today were shaped by my attendings, fellow residents, nursing staff, OR scrub techs, and mentors well beyond my own institution. Meet more people in neurosurgery. Talk about your experiences. Build your tribe — it's paramount to both success and resiliency.

And on the note of building your tribe — I recently started as a fellow at a new institution, and even after finishing residency, much of the day still feels new and unfamiliar. We never stop learning to swim in new waters, and never stop adding to our tribe of neurosurgical colleagues. With that, I'm glad to introduce Dr. Kristie Liu, PGY-3 at USC, for her advice and perspective as a resident still in the trenches.



Dr. Jessica K. Campos
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Dr. Campos is an Endovascular Neurosurgery Fellow at USC under Dr. William Mack. She completed her neurosurgery residency at UC Irvine, earned her MD from Loyola University Chicago in her hometown, with a postdoctoral cerebrovascular research fellowship at Johns Hopkins in between, and studied Chemical Engineering at Vanderbilt. She's a WINS mentor and former WINS Resident Executive Committee member, and currently chairs the CNS Resident Fellow Committee and the SNIS Social Media Committee, serves as a Fellow for NeurosurgeryPAC, and spent three years as the inaugural Cerebrovascular CNS Resident liaison. Her academic interests span cerebrovascular and endovascular neurosurgery, health policy, and the socioeconomic factors shaping neurosurgical care in California.

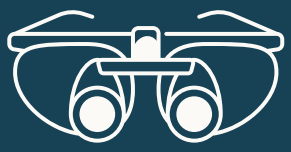
One of my recommendations for junior residents is to keep a fast and easy method to take notes or jot down things that you learn on the job. When you're tired, sometimes you're just surviving, but in the future you'll be happy that you took a moment to reflect on those interesting cases you may never see again. But I also recommend keeping your people close! The meaningful connections with the people around you — patients, co-residents, mentors — will help you through the toughest days and make them more fun.



Dr. Kristie Q. Liu
PGY-3
University of Southern California

Dr. Liu is a PGY-3 neurosurgery resident at the University of Southern California. She received a BS in Biochemistry with a minor in English from UCLA, where she conducted cytogenetics research in oncology, and an MS in Biomedical Research with a specialization in cancer from the University of Navarra in Pamplona, Spain, where she worked at the Center of Applied Medical Research (CIMA) studying the epigenetics of AML. She currently works in Dr. Frank J. Attenello's lab at the Zilkha Neurogenetic Institute, researching chemoresistance of glioma stem cells in glioblastoma, and is working toward a career as a surgeon-scientist.

Stay in the Loupe



Read the latest update on WINS social media initiatives and events

#WINSxResearchMonday

Stay up to date with the latest advances in neurosurgical research through our #WINSxResearchMonday features!

"Gender and leadership equity in neurosurgery: a systematic review of representation and authorship trends" (2000-2025) by Tykocki and Eltayeb discusses how based on current rates, gender parity in neurosurgical leadership is not projected until after 2058. The group also found that female authors were 2.4x more likely to mentor female first authors, suggesting increasing the number of women in senior roles is likely to have a multiplicative effect on authorship and visibility. "Trends in Academic Neurosurgical Workforce: A Longitudinal Analysis of Gender and Racial/Ethnic Representation in the United States From 2012-2021" by Cheema and Rahman showed that while female representation in academic neurosurgery has improved over the past decade, women and other racial and ethnic groups remain substantially underrepresented in the academic workforce. Finally, "Strategies to Reduce Gender Discrimination in Surgery: A Qualitative Study of Women Neurosurgeons and Cardiothoracic Surgeons" by Granek et al. highlighted 6 interrelated strategies to improve gender equity and inclusivity in the workplace, including (1) changing surgical training culture; (2) increasing female representation; (3) valuing surgeon differences; (4) supporting women through mentorship, advocacy, and sponsorship; (5) speaking up about bias and discrimination and pursuing legal action where necessary; and (6) implementing strategic policy changes and accountability mechanisms.

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!

Upcoming WINS Events:

- **Residents:** Keep your eye on the prize! Our resident committee is hard at work creating mentorship, educational, and career development opportunities. Stay tuned!
- **Medical Students:** Whether you are just getting started with preclinicals or at the final push, WINS is here for you! Check out our events covering family planning and VSLO later this season!

Are you passionate about 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:


WOMEN IN
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