PSG 22nd ANNUAL MEETING

The PSG Annual Meeting was held on May 13th and 14th at the Four Seasons in Irving, Texas. Immediately following the annual meeting, the 24th Annual PSG Symposium was held. Previously the symposium preceded the American Neurological Association (ANA) meeting. The Third Clifford W. Shults Symposium was included in the program which focused on current issues in genetic and environmental contributions to Parkinson’s disease and other movement disorders.

PSG members enjoyed working group meetings, study-specific meetings, and other activities. Special guests from the Parkinson’s Disease Foundation (PDF), Michael J. Fox Foundation (MJFF), the Parkinson’s Alliance, the National Parkinson's Foundation (NPF), NINDS and the PDF’s Clinical Research Learning Institute graduates also attended.

At the PSG Membership meeting, Karl Kieburtz gave a presentation on the state of the PSG indicating that the membership has grown to 250 investigators and 207 coordinators with 119 credentialed sites in the U. S. and Canada. Karl pointed out the new credentialed investigators that were in attendance with their coordinators. Current projects and grants, symposia, training initiatives, and collaborations were outlined with the strategic challenges facing the PSG and the new initiatives planned for the future.

Karen Rabinowitz presented the election results and announced Daniel Weintraub and Cathi Thomas as the new members to the PSG Executive Committee.

The PSG Nominating Committee members, Janis Miyasaki, Chair, Jeana Jaglin, Co-Chair, Melissa Gerstenhaber, Melissa Nirenberg, and Ranjit Ranawaya, were recognized for their hard work in making this year’s election process a success. We appreciate all the PSG members who took the time to submit their vote. Special thanks and honors went to Janis Miyasaki and Jeana Jaglin for their dedication and service during their time serving on the PSG Executive Committee.

Research presentations were given by Marian Evatt, Amie Peterson, and Katrina Paumier during the Membership Meeting on Friday. Marian presented on her research “Vitamin D insufficiency: Prevalence & Clinical Correlates in the DATATOP cohort”. Amie presented her research on “A Pilot Study of Balance and Vitamin D in Persons with PD”. Katrina presented her research on “Antidepressant Induced Delay of Motor Symptoms in PD (AIDS-PD)”. To view their abstracts, please visit the PSG web site at www.parkinson-study-group.org.

The meeting concluded with a joint reception for all meeting attendees hosted by the Executive Committee. Special thanks to the Parkinson’s Disease Foundation for their support of the annual meeting.
PSG ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM

The PSG 24th Annual Symposium was held on Saturday, May 15th immediately following the PSG Annual Meeting at the Four Seasons in Irving, Texas. The Third Annual Shults Symposium hosted by the Genetics and Environmental Risk Factors of PD Working Group started the morning with very informative talks and panel discussions. David K. Simon presented on “Approaches to Gene Discovery” and that led into a talk on “The Spectrum of Genetic Contributions to PD”. The first panel discussed Melanoma and PD: Association and implications for practice with Xiang Gao, Tony Lang and Karl Kieburtz. Alberto Ascherio gave the audience an update on environmental contributions to PD and other movement disorders. The second panel discussed the recommendations for collection, storage and use of genetic and environmental data in PD clinical trials. Panelists were David Grimes, Carlie Tanner, and Christine Hunter. Following this the audience enjoyed lunch as they attended the 18 poster presentations.

Continuing on to the afternoon session, Christopher Gomez, Professor and Chair, Department of Neurology, of the University of Chicago was the guest speaker. Dr. Gomez tied the morning session into the afternoon very nicely with his presentation on “Genetics of Ataxia”. Six platform presentations followed with Q&A from the audience.

The winners of the best abstracts were Laura Marsh for her abstract on “Prevalence and comorbidity of psychiatric diagnoses in a community-based sample of patients with Parkinson’s disease (PD)” and Lisa Deuel for her abstract on “Using telemedicine to conduct new patient evaluations for individuals with movement disorders”. We congratulate them and the other nominees: Kenneth Marek, Xuemei Huang, Katrina Paumier, Roger Kurlan, John Caviness, Eric Molho, Pinky Agarwal, Kathleen Shannon, and Ronel Malkani.

New this year were exhibitors from pharmaceutical companies, publication companies, medical labs and non-profit organizations. TEVA Neuroscience, Valeant Pharmaceuticals International, Lundbeck Inc., IPSEN, NOVARTIS, UCB, Inc., Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, the University of Rochester Clinical Materials Services Unit and URMC Labs all exhibited their materials. Other supporters were The Movement Disorders Society and AstraZeneca.

We would like to thank the PSG Symposium Organizing Committee members for an outstanding job planning and coordinating this event: The Genetics/Environmental Risk Working Group leaders Connie Marras, Michael Schwarzschild, and Lin Zhang with assistance from Karen Marder and Cheryl Halter. Also, the PSG Symposia Committee members Roger Albin, Andrew Feigin, Elena Moro, Michael Schwarzschild, Michele Tagliati, Jang-Ho Cha, and Hubert Fernandez. The following individuals assisted in the preparation of this symposium: Karl Kieburtz, Roseanna Battista, Donna Moszkowicz, Karen Rabinowitz, Jeanne Paiko and Carol Zimmerman.

For more information and to view the published abstracts, please access the Movement Disorders journal on-line at: http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/

*New* Coordinators' Corner

by Ray James, RN, BS, Clinical Research Nurse, Boston University Medical Center

I’m very glad to be a new member of the PSG and to have attended my first annual meeting. I’ve been working with the PSG since 2005, dealing mostly in regulatory matters. This year I took a position as a Clinical Research Nurse at Boston University and have begun coordinating various observational and clinical drug trials.

Going to Dallas for the annual meeting enabled me to learn more about the PSG, especially how to utilize their available resources and how I can play a role in the group. A major highlight for me was being able to finally meet many members of the Clinical Trials Coordination Center that I corresponded with but had not met.

I felt at ease and welcomed into a collegial atmosphere by the attendees and organizers. A unique distinction of the PSG is this ability to encourage openness, collaborations, and mutual respect between coordinators and investigators. I believe this mindset fosters open discussion so we can overcome the various challenges in our research projects, and even have a good time in the process. During the symposium portion, it was enlightening to hear more about the progress of research into the effects of CoQ10, Vitamin D, and even Antidepressants in Parkinson’s. It appears that more must be done before the research community can make clinical recommendations, but exciting work nonetheless. There were other fascinating presentations to hear and posters to peruse as well.

I look forward to upcoming annual meetings, engaging with more of you, and learning where we are heading with all our research projects.
Study Updates

SURE-PD by Alice Rudolph

SURE-PD (A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled, dose-ranging trial of oral inosine to assess safety and ability to elevate urate in early Parkinson’s disease), like many early PD studies, has been experiencing a painfully slow enrollment rate. SURE-PD has essentially seen no AEs associated with the study drug, and the rationale for the trial continues to grow with new positive reports regarding higher urate. So in an attempt to bolster enrollment, the Steering Committee and DSMB have approved allowing MAO-B inhibitors at entry, reducing the stringency of the LP requirement, and increasing the maximum eligibility serum urate values at screening. Review of the study amendment by the IRBs for the PI’s institution and the CTCC is now underway. The SURE-PD trial is funded by the Michael J. Fox Foundation.

SPIN-PD by Jennifer Harman

SPIN-PD (SPectroscopy IN Diagnosis of PD) is currently on hold while the interim analysis is completed. The SPIN-PD sites have done an excellent job in recruiting participants and the study is actually ahead of the projection. We anticipate the interim futility analysis will be completed by late summer.

STEADY-PD by Cheryl Deeley

STEADY-PD (Safety, Tolerability, and Efficacy Assessment of Dynacirc CR for PD) is well underway. STEADY-PD now has 66/100 enrollments with an October 31, 2010 deadline. Five additional sites have agreed to come on as rescue sites, bringing our total to 21 sites. STEADY-PD is a pilot Phase II doubleblind, placebo-controlled tolerability and dose finding study of isradipine CR in subjects with early Parkinson’s disease. Isradipine CR is a dihydropyridine calcium channel blocker, approved for treatment of hypertension. This class of calcium channel blocking agents may provide neuroprotection and may reduce the risk of developing PD and slow disease progression. One hundred subjects with early PD will participate in this 12-month trial. Secondary endpoints include the impact of isradipine CR on motor disability, blood pressure, cognition, PD quality of life and PD-related disabilities. Dr. Tanya Simuni at Northwestern University and Dr. Kevin Biglan at the University of Rochester lead this study. This study is funded by the Michael J. Fox Foundation.

QE3 by Victoria Snively

QE3 (Effects of Coenzyme Q10 on Early Parkinson Disease) has enrolled 546 subjects as of July 12, 2010 and is quickly approaching the goal of 600 subjects at 67 sites. We are still seeking new subjects and want to get the word out to the PSG and the entire Parkinson’s community that we plan to be actively enrolling through summer 2010.

The objective of the QE3 study is to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of high dosages of CoQ (2400 mg and 1200 mg vs placebo) in slowing clinical decline in patients with early PD. Participants, who are followed every four months over a 16 month period, must be diagnosed with PD within the last 5 years and not have been on dopaminergic therapy for more than 90 days. This study is funded by the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Further details of the study may be found on the PSG web site.

PostCEPT and PROBE by Emily Flagg

PostCEPT (A Longitudinal Observational Follow-up of the PRECEPT Study Cohort) continues with the majority of the cohort completing the third year of follow up visits, while others are entering their fourth year of follow up activities. Current funding from NIH will allow for subjects to be followed through the end of this year. The Longitudinal and Biomarker Studies in Parkinson Disease (LABS-PD) grant (submitted February 2010), would provide funding for an additional 5 years of follow up, is currently undergoing review at NINDS.

PROBE (Blood α-Synuclein, Gene Expression, and Smell Testing as Diagnostic and Prognostic Biomarkers in Parkinson’s Disease) is continuing with the analyses phase and we anticipate completing the initial diagnostic analyses by 4th quarter 2010. A teleconference to review the results with investigators will be scheduled. Follow up and data collection for PD subjects is ongoing under the PostCEPT study.

Information regarding PSG clinical trials can be found on the PSG web site or on clinicaltrials.gov.
Kudos to Sites!

Kudos go to all the enrolling SPIN-PD sites! They have done an amazing job with enrollment (PD subjects and controls both on target), as well as data entry with forms receipt and query resolution.

The two sites with the highest enrollment are PSG sites in Ottawa (David Grimes, investigator and Diane Cote, coordinator) and in Colorado (Rajeev Kumar, investigator and Dawn Miracle, coordinator), both with 31.

David Grimes, MD, Associate Professor and Diane Cote, RN of the University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada have contributed the following to tell us what makes a difference in conducting clinical trials at their site.

“Success in performing clinical research really rests with having good coordinators. Our coordinators work half time in research and half time in our regular Movement Disorders clinic. I (Dr. Grimes) have been very fortunate to have Diane (Cote) working with me. She is very attentive to all the patients needs during both regular clinic visits as well as study visits. For study visits she is well organized to keep the visit times as short as possible and therefore when we ask patients to become involved in a new project they are keen to help and know that their visits will be done efficiently.”

Ottawa Site - David Grimes, Diane Cote (Center) with a patient

Do you have kudos to share or tips on conducting clinical trials that would be helpful to others? We’d love to hear from you! Just send a note to Roseanna. Thank you!

Credentials Committee

The Credentials Committee met in May at the PSG Annual Meeting and reviewed applications. Those applicants who want to contribute their expertise but would not be involved in conducting a clinical trial are encouraged to join a working group.

Laura Marsh, MD, moved to a new site and that was approved. She is the Executive Director of the Mental Health Care Line at the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Houston, Texas that has an established Movement Disorders Program. She also holds an academic affiliation at Baylor College of Medicine.

You must be credentialed in order to participate in PSG studies. If you are a PSG credentialed investigator and move to a non-PSG site, that site must be reviewed by the PSG Credentials Committee. The Credentials Committee reviews applications about 4 times per year. We encourage anyone interested in becoming a credentialed PSG investigator to contact Donna Moszkowicz donna.moszkowicz@ctcc.rochester.edu for application materials.

Congratulations

Israel Robledo (PDF CRLI graduate) submitted an abstract to the World Parkinson Congress in the People Living with Parkinson’s category and it was accepted for a poster presentation. The abstract entitled “Parkinson’s Outreach. Hope for Tomorrow. Help for Today” involves his foundation called “Parkinson’s Outreach” that he started in 2009. The mission of the foundation is to help persons with Parkinson’s disease with prescription costs and doctor’s fees related to the disease and to promote the awareness of clinical trials that show promise in finding a cause and cure for Parkinson’s disease.

If you would like to learn more about the Clinical Research Learning Institute and the ways that graduates can contribute to your work in Parkinson’s clinical research, please contact Ronnie Todaro, M.P.H., PDF Director of National Programs at rtodaro@pdf.org or (800) 457-6676. The next PDF Clinical Research Learning Institute will be held October 21-October 23, 2010 at the Hamilton Park Hotel and Conference Center in Florham Park, NJ. For more information and to apply for this year’s program, please visit http://www.pdf.org/en/crli.
Mentoring Committee Program in Toronto, April 12, 2010

This year the Mentoring Committee (MC) hosted a program entitled “PSG Presents: Starting a Clinical Research Career – Clues for Success” on Monday, April 12, in Toronto during the AAN Annual Meeting. Taking suggestions from the evaluation of last year’s program, the MC changed the program to include topics covering identifying educational opportunities, selecting the right fellowship, negotiating a junior faculty position and obtaining research funding. The role of mentoring and interactions with CTSAs was covered. Joel Perlmutter, Chair of the Mentoring Committee, facilitated this event with Wendy Galpern, a MCRA graduate, as the guest speaker. Wendy gave her perspective as being someone who has been in academia and is now Program Director in the Office of Clinical Research at NIH/NINDS. The 41 attendees thoroughly enjoyed the program and agreed that the information was helpful. Some attendees commented on how early in their career development making a difference in moving research ideas forward and deciding what you want from a faculty position. The Mentoring Committee is planning on offering this program next year and more information will be out this fall. This meeting has been made possible through the Parkinson’s Disease Foundation’s Advancing Parkinson’s Treatments Innovations Grant.

Training Mentors

The PSG Mentoring Committee hosted a program on “Training Mentors to be Mentors” at the PSG Annual Meeting on Friday, May 14, 2010 in Irving, Texas. Joel Perlmutter, Chair of the PSG Mentoring Committee, presented material on research training (methods, opportunities, and obstacles) and mentor relationships. He also includes information about the training opportunities available through the PSG and how the PSG Advisor Program can help with research career advice. There were 50 people in attendance and those evaluating the program felt that the information given was useful.

If you are interested in obtaining a copy of Dr. Perlmutter's presentation, please email Roseanna Battista.

Academic Positions posted

The PSG posts Academic Positions on the PSG web site and this is very helpful to fellows or other researchers when looking for employment in the field. If you have any open academic or staff position(s) available within your institution, please send an email advertisement to Donna Moszkowicz, donna.moszkowicz@ctcc.rochester.edu, for posting.

PSG ADVISOR PROGRAM

The PSG Advisor Program has been very successful during its first year of operation. A rich bank of 47 advisors has been established with recruitment of non-PSG members with special expertise. Three of the MCRA graduates (C. Marras, G. Pontone, and X. Gao) are in the advisor bank. To date, we have assisted 11 applicants matching them with 12 advisors. What makes this so unique is that this program touches so many people from so many different institutions. A 3-month evaluation was conducted and advisees and advisors were pleased with the program. The MC will continue to evaluate this program at the 3-month and 12-month stages.

The PSG Advisor Program is available for new investigators who are initiating a research career or continuing an existing research area. This valuable resource is managed by the PSG Mentoring Committee and they established a bank of advisors who are willing to help you find a local mentor in your area (both research and geographic) or help you find specific research funding sources (foundations, etc.) for your research. If you would like to participate in this program, please complete the application form on the PSG website (www.parkinson-study-group.org).

Testimonials from an advisee and advisor:

Tara McIsaac, PT, PhD from Columbia University applied to the PSG Advisor Program because she needed help with career planning and development. Her specific area of interest is the affect of PD on multi-segment motor control during dual task activities, such as driving. She was matched with Daniel Corcos, PhD from the University of Illinois at Chicago because of his expertise in motor deficits in PD.

“The PSG mentoring program provided a valuable opportunity for me as a new investigator seeking grant-writing guidance to be paired with an experienced researcher within my area of study. The mentor selected for me was a great match! Thank you.” ~ Tara McIsaac

“I have enjoyed working with Tara because it has helped me to clarify my own thinking in terms of what is important for young investigators to focus on. I have also learned and benefited from talking to Tara and reading some of her work in terms of understanding more about what patients with Parkinson's disease find difficult when trying to perform two tasks at the same time. The benefit of the PSG program is that is pairs scientists with different knowledge bases at different stages of their careers and it allows them to learn from each other.” ~ Daniel Corcos
Researcher in the News

Introducing...James Boyd, MD, recently awarded the Mentored Clinical Research Award (MCRA) for 2010-2011. This award is funded by a grant from the Parkinson’s Disease Foundation (PDF) to the Parkinson Study Group (PSG). The PDF partnered with the PSG to encourage the professional and scientific development of young investigators on their path to independence. This grant supports a new investigator for a one year project in patient oriented research in Parkinson’s disease or other parkinsonian disorders under the mentorship of an experienced investigator. The training should lead to a junior investigator to gain skills in clinical research. The research plan should address unmet needs of people living with PD, have the potential for broad application among the PD community, and lead to advances in clinically relevant treatment options.

James Boyd, MD

My interest in movement disorders neurology developed unusually early in my clinic training. As a third year medical student, I spent a one month elective with Dr. Alan Goodridge in the movement disorders clinic at the Memorial University of Newfoundland. Following my Neurology residency, I remained at the University of Vermont to complete a combined movement disorders and clinical neurophysiology fellowship, under the supervision of Drs. Robert Hamill and Keith Nagle. I joined the University of Vermont Neurology faculty in 2005, where we have since developed an active Parkinson’s Disease and dystonia clinical trials program.

After a short time in clinical practice, I have recognized that impulsive behavior is a common source of disability among PD, HD, and various other motor control disorders. I was fortunate to identify investigators within the Department of Psychiatry at my institution, with interest and expertise in quantifying and pharmacologically reducing impulsivity. Drs. Paul Newhouse and Alexandra Potter have extensive experience in clinical and laboratory based measures of impulsivity and the therapeutic use of nicotine/nicotinic agonists.

Dr. Newhouse, primary mentor. Dr. Newhouse is a Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Clinical Neuroscience Research Unit and Brain Imaging Program at The University of Vermont. He also is the Associate Director for Research of the University of Vermont Center on Aging. He will assist in every aspect of this study including data analysis and manuscript preparation.

Dr. Potter, co-mentor. Dr. Potter is a Clinical Assistant Professor and Research Assistant Professor at The University of Vermont. She will be in charge of cognitive and behavioral battery construction, implementation, and analysis. She will also assist with manuscript preparation and report writing.

I was fortunate to be awarded the recent PSG/PDF mentored clinical research award, and they will serve as my mentors for my project entitled “Nicotine in the treatment of impulsivity in Parkinson’s Disease: A Pilot study.” We plan to test the hypothesis that nicotine therapy will reduce impulsive and compulsive behaviors associated with impulse control disorders in Parkinson’s Disease. We will utilize a double-blind cross over study of transdermal nicotine versus placebo over 12 weeks. Beyond the hopeful acquisition of positive pilot data, the MCRA will allow me to develop my skills as an independent investigator and become familiar with the techniques of quantification of impulsivity, while developing a transdisciplinary research relationship that can be applied to other movement disorders in the future.

As part of the MCRA program, Dr. Boyd becomes a member of the PSG Mentoring Committee where he will participate and gain valuable experience in doing grant reviews, developing training programs and building his own mentoring skills.
MCRA GRADUATES: Where are they now?

Wendy Galpern, MD, PhD, 2004-2005 award recipient; Mentor: Tony Lang, MD. Project: Antidyskinetic properties of topiramate: A double-blind, placebo-controlled trial in patients with PD and levodopa-induced dyskinesias.” Dr. Galpern’s current position is Program Director, Office of Clinical Research at NINDS/NIH. She has pursued a career in PD research and is involved with clinical research and clinical trials for movement disorders. She has had many publications in the field. After her fellowship she began working for NIH and has not applied for any peer-reviewed funding given her position. The PSG Mentoring Committee was not formed at the time of her MCRA, although Dr. Galpern has been an active participant of this committee’s activities. She has supplied the Mentoring Committee with grant information for their program booklets and was a guest speaker at the Mentoring Committee program in Toronto at the AAN this year.

Connie Marras, MD, PhD, 2005-2006 award recipient; Mentors: Tony Lang, MD for MCRA and Caroline Tanner, MD, PhD for PhD. Project: “A family study of LRRK2 mutations: Establishing evaluation and screening methods.” Dr. Marras is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Toronto and Staff neurologist at Toronto Western Hospital. She has pursued a career in PD research and is a clinician scientist with 80% of her time dedicated to research and the remaining 20% on patient care and teaching. Her observational clinical research focus is on the prognosis of PD and measurement in clinical research of movement disorders. In the years following her MCRA award, she has applied for peer-reviewed funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Michael J. Fox Foundation, and the National Parkinson Foundation. The mentoring award provided valuable protected time to apply for operating grants. Being on the PSG Mentoring Committee was a valuable experience which provided insight into the grant peer review process and helped her grant-writing skills.

Publications:


Vicki Shanker, MD, 2006-2007 award recipient; Mentors: Susan Bressman and L. Ozelius. Project: “Defining the prevalence and phenotype of the leucine-rich repeat kinase (LRRK2) in Ashkenazi Jews.” Dr. Shanker is currently an Assistant Professor of Neurology and Residency Program Director at Beth Israel Medical Center of Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York. She has partially pursued a career in PD research. Her research is clinically oriented and is focused on LRRK2-PD 5-10% of her time. The majority of the time is administration of the residency program and teaching with about 20% patient care. Data from Dr. Shanker’s MCRA research was placed in a proposal entitled “Genetics of PD consortium study” by Dr. Susan Bressman, her mentor, and funded by Michael J. Fox Foundation. This is a multicenter trial with Columbia and Israel and Dr. Shanker is working on gathering neurocognitive and mood data. Dr. Shanker is working on the final draft of a manuscript entitled “The Mood and Neurocognitive Profile of LRRK2” to be submitted to *Movement Disorders.* Being a part of the PSG Mentoring Committee and the review process made her look for and allowed her to make successful proposals. Attending the PSG annual meeting allowed her to be more attune to “hot topics” in PD and will hopefully serve as a foundation for future collaborations. This experience influenced her own interests and she explains, “Not only have I made my residents more aware of the mentoring opportunities through the PSG, but I have mentored a resident on an ET/Dystonia project. Although I have had many unexpected road bumps in my study, I have been able to help my residents avoid these problems.”

Publications:


Shanker VL, Defining the neurocognitive profile of AJ PD with LRRK2 G2019S. *MDS, 2009.*


Continued on next page...
Xiang Gao, MD, PhD, 2007-2008 award recipient; 
**Mentor:** Alberto Ascherio, MD.  **Project:**
“Prospective study of diet quality, dietary urate index and survival of PD patients.” Dr. Gao is currently an Instructor in Medicine at Harvard Medical School. He is also an Associate Epidemiologist at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and a Research Scientist at the Harvard School of Public Health. He is pursuing a career in Parkinson’s disease research and currently working on two NIH RO1 PD grants to examine whether use of NSAIDs and urate-related genes are associated with a lower risk of developing PD. He spends 80% of his time on research and the remainder 20% on patient care and teaching. He has applied for peer-reviewed funding and was funded an RO1 grant in September 2009 by the NIH-NINDS. Recently, he has been selected to serve on the Committee of Nutrition, Trauma, and the Brain for the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. The MCRA award gave him the opportunity to conduct a study by himself and think things through a PI’s prospective under the mentorship of Dr. Alberto Ascherio. Dr. Ascherio provided valuable suggestions for the project and assisted Dr. Gao in writing the MCRA grant which was his first and that led into subsequent others. He has been an active member on the PSG Mentoring Committee for the past 3 years and gained valuable experience in reviewing grants. He learned from working with experts in the field and it allowed him to have exposure to novel and exciting research ideas. His participation in the Mentoring Committee influenced him and he is planning on recruiting his own post-doc the end of this year.

**Publications:**


Gregory Pontone, MD, 2008-2009 award recipient; 
**Mentor:** Laura Marsh, MD.  **Project:** “Prevalence and familial aggregation of panic disorder in patients with Parkinson’s disease”. Dr. Pontone is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Director of the Movement Disorders Psychiatry Clinic at Johns Hopkins. He has pursued a career in Parkinson’s disease research by studying the non-motor and psychiatric aspects of PD. The focus of his research is on anxiety disorders in PD and spends 75% of his time on research with the remaining 25% on patient care and teaching. He has applied for peer-reviewed funding through the NIH, institutional funding through the ICTR TTC at Johns Hopkins and the PDF. His mentoring award allowed him to obtain successful application for institutional funds for genetic sequencing follow up of the family study. Being on the PSG Mentoring Committee allowed him to gain experience in doing reviews and discuss grant submissions with senior PSG members during the review process. This improved his understanding of grant composition and content. He suggests expanding this function of the committee in some way because it may be useful as writing grants and developing research questions are central skills for a successful academic/research career. The importance of mentorship has always been emphasized at his institution. This award provided a framework for mentoring and collaboration outside of his institution that has been invaluable. It has not only increased his interest in mentoring but also facilitated collaborations with mentors and mentees outside of his institution who have similar research interests. Dr. Pontone commented that “I believe that the “multi-center mentoring” facilitated by the PSG is one of the consortium’s greatest contributions to increasing our understanding of PD as it is central to the process that facilitates PD research”. Dr. Pontone has prepared another manuscript entitled “Familial aggregation of panic disturbances in PD” and has submitted it for publication.

**Publications:**


Amie Peterson, MD, 2009-2010 award recipient, 
**Mentor:** John Nutt, MD: “A Pilot Study of Balance and Vitamin D in Persons with Parkinson’s disease”. Dr. Peterson continues to work on her project. She recently has been awarded a CDA (Career Development Award) Level 2 through the Portland VA for her continuation of this project, a vitamin D intervention study, entitled: "Vitamin D and Balance in Parkinson’s Disease.”

**Publication:**
Peterson AL, Quinn JF, Horak FB, Nutt JG. The Relationship Between Balance, as Measured by Clinical Posturography, and Vitamin D in Parkinson’s Disease. Accepted for a poster presentation at the MDS 14th International Congress of PD and MD, June 2010 in Buenos Aires and will be published in *Movement Disorders.*

Notice of this year’s PSG PDF Mentored Clinical Research Award program will be out soon and applications are due the end of March 2011. If you have any questions, please contact Roseanna Battista.
WORKING GROUP UPDATES

Genetics and Environmental Risk (19 members)
Leaders: Connie Marras, MD, Michael Schwarzschild, MD, PhD, and Lin Zhang, MD, PhD

Current Projects:
- **Main project**, “Impact of Commonly Prescribed Medications on PD Progression” (PI: Andrew Siderowf; funded by the NPF). Construction of the meta-analytic database has been constructed and analyses have been conducted for L-type calcium channel blockers, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications and statins. Interpretation of results is ongoing. Timothy Collier (Katrina Paumier, co-PI) was funded by a PSG/PDF datamining grant to study anti-depressants. This additional study was coordinated with the main project.

- Marian Evatt is investigating vitamin D levels in the DATATOP cohort. Her project is funded by a PSG/PDF datamining grant.

- Roger Kurlan’s proposal “Improving Quality of Care and Research for PD Using Information Technology”. This project is currently on hold.

Other Non-Motor Features of PD (28 members)
Leaders: Carlos Singer, MD, Mickie Welsh, RN, DNS, and Ivan Bodis-Wollner, MD, DSc

Current Projects:
- “URGE-PD: A Multi-Site, Double-Blind, Randomized, Placebo-Controlled Trial of Solifenacin Succinate (VESIcare) for the Treatment of Urinary Dysfunction in Parkinson’s Disease”, Theresa Zesiewicz, PI. Dr. Zesiewicz secured funding on her own from Astellas Pharmaceuticals and the trial began in November 2009.

- “Weight Loss in PD”, Ergun Y. Uc, PI. An abstract entitled “Weight Loss in PD across Different Stages” was presented as a poster at the MDS 14th International Congress in June 2010. Dr. Uc has submitted a manuscript for publication. Highlights of the results include figures of weight loss of equal or more than 5% for 46.5 % of patients from DATATOP after three years; 22.3% for CALM-PD patients. Most important predictors for DATATOP included PIGD phenotype, bulbar symptoms and protective effect of Deprenyl and for CALM-PD the most important predictors were female gender, depression and dyskinesias. In the case of PRESTO patients (advanced PD with fluctuations), female gender and disabling dyskinesias were predictors. Conclusions: weight loss is multifactorial.

- “Smell and Cognitive Dysfunction in PD”. Evaluating olfaction prospectively in the early stages of PD as a predictor for the development of cognitive impairment, Richard Doty and Ivan Bodis-Wollner, PIs. Olfactory dysfunction is present in more than 90% of PD patients. There is total anosmia in 1/3 of cases and it is unrelated to motor stage. It is also indistinguishable from Alzheimer’s. It is correlated with certain autonomic measures. Dr. Doty is preparing a proposal for review.

Cognitive/Psychiatric (Behavior) (34 members)
Leaders: John Growdon, MD, Ergun Y. Uc, MD, and Kelvin Chou, MD

Current Projects:
- The Working Group (PI: Ergun Uc) completed a data-mining study examining the clinical predictors and incidence of cognitive impairment and depression in early PD using the DATATOP cohort and the related publications are below:

  - The incidence of cognitive impairment in clinical trial participants in early PD was relatively low. The study found potential novel predictors of cognitive impairment in PD such as bulbar dysfunction and presence gastrointestinal/urologic symptoms suggestive of early autonomic dysfunction. These results were presented at the Derek Denny-Brown Symposium (2008 ANA meeting) by Dr. Uc and recently published in Neurology (Uc EY, McDermott MP, Marder KS, Anderson SW, Litvan I, Como P, Auinger P, Chou KL, Growdon J, on behalf of the Parkinson Study Group. Incidence of and Risk Factors for Cognitive Impairment in an Early Parkinson’s Disease Clinical Trial Cohort. Neurology, 2009; 73:1469–1477.).

  - The results of the depression component were presented in a platform session at the 2009 AAN meeting and published in (Uc EY, McDermott MP, Weintraub D, Marsh L, Growdon J, Chou K, Auinger P, Marder K, on behalf of the PSG DATATOP Investigators. Predictors of Depression in Early Parkinson’s Disease. Neurology 2009; 72(11):A257-A258.). A paper is being prepared for submission.

- Dr. Chou coordinated a task force to recommend a cognitive scale to screen for dementia and cognitive impairment in trials of PD. The manuscript has been accepted to Movement Disorders. (Chou KL, Amick MM, Brandt J, Camicioli R, Frei K, Gitelman D, Goldman J, Growdon J, Hurting HI, Levin B, Litvan I, Marsh L, Simuni T, Troster Al, Uc EY. A Recommended Scale for Cognitive Screening in Clinical Trials of Parkinson’s Disease. Mov Disord, in press)

- Dr. Karen Marder (Columbia University), along with Lorraine Clark, PhD, conducted a study on genotyping blood samples collected during the DATATOP study to determine the association between several PD related mutations with dementia incidence in PD. An abstract was presented as a poster at the AAN 2010 annual meeting.

More Working Group updates, next page...
Working Group Updates, continued…

**Biomarkers** (16 members)
Leaders: Un Kang, MD, Roger Kurlan, MD, and Claire Henchcliffe, MD

Current Projects:
- The Working Group is helping to coordinate the biomarker collection component of the QE3 study (separately funded through the MJFF).
- With Ivan Bodis-Wollner (PI), they are developing a multicenter biomarker study using optical coherence tomography (OCT). He is analyzing preliminary data to drive power calculations for the next phase of the project. The working group plans to work on the protocol based on this analysis and organize the working group members for this trial. The protocol was submitted for a NIH Challenge Grant in April 2009 and not funded. Plans are to continue to work on it and submit it for funding.

**Functional Neurosurgical** (63 members)
Leaders: Michael S. Okun, MD, Hubert Fernandez, MD, and Rajeev Kumar, MD

Current Projects:
- **PPN DBS**: There is not enough information available on PPN DBS, and studies vary. To consider a PPN multi-center DBS study, a consensus about patient selection, imaging, target zone, and outcomes would be needed. Elena Moro, Michael Okun and Rajeev Kumar will lead a review article on the need for standardization of approaches to PPN DBS for the field. Suggested outcomes can be shared with all PSG centers implanting PPN to get some solid pilot data. A conference call to plan the review article further will be scheduled. There will also be further discussion as to whether it is useful and feasible to attempt to obtain standardized data from those sites that have performed PPN implantation.
- **Zona Incerta Target for ET and PD**: There are growing reports that the zona incerta may be an equally efficacious, if not better, target than the standard STN for advanced PD patients, and possibly with less behavioral and cognitive consequences. The Functional Neurosurgical WG, under the co-leadership of Hubert Fernandez and Robert Gross plan to submit a prospective pilot trial on ZI versus STN DBS for advanced PD patients. Anyone interested in serving in the Writing/Organizing Committee and/or participating as a site are welcome to contact Hubert Fernandez or Robert Gross.
- **STN vs VIM for tremor-predominant PD**: The question of whether STN or Vim target should be recommended in parkinsonian tremor, in the absence of disability from any symptom other than tremor, is a valid one and feasible to proceed with a multi-center trial. A major advantage of the study is that both proposed targets are “on label” and should be medically appropriate to use as well as reimbursed by the study participants’ medical insurance.

**Classic Motor** (27 members)
Leaders: Robert Hauser, MD and Anthony Lang, MD

Current Projects:
- **Tanya Simuni. STEADY-PD** *(Safety, Tolerability, and Efficacy Assessment of Dynacirc CR for PD)* trial. The primary aim is to assess the general safety and tolerability of isradipine, to determine effective dosage of isradipine and obtain pilot data on the potential effect of isradipine on slowing the progression of PD. The trial is currently enrolling.
- **Roger Kurlan. “Aerobic Exercise as a Disease Modifying Intervention in Parkinson’s Disease”.** Dr. Kurlan submitted this proposal to the PSG SRC on August 3, 2009 and it was approved as a PSG study if funded. Dr. Kurlan submitted this to NIH on July 14, 2010.
- **Robert Hauser and Peggy Auinger. “Determination of Minimally Clinically Important Change in Early and Advanced PD”.** This datamining project was funded by PSG/PDF and analyses have been completed on the TEMPO and PRESTO studies. Results were presented at the PSG Annual Meeting in May 2009. A manuscript will be prepared for publication.

The Classic Motor Working Group will host the Fourth Annual Shults Symposium in May 2011. A planning committee is being formed and they will work with the PSG Symposia Committee on this effort.

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**Would you like to join a working group?**

If you are interested in joining any one of the 6 working groups, simply send an email to one of the working group leaders introducing yourself and your background and they will get back to you – we encourage both investigators and coordinators to become involved in the working groups. The goal of the working groups is to generate proposals for new research studies, either interventional or observational, as well as retrospective data-mining projects. More information can be found on the PSG web site.
Calendar of Events

September 28–October 1, 2010
WORLD PARKINSON CONGRESS, Glasgow, Scotland. Learn more at: www.worldpdcongress.org or contact Elizabeth “Eli” Pollard, Congress Manager, at info@worldpdcongress.org. PSG is proud to be an organizational partner of this event.

October 21–October 23, 2010
PDF Clinical Research Learning Institute, Hamilton Park Hotel and Conference Center, Florham Park, New Jersey. For more information, contact PDF at (800) 457-6676 or info@pdf.org or visit www.pdf.org/en/crli.

April 2011
PSG PRESENTS: STARTING A CLINICAL RESEARCH CAREER – CLUES FOR SUCCESS, hosted by the PSG Mentoring Committee. To be held at the AAN Annual Meeting in Hawaii. Date and time to be determined.

May 12–14, 2011 SAVE THE DATE!
PSG 23rd ANNUAL MEETING and PSG 25th ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM, Four Seasons, Irving, Texas.

Comments? Questions?

Please let us know...your comments and questions will be kept confidential. We also welcome your feedback on the newsletter and your ideas for topics for future newsletters.

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