Delegate Biographies

Mr Alison Alexandre, Clinical Research

Alison Alexandre, M.D., M.Sc, is a independent researcher. In this role, he seeks to build and to promote a culture of scientific excellence, academic integrity and interdisciplinary collaboration. He also works to establish partnerships with the larger scientific community—including other institutions and private companies—to address the most urgent challenges of medicine with the shared goal of improving human health.

As a GP (Brazilian homologous) who ran a clinical service for more than 10 years, Alison Alexandre brings a strong translational focus to his own research and to his roles leading research enterprises.

Prior to joining scientific medical activities, Alison Alexandre was a professor of biology at the public school system. In addition, he was the team leader of electronics and basic computer teachers as a volunteer in philanthropic organizations. He also received a bachelor's degree in biology and a master in medical sciences.

Mr Ezana Assefa, Emory University

Hello, my name is Ezana Assefa. I am a fifth year graduate student at Emory University studying genetic modifiers of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. When I'm not in lab, you can usually find me playing basketball at the gym, enjoying the weather outside on The Beltline, or trying food at a new restaurant.

Mr. Lautaro Francisco Belfiori Carrasco, Lund University

Starting my journey in Argentina, I got a degree in Biotechnology from the Argentina University of Enterprise. After a short experience in zebrafish I joined the Aging and Neurodegeneration group at Fundación Instituto Leloir, leaded by M.D. Eduardo Castaño, to pursue my PhD. During my stay there I focused on identifying genetic factor that modified Amyloid beta toxicity in the central nervous system of D. melanogaster. Validation of those genetic factors **motivated a new model** organism shift into primary neuron and cell line culture to study the effect of 4-hydroxyphenylpyruvate dioxygenase (Hpd) down-regulation on Amyloid beta toxicity.

Once the Ph.D. was finished and still fueled by how changes in gene expression can modify neurodegenerative processes I joined the Translational Neurogenetics Unit leaded by Ph.D. Maria Swanberg. Here I am studying gene expression changes which modulate spontaneous dopaminergic neurodegeneration in the En1 hemizygous mouse model.

Delegate Biographies

Ms Hannah Cahill, University of Bristol

I attended the University of Bristol to study Biochemistry. My final project was in the Henley lab developing cell culture models of Alzheimer's disease using lentiviruses. I am now on the Wellcome Trust Dynamic Molecular Cell Biology PhD programme at the University of Bristol, working in the Henley lab continuing this project.

Mr Sandeep Chenna, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland

I am Sandeep, I work as a research assistant at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Dublin. My younger self was interested in biological systems mainly due it´s dynamic nature (`Lively´). So, I did an Int. Masters in basic sciences specializing in biotechnology. But I felt the best way to understand dynamic systems is by taking a birds eye view. This approach involves analysing and integrating a lot of data and it requires a good mathematical understanding and computing knowledge, So I ended up doing a second master´s in biomedical engineering specializing in computational neuroscience. At RCSI, I am part of an IMI funded EU Project, PD-MitoQUANT. My present work involves using mathematical models to integrate data from low and high throughput experimental setups. The experimental data is from neurons treated with α-Synuclein oligomers (which is a protein known to accumulate in Parkinson´s disease patient neurons). This integration of data into models helps in identifying mechanistic details and possible pathways contributing to neurodegeneration, which can further be validated by experiments. When my day in research life is not moving, I try different ways to dribble a basketball. When I think I have done enough research, I go hiking. I also like learning new languages and am an Indian multilingual (Telugu, Tamil, Hindi, Marathi) and I am trying to include European languages (Spanish, French) to the list.

Mr Patrick Cottilli, Francis Crick Institute

Hi everybody, I am an Italian guy who has lived in Spain for the past 9 years - there I did my Bachelor's degree in Biotechnology and a Master's degree in Neuroscience. I initially started working in biochemistry about pathogen-plant interaction between viroids and tomato plants. This project eventually led to a collaboration with a laboratory in Sweden where I spent 1 year as research assistant solving the structure of the tomato cytosolic ribosome with Cryo-EM. I have then continued my studies in Neuroscience in Barcelona, where I evaluated possible drug treatments to enhance peripheral nerve regeneration in a sciatic nerve injury mouse model. Finally, I recently started my PhD in London to study the impact of mitochondria in the functions of midbrain dopaminergic neurons presynapses in physiology and in Parkinson's disease.

A part from that, I really enjoy playing rugby and do sports in general. I try to spend as many weekends as possible hiking, and I am excited to explore the green side of UK.

Delegate Biographies

Mrs Maria Dalby, Muna Therapeutics

I am a bioinformatician working in the biotech company Muna Therapeutics. Here, I lead several data science driven activities to support the drug discovery programs. I am focused on developing novel therapeutics for neurodegenerative diseases, including Parkinson's Disease and Alzheimer's Disease.

Short Resumé:

Principal Bioinformatician at H. Lundbeck A/S (2021 - 2022). Main focus on insight into translational medicine, and biomarker development in the Department of Experimental Medicine.

Post-doctoral Researcher at H. Lundbeck A/S in the Department of Neuroscience, Research and affiliated Researcher at the Karolinska Institute, Sweden, Department of Medical Epidemiology and Biostatistics (2018 –2021). Main topics: Genetic and environmental links to affective disorders and cognitive performance

Post-doctoral Researcher at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark (2018 – 2018) working in the Department of Computational and RNA Biology, Science. Main subjects: Transcriptional profiling and cell-type proportional changes in healthy ageing.

PhD degree in Regulation and Maintenance of Transcriptional Specificity from University of Copenhagen (2015 – 2018) in the Department of Computational and RNA Biology, Science. Visiting Researcher at Cornell University, NY, Department of Biomedical Sciences. Main specialisation in genomics and computational modelling of transcriptional regulation.

M.S. in Bioinformatics and Systems Biology from the Technical University of Denmark (2012 – 2015)

B.S. in Biotechnology from the Technical University of Denmark (2009 – 2012)

Miss Ella Dunn, Royal Holloway, University of London

Ella Dunn is a current PhD student in the School of Biological Sciences at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her research focuses on identifying novel modifiers of synaptic function in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) and frontotemporal dementia (FTD). Ella currently utilises Drosophila models of ALS and FTD to carry out her research. Prior to beginning her doctoral studies, Ella completed a BSc in Biomedical Sciences and an MSc by Research in Biological Sciences at Royal Holloway.

Delegate Biographies

Ms Carolina Facal, University of Buenos Aires

My name is Carolina Facal and I am a PhD student at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. I have been undertaking my research project in testing the functional consequences and therapeutic potential of tau down-regulation in models of tauopathy. My career goals include contributing to understand the mechanisms involved in neurodegenerative diseases and to improve therapeutic strategies for tackling them.

Since I started my MSc thesis, I have been working at the Laboratory of Experimental Therapeutics for Neurodegenerative Processes, which belongs to the National Argentinian Research Council. During my MSc and PhD studies I have acquired broad expertise in the field of neurodegeneration, particularly focusing my work in investigating the role of tau in neuronal physiology and pathology. I also contributed to optimising novel gene therapy tools in a mouse model of tauopathy, characterising behavioural and neurochemical phenotypes associated with tau abnormal metabolism.

For my postdoctoral training I pursue moving to another country and continue my work in neurodegenerative diseases. Hence, attending the Molecular Neurodegeneration and Therapeutic Approaches Course would be a great opportunity to broaden my knowledge in the field and to create networks for my future career as a scientist.

Dr. Anllely Fernandez, Indiana University-School of Medicine

I was born in Antofagasta, Chile (Atacama desert). I am the second of 5 siblings. I studied Biochemistry in the University of Antofagasta, Chile. I worked in my undergraduate degree thesis characterizing the cellular secretion pathway of Cerebral Dopamine Neurotrophic Factor (CDNF), a new neurotrophic factor that was discovered in 2007 as a possible treatment for Parkinson's disease. After that, I moved to the capital of Chile, 1400 km from Antofagasta. I did my PhD in the Universidad de los Andes in Santiago, Chile. I was the only woman in my year group. My doctoral thesis was then carried out in the laboratory of Dr. Ursula Wyneken. I determined the mechanism by which proteins are loaded into small extracellular vesicles (sEVs) or exosomes from astrocytes through a SUMOylation mechanism. Simultaneously with my thesis, I actively collaborated with researchers on the investigation of the role of miR-26a in stress. After finishing my doctorate, I decided to do my postdoctoral training in the laboratory of Dr Rubén Vidal at Indiana University School of Medicine in the USA. I am studying diseases that are characterized by amyloid deposition and tau, including Alzheimer disease (AD), familial British dementia (FBD) and familial Danish dementia (FDD).

Delegate Biographies

Mrs Ana Luisa Gil Martinez, Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, University College London

I was born in Murcia, Spain. I completed my Bachelor's degree in Biochemistry and my Master's degree in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology at the University of Murcia (Spain). For my Master's thesis, I worked on the effect of platinum (IV) prodrug-loaded silk fibroin nanoparticles on human ovarian and breast tumor cell lines. This approach showed a significant antitumor effect while maintaining an excellent selectivity index for tumor cells. Thus, I became more interested in studying the molecular processes involved in disease.

In 2015, I joined Prof. Maria Trinidad Herreros's group at the University of Murcia and Prof. Harry Steinbusch's group at the Maastricht University to do a double Ph.D. in Neuroscience. During this period, I worked on studying the effect of anti-inflammatory drugs on the progression of dopaminergic neuronal death and glial response in the MPTP-mouse model. I developed different techniques including in-vivo disease model monitorization, immunohistochemistry, western blot, and microscopy during this time.

In 2020, I was awarded a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship to join Prof. Mina Ryten's Lab at the University College London. Since then, my postdoctoral project has aimed to describe transcriptomic signatures related to the progression of neurodegeneration in Parkinson's disease. For this purpose, I analyze transcriptomic data from blood-human samples of sporadic PD cases to identify the differential expressed genes and to build co-expression networks.

Dr Luisa Giudici, ADDI (Alborada Drug Discovery Institute)

I have acquired a Master Degree in Biological Sciences at the University of Milano (Italy) and a Ph.D. in Biotechnology at the University of Brescia (Italy). I was initially interested in studying intracellular transport, subcellular localization and metabolism of sphingolipids, particularly in the development of in-cell assays by using novel fluorescent probes. This was the subject of my Ph.D. thesis and part of the work was carried out at the University of Utrecht, Biochemistry Dept., The Netherlands, Prof. L.M.G. van Golde, where I developed a fluorescent assay for cellular sphingolipid transport in cultured oligodendrocytes.

After the Ph. D. I worked in the lab of Prof. G. van Meer (University of Utrecht, Dept. of Cell Biology, The Netherlands) to acquire up-to-date techniques to study intracellular transport of lipids and applied them to the study of the transport and the plasma membrane translocation of sphingomyelin.

In 2000 I moved to the UK for a Post-doc in the laboratory of Prof. Robin F. Irvine, Dept. of Pharmacology, University of Cambridge where I was involved in the study of cellular signalling of phosphatidylinositols with a specific focus initially on the phosphatidylinositol 5-phosphate 4-kinases (intracellular localisation and mobility of various splice variants) followed by study of the function of Phosphatidylinositol 4-phosphate 5-kinase II isoform γ using a specific inhibitor of its enzymatic activity.

Delegate Biographies

From 2016 I have worked for a year at Babraham Institute (Dr. Nick Ktistakis and Dr. Len Stephens) where I applied proteomics, metabolomics and immunofluorescence to the study of the role of Phosphatidylinositol 4-phosphate 5-kinase II isoform in stress granules formation. The results of this work were part of the application for a BBSRC Research Grant that was not granted.

Since 2019 I have been employed at the Alborada Drug Discovery Institute, University of Cambridge, as a Research Associate. I have been involved in the validation of a number of targets for neurodegeneration, applying research skills in cell biology (i.e. primary cell cultures of neurons, autophagy detection methods), molecular biology (including: CRISPR-Cas9 gene editing, quantitative real-time PCR, cellular transfection -siRNA and DNA plasmids-), and cellular imaging (i.e. High Content Imaging, Image analysis). Lately, I have acquired responsibility as project coordinator for high-throughput screening experiments.

Dr Grace Hallinan, Indiana University

I am a postdoctoral research fellow from Ireland, currently in my fourth year of postdoctoral training. I completed my undergraduate degree in University College Dublin, Ireland, and moved to the University of Southampton, UK for my PhD in 2014. My interdisciplinary PhD was focused on the directionalised propagation of tau protein between connected neurons. For this research, I worked with Dr Katrin Deinhardt in the Biological Sciences department, and with Dr Jonathan West in the Centre for Hybrid biodevices, where I made custom microfluidic devices for my project. After completing my PhD, I stayed in Southampton for one more year on a postdoctoral pilot study. In 2018, I moved to Indianapolis to join the Vidal and Ghetti labs at the Indiana University School of Medicine. Here, I research the structural and biochemical properties of prion protein and prion-like proteins, such as tau and amyloid beta. I now live in the USA with my fiancé, our four cats and two rats!

Mrs Zhenzhen Hu, University College London

My Chinese name's Zhenzhen Hu. I am currently an associate professor at Nanchang University Jiangxi Medical College in China. I obtained Bachelor of Medicine from Gannan Medical College and PhD in Pharmacology from Chungbuk National University, Republic of Korea. Since my PhD, I have been working on the mechanism underlying the development process of drug addiction. My research focuses on the role and mechanism of GABABR membrane trafficking during the process of drug addiction and depression. Now I am an academic visitor in Huiliang Li's Lab at University College London. My current research focuses on the oligodendrocytes basis of spatial cognition and memory in mice, making use of the state-of-the-art virtual reality techniques

Delegate Biographies

Dr. Yoo Koung Ko, The ALBORADA drug discovery institute

I am a neuroscientist by training, receiving a BSc (Hons) and PhD from the University of Edinburgh. During my PhD research, I studied synapse biology using CRISPR/Cas9 genome editing in Prof Seth Grant and Dr Noboru Komiyama labs. Upon completion of my PhD, I joined the ALBORADA Drug Discovery Institute at the University of Cambridge as an associate biologist. I am interested in elucidating molecular and cellular mechanisms behind brain disorders and translating this mechanistic understanding into novel therapies. My current research focuses on discovery and development of compounds that are beneficial for treating neurodegenerative diseases. I carry out a variety of functional experiments to characterise and validate promising targets and mechanisms using both cellular and animal models.

Dr KilSun Lee, Universidade Federal de São Paulo

Kil Sun Lee is associate professor in Universidade Federal de São Paulo, Escola Paulista de Medicina, Brazil. She was graduated in chemistry and biotechnology in Universidade de São Paulo in 1998 and accomplished her doctoral degree in prion protein biology in the same institution in 2002. Between 2003-2007, worked as post-doctoral fellow in Byron Caughey´s lab, Rocky Mountain Laboratory, NIAID, NIH. The main topics investigated in this period were the formation of protein aggregates and their trafficking within and between cells. Currently, she gives lectures of biochemistry and molecular biology in medical school and also leads a research group with main interest of understanding molecular mechanisms related to cognitive impairment associated to lifestyles or chronic health conditions, such as sleep deprivation, iron deficiency and obesity.

Ms. Chana Lim, Eisai Inc

I currently reside in the United States and have completed my masters in Bioinformatics at Boston University. I am currently working as a Senior Researcher in Computational Biology, Data Science & Science Infrastructure at a Japanese pharmaceutical company called Eisai. My expertise is mainly on Bioinformatics, Data Science, and Data Visualizations.

Delegate Biographies

Mrs Ana Marote, Life and Health Sciences Research Institute (ICVS), School of Medicine, University of Minho

Ana Marote completed her BSc in Biomedical Sciences in 2011 and her MSc in Molecular Biomedicine in 2013, both at the University of Aveiro. During her master's and a subsequent research fellowship, she worked at the Institute for Biomedicine at the University of Aveiro, where she was enrolled in multidisciplinary projects involving the Department of Mechanical Engineering and the Institute of Materials, which were mainly focused on the development of new approaches for tissue regeneration, including poly(l-lactide) electrospun- based nanofibers for neuronal differentiation, new powder formulations for bone substitution, and electrical stimulation for the generation of active bone implants. In 2020 she completed her PhD in Applied Health Sciences at the Life and Health Sciences Research Institute (ICVS) in collaboration with Behavioral and Molecular lab (Bn'ML) at the University of Minho, under the supervision of Dr. António Salgado and Dr. Luísa Pinto. The main focus of her PhD studies was to unveil the therapeutic potential of induced pluripotent stem cells (iPSCs)-derived mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) secretome as a cell-free therapy for Parkinson's disease. She was a visiting PhD student at the iPSC Laboratory for CNS Disease Modeling at Lund University, under the supervision of Dr. Laurent Roybon, where she trained in stem cell biology, and acquired skills necessary for the generation, maintenance, and characterization of iPSCs from patient fibroblasts and peripheral blood mononuclear cells. Moreover, she trained on the differentiation of iPSCs, as well as mouse embryonic stem cells into midbrain dopaminergic neurons. After returning to ICVS, she was able to implement these new techniques and pursue her studies on the generation and characterization of iPSCs-derived MSCs. Currently, she is a junior researcher at ICVS, focused on the development new in vitro models, based on human iPSCs, for understanding the underlying mechanisms of degeneration in Parkinson's disease and designing innovative diagnostic and therapeutic approaches . She has co-supervised one MSc dissertation in Biomedical Engineering and two final BSc project in Biochemistry. She is currently supervising two MSc dissertations in Health Sciences and Genetics. She has published 21 peer-reviewed papers (over 400citations, h-index=11), one book section, and has one registered patent (WO/2021/198927, Compositions for Therapy or Treatment of Parkinson's Disease, Methods and Uses Thereof). Since 2020, she is also a reviewer for several peer-reviewed international journals, including the International Journal of Molecular Sciences and the Journal of Cellular and Molecular Medicine.

Mr Thomas Mota, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center

Thomas Mota completed his undergraduate education in microbiology at California State University, Long Beach, where he became interested neuroscience research. He then completed the California Institute for Regenerative Medicine Bridges to Stem Cell internship at the University of California, Irvine, where he studied methods to increase the efficacy of integration of cellular transplants in animal models of neurodegenerative disorders. In 2017, Thomas joined the PhD program at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles, California, where he has been studying the role of neuroinflammatory signaling in microglia, and their role in ALS/FTD disease pathogenesis. In 2020, Thomas was awarded the Gilliam Fellowship for Advanced Study from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to support his research.

Delegate Biographies

Ms. Veroniki Nikolaki, University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School

My name is Veroniki Nikolaki and I am originally from Athens, Greece. I am 27 years old and I studied in the USA for my bachelor's and master's degrees. I studied biology and biotechnology at WPI during my undergrad and Biotechnology with a focus on Neuroscience during my master's at Columbia University. I then worked for 3 years in the Datta lab at Harvard Medical School, where I looked at the role of microglia in Alzheimer's disease. I am currently a second year PhD student in the Gao lab at UMass Medical School. I study the C9orf72 gene causing ALS/FTD and more specifically I am interested in sex differences in DPR pathology and genetic modifiers of disease. My fun fact is that I used to be a competitive springboard diver for 12 years.

Mrs Lucia Padilla, The Glenn BIggs Institute for ALzheimer´s & Neurodegenerative Diseases

My name is Lucia Padilla. I am 26 years old and I was born in a little province in the north of Argentina called Jujuy. My province was part of the Inca Empire before the colonization so I grew up surrounded by different cultures with a strong influence from Bolivia and Peru.

My family is full of people that enjoy spending time outdoors. My father has practiced fly fishing since he was young so he taught me and my siblings how to fly fish when we were kids. Due to this passion that he has passed on to us, we used to go to Patagonia for our summer holidays. We would drive from my province with all our equipment on our car for two days and stay in the south of the country fly fishing and doing other water sports during a month.

When I was 18 years old, I moved to Buenos Aires to study biology at the University of Buenos Aires. I lived there with my brother for seven years until I graduated. While I was a student, I made a lot of friends and realized I wanted to dedicate myself to scientific research. I have always been very close to the health system in my country because my parents are both psychiatrists, a fact that definitely inspired me to focus on the molecular basis of human diseases further on in my career.

Because of my close contact with psychiatry, I was always curious about psychopathologies and neurological diseases. That is why when I was offered to work in the University of Texas in San Antonio at an Alzheimer research institute, I packed my life and moved to the United States, where I have spent the last eight months.

Moving to another country was not easy but luckily I have met other Argentinian people and we get together to celebrate our culture and feel more at home. Also, I have met people from different parts of the world which has given me the chance to get to know other cultures and meet new friends.

Delegate Biographies

Mrs Jolien Perneel, VIB-UAntwerp Center for Molecular Neurology

My name is Jolien Perneel, I joined the lab of Professor Rosa Rademakers at the VIB-UA Center for Molecular Neurology as a Ph.D. student after obtaining my Master's degree in Biochemistry and Biotechnology (Cellular and Molecular Neurosciences) in 2020 at the University of Antwerp. The Rademakers lab focuses on the identification and functional follow-up of genetic variants for frontotemporal dementia (FTD). In this context, my project is focused on the biology and function of a lysosomal protein called TMEM106B, for which I am using both cell models and animal models to study the functional consequences of altered TMEM106B on cellular and endolysosomal health. While TMEM106B was initially identified as a risk factor for FTD, TMEM106B also modulates disease risk in a variety of brain disorders and has been implicated in healthy aging. Recently, several Cryo-EM groups identified TMEM106B amyloid fibrils constituted of its C-terminal fragment in postmortem brain tissue of a diverse set of neurodegenerative conditions. Consequently, also several parts of my research will rescope towards these new findings, exposing me to new scientific topics and challenges which is why this course will be highly relevant for me.

Dr Naira Rashid, Hamdard University New Delhi

I am Dr. Naira Rashid, working as a Postdoctoral Research Associate under DHR Woman Scientist scheme of Govt. of India. My research domain from the time of my Ph.D has been on studying the misfolding of proteins and exploring the role of chaperones in ameliorating protein aggregation. My current research work involves identification and functional characterization of alternatively spliced novel isoforms of human genes encoding small heat shock proteins (sHSPs) and deciphering their potential role in neurodegenerative disorders.

Our research involves the use of in silico and molecular biology based tools to identify alternatively spliced isoforms of these sHSP's and subsequently observe the protein expression. We intend to characterize the proteins and analyze their role in ameliorating various disorders associated with protein misfolding.photo to be provided

Delegate Biographies

Mrs Amitis Saliani, Queen Mary University of London

I am keenly interested in the genomic medicine theme and in finding novel therapeutic approaches to tackle some of the most deliberating diseases. Having gained knowledge in Genetics during my undergraduate degree, I am currently pursuing Masters (MRes) in Genomic Medicine at the Queen Mary University of London while gaining lab experience in lysosomal storage and neurodegenerative disorders to repurpose existing drugs to treat Gaucher and Parkinson's disease.

I am currently looking to further my knowledge on genomic spectrum of neurodegenerative diseases and the current models available and in the future to develop novel therapeutic approaches.

Mrs Amberlyn Simmons, Arizona State University

Amberlyn Simmons is a PhD student studying Biomedical Engineering at Arizona State University (ASU) under the advisement of Dr. Sarah Stabenfeldt. She was awarded the Fulton Fellowship and the Dean's Fellowship with the Ira A. Fulton Schools of Engineering at ASU. Her current research focuses on developing biomaterial based delivery systems for treatment of traumatic brain injury. Prior to joining the Stabenfeldt lab, Amberlyn completed her B.S. in biomedical engineering at the University of Florida in May 2021. Here, she conducted research in Dr. Cherie Stabler's Diabetes Tissue Engineering Laboratory under the mentorship of Robert Accolla. Amberlyn is the current president of ASU's chapter of the Society for Biomaterials and the current bylaws chair of the national student chapter of the Society for Biomaterials.

Ms Dufie Strubbe, VIB-KU Leuven Center for Brain & Disease Research

Dufie Strubbe was born in Bruges (Belgium) in 1998. After finishing high school in 2016, she started studying at the KU Leuven faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences (Belgium) and graduated magna cum laude as an MSc in Drug Development in July 2021. Shortly after Dufie obtained her MSc degree, she started as a Ph.D. student in the Laboratory of Neurobiology (Center of Brain & Disease Research, VIB-KU Leuven, Belgium) lead by Professor Ludo Van Den Bosch to pursue her Ph.D. degree in Biomedical Sciences. Hereby, she is currently focussing on unravelling the mechanism(s) responsible for the therapeutic effect of histone deacetylase 6 (HDAC6) inhibition in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) in hope of contributing to the development of a new therapeutic strategy. To this end, she is trying to elucidate the exact role of HDAC6 in ALS and unravel the mechanisms that underly the positive effect of HDAC6 modulation through pharmacological inhibition and genetic silencing. By using FUS-ALS patient-derived iPSC motor neurons and in vivo zebrafish disease models, the fundamental interactions and functions by which HDAC6 affects ALS pathogenesis will be investigated in addition to unravelling its role in axonal transport, neuromuscular junction formation and stability, and ALS-associated proteotoxicity.

Delegate Biographies

Mr Thomas Wight, Cerevance Ltd.

I am currently an Associate Scientist at Cerevance, A biotech company based in Cambridge. I graduated from the University of Manchester with a first class degree in Pharmacology with industrial experience in 2021. My industrial experience year was conducted at Boehringer Ingelheim in Vienna, where I gained a strong laboratory skillset. However, it was in my final year at university where I developed my passion for research of neurological disease. My final year project involved investigating the effect of acute exercise on the cognitive deficits in the sub-chronic phencyclidine rat model for cognitive impairment associated with schizophrenia. Cerevance focusses on finding novel targets and developing therapeutics to treat neurodegenerative diseases using our proprietary platform - NETSseq. At Cerevance, I am involved in in vitro and ex vivo cell biology assays such as organotypic hippocampal slice assays for investigating cellular mechanisms and the effect of compounds and high-throughput screening assays to drive the structure-activity relationship for projects. At this early stage in my career, the experience I am gaining from working at Cerevance is invaluable; I am involved in a variety of stages in our pipeline allowing me to develop my laboratory skills and providing me with a unique insight into the drug development process.

Dr John Williams, Eisai, Inc

I am a computational geneticist with a background in genomics, causal inference, and machine learning. I have previous experience in mouse genetics at MRC Harwell's Mammalian Genetics Unit and recently finished a postdoc at the University of Birmingham before joining Eisai. My previous work has encompassed neuropsychiatric genetics and the ontological representation of behavioral and disease traits.

Very happy to be attending and learning some great biology. At Eisai I will be involved in several Alzheimer's disease related studies, largely still in planning stages as of this writing.

Mr Dongwei Xu, University College London

I obtained my Batchelor's degree from the University of Edinburgh in 2020. Then I joined Dr Teresa Niccoli's group at UCL to work on my Master's project focusing on a Drosophila model for ALS. I am now a PhD student at the same lab working on how metformin modifies the symptoms of a Drosophila model for Alzheimer's Disease.