Dear Neurology Colleagues,

In these early days of 2022, I have reflected not only on the Yale Department of Neurology’s accomplishments during the last year, but also on our opportunities for improvement in the year to come. Ignited by nationwide demonstrations for racial justice in 2020, we had established a Committee for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion consisting of faculty, staff and trainees. In recent months, I am proud to share that we have expanded even more on our DEI efforts and will continue that forward momentum in 2022.

A priority for our department has been to appoint and finalize a leadership team to guide our DEI efforts. I am pleased to announce that Reshma Narula, MD has been appointed Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, and that Vanessa Cooper, MD has been appointed Associate Director for Educational Diversity. Together, they will serve as a resource for individual issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion that will involve faculty members, trainees, and staff. I invite you to read more about their individual responsibilities below.

Similarly, and as regional safety guidelines allow, we plan to resume outreach efforts with our New Haven community and surrounding region. I would like to recognize our Stamp Out Stroke (SOS) program, in particular, an outreach initiative led by Yale stroke physicians, nurses, neurology residents, and students, whose goal is to educate underserved communities about stroke prevention and patient care. SOS held 14 stroke education events last year, and I look forward to expanding critical work like theirs.
While there are certainly areas for growth, I am happy to report on many advancements in diversity and inclusion. From Clinical Grand Rounds that address health disparities and resident and faculty diversity training to our Yale Visiting Elective Program for Students Underrepresented in Neurology, the Department is well positioned to improve its current culture and eliminate barriers to success.

In closing, I would like to extend my deepest thanks to you for your continued hard work. Whether you have been on the frontlines caring for our patients, keeping the pace with clinical trials, or working behind the scenes in administration, thank you for doing your part during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

David A. Hafler, MD
William S. and Lois Stiles Edgerly Professor of Neurology and Professor of Immunobiology
Chairman, Department of Neurology, Yale School of Medicine
Neurologist-in-Chief, Yale New Haven Hospital

Vanessa Cooper, MD, Associate Director for Educational Diversity
Reshma Narula, MD, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Dr. Cooper will help support the recruitment of a diverse resident and fellow workforce, as well as help coordinate education offerings that focus on diversity and inclusion.

Dr. Narula will chair the DEI committee and work to develop DEI-related policies and procedures for the department. She will provide resources to regarding discrimination, microaggression, harassment, and Title IX concerns. She will serve as an ombudsperson for the department and support recruitment efforts.

Blue Ridge Institute for Medical Research ranks Yale Department of Neurology #6

In a ranking of NIH funding to US medical schools

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Education Highlights

The residency and fellow recruitment process remained virtual for the 2020-22 season.

We have shifted to hybrid in-person/virtual Grand Rounds, and we have started to focus on inviting speakers who are able to travel to New Haven to present in person.

We plan to continue holding Health Disparities Clinical Grand Rounds, in which we use real cases to highlight disparities in neurological care and discuss ways to ensure equity in our clinical care.

We have had an excellent record of resident and fellow scholarship, including residents and fellows with R25 and T32 training support.

We are delighted to announce the Yale Neurology Residency Class of 2026! Meet our newly-matched residents below!

Yale Neurology Class of 2026

EMILY DAIGLE
Frank H. Netter MD School of Medicine at Quinnipiac University

M. ELIZABETH DEERHAKE
Duke University School of Medicine
Awards and Grants

**Julian Acosta:** 2022 Mordecai Y.T. Globus New Investigator Award; 2022 Paul Dudley White International Scholar Award

**LaShae Nicolson:** Kavli Postdoctoral Award for Academic Diversity

**Soumya Yandmuri:** “Isolation and characterization of myelin oligodendrocyte glycoprotein

**Naila Makhani:** Harry Weaver
Neuroscience Scholar
Joachim Baehring, David Hafler, Larry Hirsch, Paul Lleva, David Pitt, Alice Rusk, Joe Schindler, Dario Zagar: CT Magazine Top Doctors 2021

Carolyn Fredericks: Henry F. McCance Yale Scholar
Sophie Holmes: $2 million grant from the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research to conduct the first clinical trial of ketamine to treat depression in people with Parkinson’s disease.


Thomas Biederer: $9 million grant from the Aligning Science Across Parkinson’s (ASAP) initiative to support work to understanding cognitive impairments in Parkinson’s disease; “Cellular and circuit-level vulnerability to neurodegeneration in Parkinson’s disease” (ASAP)

Jonathan DeLong: “Determining effects of cholesterol signaling on inflammation after intracerebral hemorrhage” (AHA)

Sebastian Diaz: “Inflammatory mechanisms of injury in chronic cerebral ischemia and vascular monoclonal antibodies” (NMSS)

Yifei Cai: “Molecular mechanisms of axonal pathology in Alzheimer’s disease” (Bright Focus)

Hal Blumenfeld: “Neuroimaging, neuronal firing and behavior in spike-wave seizures” (NIH); “Thalamic stimulation to prevent impaired consciousness in epilepsy” (NIH); “Remote effects of focal hippocampal seizures on neocortical function” (NIH)

Stephen Strittmatter: “Sex-Specific Single Cell Profiles, Genetic Risk and Drug Responsiveness in Alzheimer’s Disease” (NIH); “mGluR5 and Phase State Dependent Synaptic Loss in Alzheimer’s Disease” (NIH)

David Hafler: “Unbiased characterization of the antigenic targets driving autoimmunity” (Race to Erase MS)

David Hafler, Erin Longbrake: “Neurodegenerative Pathways in Human Disease” (Roche Collaboration)

Erin Longbrake: “Optimizing COVID-19 Vaccination Strategies for B-Cell Depleted Patients” (Robert Lee and Clara Guthrie Patterson Trust)

William Cafferty: “Defining and exploiting the plasticity transcription to repair the damaged spinal cord” (NIH)

Richa Sharma: “Classification of Stroke Etiology Using Advanced Computational Approaches” (NIH)

Jaime Grutzendler: “Mechanisms of
dementia” (AHA)

**Kevin O’Connor:** ”Molecular determinants driving diverse mechanisms of antibody-mediated pathology” (NIH); ”Mechanisms of autoimmunity in myasthenia gravis” (NIH); “Early-stage development of CAAR T cells for treating SChR MG” (Cabaletta Bio)

**Sreeganga Chandra:** ”Pathogenic Mechanisms for Auxilin-mediated Parkinson’s Disease” (Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson’s Research)

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