

FALL 2024

# NeuroNEXT

from the Departments of Neurological Sciences and Neurosurgery

## *Falling Forward*

*to pursue scientific innovations*

As the clocks tell us to “fall back” this season, our work in neurosciences is pressing forward with groundbreaking research, clinical advancements, and renewed purpose. This fall, we reflect on our achievements and the exciting initiatives driving us toward the future.

At the heart of our momentum is Project Health, which saw key developments during our meeting with the Nebraska Board of Regents and University of Nebraska President Jeffrey P. Gold, MD. Discussions centered on the future of neurological care, cutting-edge technologies, clinical trials, and human integration in healthcare. Project Health is leading the way toward a new era of precision care and innovation.

Building on this, we’re exploring Artificial Intelligence (AI) in healthcare. Drs. Daniel Murman and Olga Taraschenko studied 100 cases where AI augmented diagnoses. This research is a promising step toward improving clinical decision-making and outcomes. Our commitment to innovation extends to bridging the gap between advanced technologies and equitable healthcare access.

The Multiple Sclerosis At Home Access (MAHA) program exemplifies this. Supported by Chariots 4 Hope and the MAHA Advancing Health Equity Initiative, patients like Emily now have transportation to appointments, demonstrating how we apply forward-thinking solutions to improve care and reduce health disparities.

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**Matthew Rizzo, MD, FAAN**  
*Frances and Edgar Reynolds  
 Professor and Chair  
 Department of Neurological  
 Sciences*



**Aviva Abosch, MD, PhD**  
*Nancy A. Keegan & Donald R.  
 Voelte, Jr. Professor and Chair  
 Department of Neurosurgery*



**Howard Fox, MD, PhD**  
*Senior Associate Dean,  
 Research and Development,  
 College of Medicine  
 Professor, Department of  
 Neurological Sciences*

*Falling Forward from pg.1*

Aubrie Lindner, Renee Stewart, and their team’s work to expand access for underserved populations mirrors our broader goal of leveraging technology for immediate, tangible benefits. As we explore AI’s potential, we are equally committed to ensuring these innovations reach all patients.

Our investigators continue pushing boundaries. Drs. Michele Aizenberg, William Thorell, and Oleg Korzyukov have secured funding for research in high-grade gliomas, stroke, and hearing loss. Dr. Peng Zhong received NIH funding to study opiate withdrawal and sleep effects.

The Warren Neuroscience Lab’s PRANK grant explores genetic factors in Alzheimer’s risk, showcasing their leadership at conferences. Dr. Olga Taraschenko’s work on autoimmune encephalitis at the Gordon Research Conference advances neuroimmunology. Globally, our participation in the UNMC Ukraine Toy Drive extends our impact.

We celebrate individuals driving us forward. Dr. Elhaum, PGY-III, became Membership Chair of Women in Neurosurgery, and Srijita Das won Outstanding Presentation at the UNMC Neuroscience Symposium.

As we lead in research and patient care, we also prioritize wellness. Our sand volleyball team placed second in the summer league, aiming for first next season!

Reflecting on our progress, we’re reminded of Samuel Butler’s words: “Autumn is the mellower season; and what we lose in flowers, we more than gain in fruits.” While the clocks fall back, our departments continue to bear fruit—through pioneering research, enhanced care, and community engagement.

Thank you for your dedication to our mission, and here’s to a season of growth and achievement as we move forward.

***We hope you enjoy this fall edition of our NeuroNEXT Newsletter!***

# A New Era in Neurological Care and Research: Leading the Way within Project Health

Neurological disorders are on the rise globally, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) and Nebraska Medicine are stepping up to meet this challenge. On August 7, 2024, Dr. Matt Rizzo and Dr. Aviva Abosch met with the Nebraska Board of Regents Health Affairs Committee, including President Gold, for an enthusiastic discussion on a forthcoming Neurosciences Institute within Project Health—a new \$2.2 billion hospital initiative. The Regents committee, led by Dr. Jack Stark, along with Kathy Wilmot, Barbara Weitz, and Elizabeth O'Connor, supported the initiative. The full Board of Regents voted unanimously the next day to approve Project Health.

This approval is timely and crucial. Neurological disorders, including multiple sclerosis, stroke, brain tumors, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, epilepsy, traumatic brain injury, chronic pain conditions, and neuropsychiatric disorders, impact over 3 billion people worldwide, surpassing cancer and cardiovascular disease in terms of disability-adjusted life years. With such a staggering global impact, the demand for neurological services continues to rise, making this project more urgent than ever.

The Neurosciences Institute will house cutting-edge technologies such as advanced neuroimaging suites, AI-powered diagnostic tools, and precision medicine platforms tailored to individual patient needs. By integrating these technologies into patient care, UNMC and Nebraska Medicine will deliver innovative, life-saving treatments, and significantly improve patient outcomes for a wide range of neurological conditions. Additionally, the institute will offer minimally

invasive neurosurgical techniques, advanced seizure monitoring, and neurorehabilitation services that leverage robotics and virtual reality, along with neuropsychiatry and neuropsychology services.

Furthermore, the institute will spearhead innovative clinical trial models designed to accelerate the translation of research into practice. Adaptive trials, decentralized clinical trials, and the integration of real-world data will allow for more personalized and efficient approaches to evaluating treatments, particularly in complex conditions like neurodegenerative diseases and chronic pain syndromes.

The design and layout of the institute will reflect the latest principles in human systems integration, human factors, and ergonomics to create an environment that supports patient and clinician well-being. This human-centered approach will extend from patient rooms to research labs, enhancing both clinical care and scientific collaboration.

Patients in Nebraska and around the world will benefit from shorter wait times, quicker access to specialized neurological services, and personalized treatment plans driven by cutting-edge diagnostics and AI-powered insights. The consolidation of services, currently spread across 10 buildings, will create a seamless care experience for patients, making it easier to navigate the healthcare system and receive timely diagnoses and treatments.

Nebraska currently faces a shortage of neurologists, with only 2-3 neurologists per 100,000 people compared to the needed 6-7 per 100,000. The Neurosciences Institute will not only address this shortage

locally but will also serve as a national and global hub for training the next generation of neurological healthcare professionals.

UNMC and Nebraska Medicine are committed to engaging with patients, staff, and community stakeholders throughout the planning and design phase of the Neurosciences Institute. This collaborative approach will ensure that the institute reflects the evolving needs of neurological care and research. By incorporating feedback from those it serves, UNMC and Nebraska Medicine aim to create a facility that not only meets but exceeds expectations for patient care, research innovation, and educational excellence.

As this transformative project progresses, regular updates will be provided to keep the community informed. The new institute promises to set a global standard in neurological care and research, elevating UNMC's and Nebraska Medicine's role as leaders in meeting the ever-growing needs of Nebraska and the world. We invite feedback and suggestions from the community to ensure the Neurosciences Institute serves the best interests of all stakeholders.



*Dr. Matt Rizzo and Aviva Abosch at the meeting on August 7  
(Photo by University of Nebraska President Jeffrey P. Gold, MD)*

# Welcome! *New Faculty & Staff*



**Anna Croghan, PhD,  
Assistant Professor**

Dr. Croghan joins the DONS as an assistant professor in neuropsychology. Her research interests include cognitive changes in chronic illness, exploring the association of physiological markers with cognitive functioning, and enhancing experiences for psychology trainees.

**Three interesting facts about me:**

- I am a born and raised Midwesterner and am excited to begin my journey in Omaha!
- In graduate school, I lived less than 100 miles from the Canadian border.
- I love to travel and have been to 6 countries (and counting)!



**Solmaz Ramezani Hashtjin,  
MD, PGY-I Resident**

Dr. Ramezani Hashtjin was born and raised in Tehran, Iran. She went to medical school at Zanjan University of Medical Sciences.

**Three interesting facts about me:**

- I love outdoor activities, especially anything adventurous!
- I enjoy playing volleyball, and the gym is my happy place.
- I'm a pretty good cook and love trying new cuisines and learning how to make them.



**Sheridan Parker, PhD, MEG  
Research Technologist**

Dr. Parker is from Dover, Delaware. Before UNMC, she was a postdoctoral fellow in the Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

**Three interesting facts about me:**

- I am an avid baker, homemade cinnamon rolls especially!
- I have been crocheting and making large blankets since I was 13.
- Ice Hockey is my favorite sport to watch (Go Mavs!).

# Updates *from Neurosurgery*



JON NGUYEN, MBA, CMPE, WAS RECENTLY ELECTED TO SERVE AS SECRETARY FOR THE NEUROSURGERY EXECUTIVES' RESOURCE VALUE & EDUCATION SOCIETY (NERVES).

Established in 2002 by the Council of State Neurosurgical Societies (CSNS), NERVES connects neurosurgery executives to resources, education, and data to enhance the value of neurosurgery business for all practices and health systems. As secretary, Jon is the Chair of NERVES' Communication Committee and serves on the Board of Directors.



## NEUROSURGERY RESIDENT SELECTED AS MEMBERSHIP CHAIR OF WOMEN IN NEUROSURGERY

Elhaum Rezaii, MD, PGY-III resident, will serve as the Membership Chair of the Women in Neurosurgery (WINS) Resident Executive Committee for the 2024-2025 term. WINS is the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) Joint Section on Women in Neurosurgery that fosters education, inspiration and encouragement for women in neurosurgery to realize their professional and personal goals and to serve neurosurgery in addressing the issues inherent to training and maintaining a diverse and balanced workforce.

Dr. Rezaii was also recently nominated and accepted to attend the K12 Pipeline Accelerator Meeting (KPAC) in Chicago in November. The Neurosurgeon Research Career Development Program (NRCDP) is a K12 program of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). The program's aims to support those underrepresented in medicine and women to become successful neurosurgeon-scientists.



## PHD CANDIDATE WINS AWARD AT UNMC NEUROSCIENCE SYMPOSIUM

Srijita Das, MS, won the "Outstanding Presentation" award for her poster titled: "Identifying task-activated cortex through phase-amplitude coupling analysis" at the UNMC 2024 Neuroscience Symposium held on August 7 at the University of Nebraska Omaha's Mammel Hall. She is a current neurosurgery PhD candidate.

Srijita serves in multiple leadership positions:

- Interdisciplinary Graduate Program for Biomedical Sciences (IGPBS) Student Representative (Aug 2024 – Present). She will be the point of contact between the IGPBS steering committee, Graduate Studies, and GSA.
- IGPBS Neuroscience Student President – As the Neuroscience student representative, she acts as the voice of students in the department.
- College at Large Co-Chair for the student organization Student Alliance for People of All Abilities (SAPA). SAPA is devoted to engaging and educating students on working with individuals with varying emotional and physical abilities.

## NEW RESEARCH FUNDING



**Michele Aizenberg, MD,** is Co-PI in a new NIH grant sponsored by the National Cancer Institute.

Title: Diffusion MRI-based visualization of non-enhancing tumors for guiding supra-total resection of high-grade gliomas.

Awarding agency: NIH NCI  
The PD/PI for this study is Ragini Verma, PhD, at the University of Pennsylvania.

**\$237,873 for 5 years**



**William Thorell, MD,** is Site PI on a multi-site clinical trial sponsored by industry.

Title: THUNDER: Acute Ischemic Stroke Study with the Penumbra System® including Thunderbolt™ Aspiration Tubing.

Sponsor: Penumbra, Inc.

**\$65,000 for 2 years**

# Updates *from Neurological Sciences*



## **OLEG KORZYUKOV, PHD, RECEIVES COBRE FUNDING**

Dr. Korzyukov received funding from the Translational Hearing Center, Creighton University, Center of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE; NIH P20GM139762-01) for his pilot study on early biomarkers of Parkinson's Disease measured in voice production.

Central auditory processing relies on the transmission of information from the brainstem to cortical neuronal populations and the interplay between neuronal networks distributed across the temporal and frontal lobes. Neurodegeneration affecting these auditory neuronal networks is a significant factor contributing to neurodegenerative age-related diseases such as Parkinson's disease and Alzheimer's disease. Central auditory processing networks become functionally integrated in different configurations depending on ongoing tasks, such as passive listening or auditory-controlled voice production. Therefore, neurodegeneration-related aberrations in these neuronal networks may manifest as disease-specific bioelectrical markers of neurodegeneration, which can aid in differentiating multiple, disease-specific neurodegenerative processes. Understanding the brain mechanisms underlying these various neurodegenerative processes is essential before appropriate clinical interventions can be proposed.

The long-term goal of the proposed research is to identify and functionally characterize disease-specific bioelectrical markers associated with age-related neurodegeneration that affects auditory processing in the temporal and frontal neuronal networks during passive listening and auditory-controlled voice production.



## **PENG ZHONG, PHD, RECEIVES R01 GRANT**

### **Congratulations to Dr. Zhong on his grant titled**

**"Mechanistic Studies of Opiate Withdrawal-Induced Sleep Disturbances"** supported by NIH/NIDA, R01.

Intense withdrawal symptoms can prevent successful long-term abstinence from opioid use, robustly trigger relapse and further accelerate the negative impact on the lives of Opioid Use Disorder patients. Disrupted sleep is one of such contributing opioid withdrawal symptoms and is considered an important reason for relapse back to opioid use. Our research aims to uncover the neural mechanisms underlying sleep disruptions during opioid withdrawal. Successful completion of our research aims will potentially lead to the development of effective therapies for withdrawal-induced sleep disturbances and, therefore, break the vicious cycle of abuse, withdrawal and relapse.

# Updates *from the Warren Neuroscience Lab*



Warren Neuroscience Lab at a recent visit to the Davis Global Center on campus

Members of the Warren Neuroscience Lab (WNL) attended two conferences in late September and early October. The first conference, Flux, focuses on brain and cognitive development while the second conference, Society for Neuroscience

(SfN), focused on the brain and nervous system. Both conferences are perfect outlets for the cutting-edge research from the WNL. Students and staff presented data from the ongoing NIA supported Polygenic Risk for Alzheimer's Disease in Nebraska Kids (PRANK) study that aims to observe the association between genetic Alzheimer's disease (AD) risk and AD vulnerable brain structure and function in periadolescent children. Additional research will be presented from a complementary study to PRANK called PRANK-Fit that observes the relationship between physical activity and brain development in a periadolescent population.

During their time at Flux, members of the WNL had the opportunity to learn from leading experts in child neurodevelopment, while also sharing their own research. Anna Wilhelm, research clinical coordinator, presented her research on hippocampal subfield volumes and relational memory performance using ChAMP. Emma Armbruster, research assistant, presented her research on associations between pubertal status and hippocampal subfield volume. Meghan Ramirez, graduate student, presented her research on hippocampal subfield volume and relational memory using a subsequent memory task.

## MULTIPLE WNL MEMBERS AWARDED



**Abi Heller-Wight**, graduate student and MD/PhD scholar was recently awarded the SfN Trainee Professional

Development Award (TPDA). The TPDA grants students a travel stipend and complementary conference registration for the SfN International Conference in October 2024 in Chicago. This is Abi's second time receiving this award contributing to a total of four TPDAs awarded to the WNL.

Abi presented her research on hippocampal subfield volumes and physical activity. Meghan Ramirez, graduate student, presented her research on brain activity and relational memory using task-based fMRI. Anna Wilhelm, research clinical coordinator, presented her research on hippocampal subfield volumes and relational memory. Emma Armbruster, research assistant, presented her research on associations of sex and age with anterior and posterior hippocampal subfield volumes. Connor Phipps, post-doctoral research fellow, presented his research on modular architecture of the brain's intrinsic functional networks during periadolescence and its association with cognitive ability.



**Meghan Ramirez**, a doctoral candidate in the Interdisciplinary Graduate Program in Biomedical Sciences

Neuroscience Program at UNMC, received a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Blueprint and BRAIN Initiative "D-SPAN" F99/K00 fellowship for her project titled "Understanding the developmental impact of environmental risk factors on brain and cognitive systems vulnerable to Alzheimer's disease in children." Ms. Ramirez's project will investigate the relationship between environment and relational memory to better understand the consequences of modifiable social and environmental determinant of health, which are risk factors for Alzheimer's disease in early life (F99 phase) and across the lifespan (K00 phase).

The NIH Blueprint and BRAIN Initiative Diversity Specialized Predoctoral to Postdoctoral Advancement in Neuroscience (D-SPAN) Award is designed to support a defined pathway across career stages for outstanding graduate students from diverse backgrounds otherwise underrepresented in neuroscience research. This two-phase award supports completion of the doctoral stage (F99) and facilitates the transition into a post-doctoral position (K00), supporting six years of academic and professional activity. Alzheimer's disease is a pressing public health concern that defies simple prediction: 90% of Alzheimer's disease cases are sporadic, reflecting the significant contributions of environment and lifestyle to Alzheimer's disease risk. In this context, development is a critical time for foundational structural and functional brain maturation that can bias a person toward or away from Alzheimer's disease risk later in life.

# Multiple Sclerosis division advancing community outreach

## MAHA Program teams up with Chariots 4 Hope

Living with a progressive disability such as Multiple Sclerosis (MS), can impact a person's ability to drive independently. Some may require a wheelchair accessible vehicle as a means of transportation. Still, unfortunately, due to the cost of wheelchair accessible vehicles and limited access to affordable public/private paratransit services, transportation can become impossible, contributing to social isolation.

Omaha Metro's public paratransit, (MOBY), offers paratransit services at an affordable rate, however, with a narrow corridor service area, limited hours of operation, and variability of time constraints, use of their services can be difficult. There are a variety of private paratransit options within the Omaha metro area, whose prices remain competitive with common prices nationwide, though a round-trip fare on average will cost a person around \$120. Since its inception in 2013, the MS At Home Access (MAHA) team has remained a community advocate for improved, affordable, and accessible paratransit options in our community.

Through its advocacy efforts, the MAHA team connected with Chariots 4 Hope, a local faith-based, non-profit organization whose mission is to "demonstrate God's love by removing transportation barriers." Chariots 4 Hope supports low-income families and individuals to maintain self-sufficiency through reliable transportation and RIDE programs. It just so happened that a wheelchair accessible vehicle was donated to the program, and they wanted to gift the van to one of the individuals enrolled in the MAHA program.



Emily and her spouse  
expressing messages of  
appreciation to the team

While there were many MAHA participants for whom the donation would have been advantageous, there was one individual the team knew would benefit from the gift—Emily. This van meant that Emily could continue to receive her monthly MS therapy. "We were reaching a crossroads in her treatment, as continuing to get her to and from the hospital each month was no longer



possible in a traditional vehicle, nor was it affordable to continue paying the high out-of-pocket cost for paratransit services each month," said Renee Stewart, APRN, clinic leader of the MAHA program.

In June, the MAHA team and Chariots 4 Hope arranged for the surprise, and what a surprise it was! "As a provider, I was thrilled about this gift for Emily and her family as it meant we could continue her MS treatment. She would now have a safe, affordable and reliable means of getting to and from the hospital. For Emily, getting to medical appointments was the last of her concerns, this van meant living again," said Stewart.

"We have been to the farmers market, Costco, the mall, and grocery store together. The van has changed our world completely!" said Emily.





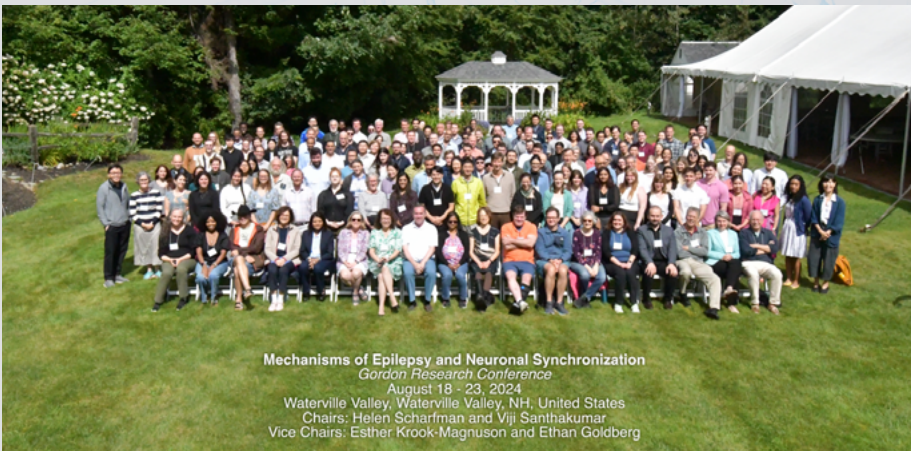
Aubrie Lindner

### MAHA PROGRAM ADVANCING HEALTH EQUITY INITIATIVE RECEIVES SPONSORSHIP

The MS At Home Access (MAHA) program received funding through sponsorship for the "MAHA Advancing Health Equity Initiative". The initiative is aimed to significantly expand education and resource efforts within MS care by targeting specific geographical areas based on the populations of underrepresented people meant to reduce health inequities. MAHA's Program Coordinator, Aubrie Lindner, received funding to accomplish this initiative by fostering relationships with health care providers within MS care. Engagement with these health care providers will allow for a better understanding of the health disparities

experienced by their patient populations. It offer health care providers knowledge of the lessons learned through the MAHA's eleven years of care delivery to patients with MS and significant disability.

MS is a complicated costly chronic disease, with progressive forms presenting dynamic complexities in health care delivery due to the severity the acquired disability can produce. People living with MS and significant disability are part of populations of underrepresented people who experience health disparities that magnify issues regarding disease education, diagnosis, and treatment. Additionally, those who also belong to one or more other populations with health disparities fare even worse, including racial and ethnic minority groups, people with lower socioeconomic status, and underserved rural communities.

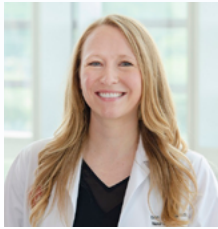


Mechanisms of Epilepsy and Neuronal Synchronization  
Gordon Research Conference  
August 18 - 23, 2024  
Waterville Valley, Waterville Valley, NH, United States  
Chairs: Helen Scharfman and Viji Santhakumar  
Vice Chairs: Esther Krook-Magnuson and Ethan Goldberg

### OLGA TARASCHENKO, MD, PHD, GIVES PRESTIGIOUS CONFERENCE PRESENTATION

Dr. Taraschenko presented "Mechanisms of autoimmune encephalitis and residual memory loss" at the prestigious Gordon Research Conference in Waterville, New Hampshire, in August. Her talk included a mouse model of antibody-induced seizures and the role of neuroinflammation in the development of memory loss in encephalitis.

# Awards *Department of Neurological Sciences*



## ERIN SMITH, MD, RECEIVES GOLDEN APPLE AWARD

Erin Smith, MD, assistant professor in the DONS, has received the Golden Apple Award from the medical student class of 2027. Dr. Smith was nominated for her passion in helping others and creating a positive

environment for those around her.

Dr. Smith joined the department as faculty in 2021 after receiving her entire medical training from UNMC. She specializes in Parkinson's Disease and is also the Co-Director of the Comprehensive Movement Disorders Clinic.

Subin Mathew, MBBS, says: "Dr. Smith is an outstanding and motivated clinical educator to our medical students, residents, and fellows in neurology. What makes her stand out is her dedication to know her students and understand their needs and tailor education accordingly."



## BETHANY LOWNDES, PHD, RECEIVES UNMC 2024 NEW INVESTIGATOR AWARD

The award is given to UNMC investigators who receive their first independent national funding. Awardees are celebrated at a ceremony on November 14, 2024.



## ***UNMC neurologists help advance science on AI diagnosis of dementia***

By Jeff Robb, UNMC strategic communications

Two UNMC neurological sciences faculty joined a national team of other leading neurologists and dementia researchers in publishing new research to advance the use of artificial intelligence to diagnose challenging dementia cases.

Daniel Murman, MD, and Olga Taraschenko, MD, PhD, of the DONS, were co-authors of the journal article “AI-based differential diagnosis of dementia etiologies on multimodal data.”

The research, which was published in the journal *Nature Medicine* in July, developed a diagnostic computer model drawn from medical records from 51,269 participants in anonymous datasets that included exam findings, test results and magnetic resonance imaging scans. Those records were collected from nine medical databases covering both common and rare dementias, including Alzheimer’s dementia and Lewy body dementia.

The goal of the project was to develop a diagnostic tool that could assist practitioners who are rarely exposed

to dementia to triage the patient referrals to subspecialty clinics.

According to the publication, a comparison of 100 randomly selected cases showed that “neurologist assessments augmented by our AI model exceeded neurologist-only evaluations by 26.25%.”

Drs. Murman and Taraschenko were among the neurologists who were presented those 100 cases for review and diagnosis.

The study, which built on earlier research involving the UNMC neurologists, said the computer model has “the potential to be integrated as a screening tool for dementia in clinical settings and drug trials.”

Dr. Taraschenko said: “It was exciting to be able to contribute to the training of this phenomenal tool by sharing our clinical wisdom.”

Dr. Taraschenko, an associate professor, chief of the Comprehensive Epilepsy Program and director of the Autoimmune Seizure Laboratory,

said the project expanded on earlier work that created a machine learning framework to help distinguish people with normal cognition from those with Alzheimer’s dementia.

The latest AI algorithm, she said, allows the accurate prediction of a dementia diagnosis even if certain parts of the diagnostic workup are missing by applying the information from other complete cases.

In everyday clinical practice, the datasets are commonly “imperfect,” Dr. Taraschenko said.

In the future, Dr. Murman, professor and director of the Behavioral Neurology Division, said, this type of diagnostic software could be integrated into electronic medical records to assist providers in real time.

By combining clinical and test information, the UNMC neurologists said, physicians can diagnose a specific type of dementia or provide timely referrals to specialists.



## TOY DRIVE TO SUPPORT CHILDREN OF UKRAINE ORGANIZED BY UNMC VOLUNTEERS

A group of UNMC volunteers are collecting toys for children impacted by the war in Ukraine. Among those organizing the efforts include: DONS faculty Valentina Gumenyuk, PhD, Olga Taraschenko, MD, PhD, Lyubov Butsyak, APRN-NP, and UNMC Office of Global Engagement's Program Manager, Sara Pirtle. UNO adjunct professor Viktoriya Mashinson is also among the volunteers.

Gumenyuk says: "I wish from all my heart to make them smile again!"

The donated toys are shipped to Ukraine and gifted to children who lost their parent(s) due to the ongoing war. The group has already helped many children and plans to keep the toy drive going for as long as needed. If you have questions or would like to help, please contact Dr. Valia Gumenyuk or Sara Pirtle.



## DONS SAND VOLLEYBALL TEAM ENDS SEASON IN SECOND PLACE

The team played weekly throughout the summer at O'Leaver's – just minutes away from campus.

*From left to right: Neil Jouvenat, PA-C, Greg Costello, Erin Dennis, MD, José Zamora-Sifuentes, DO, Shelley Lee, DO, Mary Soper and Courtney Venegas, MD*

# Save the Date! *Upcoming Events*

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## **Parkinson's Disease in 2024**

A CONFERENCE FOR PARKINSONS PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES/CARE PARTNERS

**Wednesday, November 13**

8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Embassy Suites La Vista

12520 Westport Pkwy

La Vista, Nebraska

(registration begins October 11)





University of Nebraska Medical Center  
Department of Neurological Sciences  
988440 Nebraska Medical Center  
Omaha, NE 68198-8440

If you have any news or upcoming events that you would like featured in the next edition of the *NeuroNExT UNMC* newsletter, please send the information to [sallie.weathers@unmc.edu](mailto:sallie.weathers@unmc.edu)





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