

The Friedman Brain Institute and the
Neuroscience Graduate Program presents:

The
18th Annual
Neuroscience
Retreat

Retreat Organizers:

Abha K Rajbhandari, PhD and **Sarah A Stanley, MBBCh, PhD**



Icahn
School of
Medicine at
Mount
Sinai

*The Friedman
Brain Institute*

Artwork by Danny Roldan

Message from the Director

It is a privilege to welcome you to this year's Friedman Brain Institute (FBI) Retreat, my first as Director. This annual gathering gives us the opportunity to come together as a community to learn about the exceptional neuroscience research being conducted across Mount Sinai. We can share new ideas and perspectives, forge new and strengthen existing collaborations, and offer advice and mentorship across career stages. The Institute rests on the extraordinary foundation established under the leadership of Eric J. Nestler, whose commitment to rigorous, collaborative science has positioned the FBI as a global leader in brain research. I am also very grateful to Richard Friedman and Susan Friedman for their continued support and belief in our mission. We are entering a new era of neuroscience research, one in which human and preclinical studies will be more tightly integrated, brain-body interactions are defined with greater precision, and artificial intelligence and large-scale data science will be harnessed to better understand brain function and dysfunction. The FBI is well positioned to help lead the way, and this retreat is an important part of that effort; providing a forum to learn about new advances, ask questions, challenge ideas, and deepen connections across the Institute as we work together to accelerate progress.

Paul J. Kenny, PhD

Director, The Friedman Brain Institute
Nash Family Professor of Neuroscience
Interim Chair, Nash Family Department of Neuroscience
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

GRADUATE PROGRAM INFORMATION

Neuroscience Graduate Training Program

A relatively uneventful, but ever-successful year for the Neuroscience Graduate Program after the chaos and uncertainty of the preceding one. Since last year's retreat, approximately 18 PhD or MSTP students successfully defended their thesis work. Many students competed successfully for F30/F31 NRSA predoctoral Fellowships. Our trainees continue to publish their work in high-impact journals. Several of our T32 training grants were renewed successfully. These are some of the most important metrics of a thriving graduate program.

The process of graduate Admissions returned to normal this year, with a record number of applications to the Neuroscience PhD program. I am pleased to welcome 11 new Neuroscience PhD students to Mount Sinai. These are truly amazing people, eager and excited to start their professional research journeys here, bringing diverse scientific interests, strengths and backgrounds.

I wish to pay tribute to Dr. Betsy Cropper for her enormous contributions to the Neuroscience training program over several decades. As many of you may know, Betsy retired this past year. She joined the Mount Sinai faculty in 1990 and became Course Director of our Program's Core 1 course in 2009, developing and leading that course for the next 15 years. She is an exceptionally gifted and dedicated teacher and mentor, and as Core 1 course director, has directly touched the lives of every Neuroscience PhD student from 2009-2024 (some 174 students). She has led a continuously-funded research program since the early 90s, has trained numerous students and postdocs and has served tirelessly on Admissions and other committees for many years. In recognition of her teaching innovation, dedication and mentoring talents, she was awarded the 2026 inaugural "Excellence in Science Teaching Award" by Mount Sinai's Institute for Medical Education. Congratulations Betsy and thank you for all of your contributions!!

Finally, I close by announcing how pleased I am to welcome Dr. Silvia De Rubeis as a Co-Director of the NEU multidisciplinary training area (MTA), joining me starting Jul 1 of this year. Silvia is an accomplished research scientist and an experienced and dedicated mentor and student-advocate. She has been heavily involved in NEU admissions and other duties for some time, so this is a natural transition for her. I look forward to working with Silvia to nurture, promote and strengthen neuroscience graduate training at Mount Sinai now and into the future.

George Huntley

AGENDA

8:30 – 9:00 am

(South Hall Lobby)

Registration

Coffee, tea, and water

9:00 – 9:05 am

(Nave)

Introduction

Abha K. Rajbhandari, PhD (Psychiatry) and Sarah A. Stanley, MBBCh, PhD (Medicine)

9:05 – 9:20 am

Welcome Remarks

Paul J. Kenny, PhD on The Friedman Brain Institute

9:20 – 9:35 am

George Huntley, PhD on The Graduate Student Program

9:35 – 10:15 am

Morning Keynote Speaker

Ishmail J. Abdus-Saboor, PhD – Columbia University

“Skin-brain axis for social touch: mice to naked mole-rats”

10:15 – 10:25 am

Break + Raffle (3 awards)

10:25 – 11:10 am

Short Talks I

Moderator: Jessica L. Ables, MD, PhD

Faculty | Ignacio Saez, PhD (Neuroscience)

“Eyes on the Prize: Dynamics of attention and value in Human Prefrontal Cortex”

Postdoctoral | Veronica Burstein, PhD (Enamorado lab) – *“Mapping Peripheral Neuroimmune Engrams”*

Graduate Student | Ayako Kuno (Morishita lab)

“A critical period for social touch-dependent mesocortical control of social reciprocity”

11:10 am – 12:15 pm

(South Hall)

Morning Poster Session

11:50 am – 12:50 pm

(South Hall)

Lunch

12:50 – 1:30 pm

(Nave)

Afternoon Keynote Speaker

Wendy Suzuki, PhD – NYU - *“The Astonishing Effects of Exercise for Your Brain”*

1:30 – 2:00 pm

Panel Discussion: *“Practical Tools for Thriving in Science”*

Communicating Your Science • Finding the Right Environment • Tools for Thriving

Wendy Suzuki, PhD – NYU

Ishmail J. Abdus-Saboor, PhD – Columbia University

Daniela Schiller, PhD – Mount Sinai

2:00 – 3:00 pm

(South Hall)

Afternoon Poster Session

3:00 – 3:45 pm

(Nave)

Short Talks II

Moderator: **Michel Enamorado, PhD** (Dermatology)

Faculty | **Gita Pathak, PhD** (Genetics and Genomic Sciences) – *“Large-Scale Biobank Evidence for Shared Genetic Architecture Between PTSD and Cardiovascular Disease”*

Postdoctoral | **Jeronimo Lukin, PhD** (De Rubeis lab) – *“Retrosplenial cortex involvement in novelty-avoidance behavior in a mouse model of autism”*

Graduate Student | **Sanutha Shetty** (Karki lab) – *“Role of the ventral respiratory group (VRG) neuropeptidergic tonality in regulation of fear and metabolic response”*

3:45 – 4:00 pm

Break + Raffle (3 awards)

4:00 – 4:45 pm

Short Talks III

Moderator: **Brian Sweis, MD, PhD** (Neuroscience)

Faculty | **Filip Swirski, PhD** (Cardiology) – *“Brain-heart communication in heart disease”*

Postdoctoral | **B. Ülgen Kilic, PhD** (Jacob Lab and Fiore Lab) – *“Aberrant state transitions on brain energy landscape reveal clinically relevant system entrapment in Major Depressive Disorder”*

Graduate student | **Hao Sun** (Goate lab) – *“Identification of Candidate Genes at Alzheimer’s Disease Risk Loci Across Blood, Peripheral Myeloid, and Microglial Expression Quantitative Trait Locus Contexts”*

4:45 – 5:15 pm

(South Hall)

Awards + Closing Ceremony – Paul J. Kenny, PhD

5:15 – 6 pm

Social Hour

Art of the Brain Scavenger Hunt

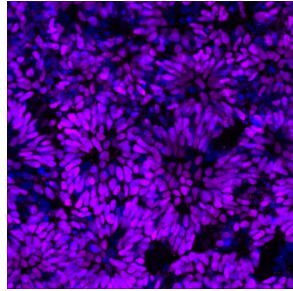
Match the images with the corresponding poster located in the South Hall.

The first person to submit the correct answers wins a framed Art of the Brain image.

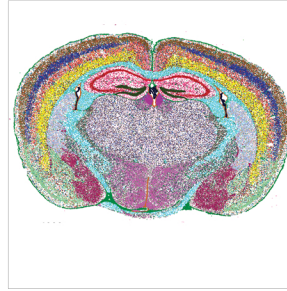
Morning Session



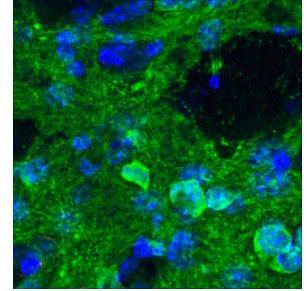
Scan
to submit
your answers!



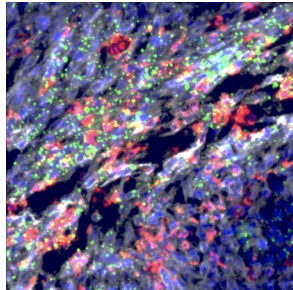
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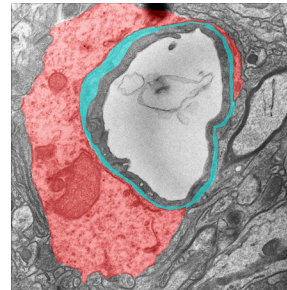
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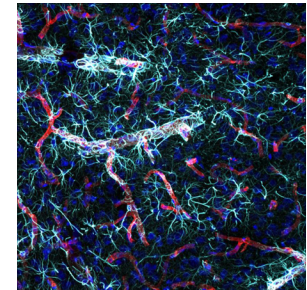
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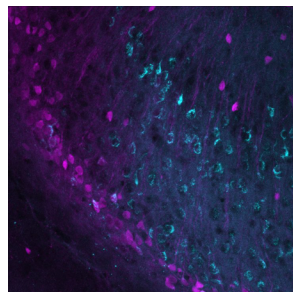


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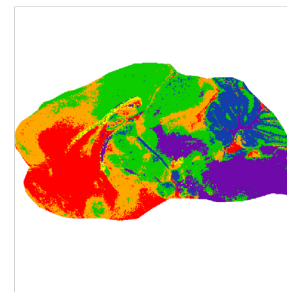
Afternoon Session



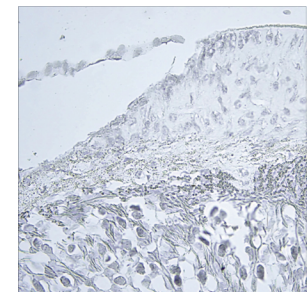
Scan
to submit
your answers!



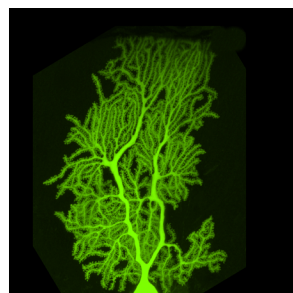
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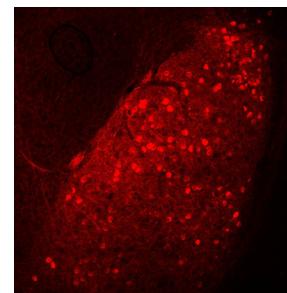
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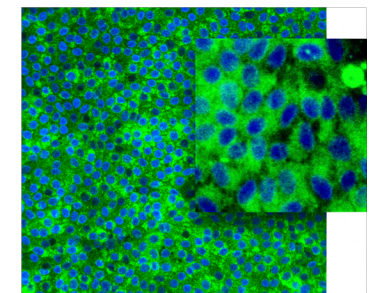
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FBI Retreat Website



Abstracts



WI-FI Access

SSID: Riverside_Rentals
Password: internet490



Art of the Brain Scavenger Hunt

Morning Session



Art of the Brain Scavenger Hunt

Afternoon Session



We hope
you will
join us in
2027 for the
Nineteenth
Annual
Neuroscience
Retreat