



# Alzheimer's and Cognition Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS**

“Healthy Brain Aging Starts Here”

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## FDA Approves Aduhelm

*This is an abbreviated version of the official statement put out by the CUACC regarding the approval of Aduhelm (aducanumab). The full statement can be found on our website: [bit.ly/CUACC-Aduhelm](http://bit.ly/CUACC-Aduhelm)*

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a new treatment for Alzheimer’s disease, Aduhelm (aducanumab), through their accelerated approval pathway, which the FDA describes as being a pathway “used for a drug for a serious or life-threatening illness that provides a meaningful therapeutic advantage over existing treatments...and where there is an expectation of clinical benefit despite some residual uncertainty regarding that benefit.”

This is the first new Alzheimer’s disease treatment to be approved since 2003, and the first drug that has been shown to be disease modifying instead of symptom modifying (in research studies, aducanumab has been shown to decrease levels of amyloid plaque in the brains of people with AD).

The approval of aducanumab is surrounded in some controversy, as the FDA advisory panel did not recommend aducanumab’s approval at their meeting on November 6, 2020. For more information, please visit [bit.ly/CUACC-Aduhelm](http://bit.ly/CUACC-Aduhelm).

## Celebrating Faculty Promotions

Congratulations to the CUACC faculty who received promotions recently! To learn more about our wonderful faculty, please visit [bit.ly/CUACC-faculty](http://bit.ly/CUACC-faculty).

**Christina Coughlan, PhD**, to Assistant Research Professor  
**Heidi Chial, PhD**, to Assistant Research Professor  
**Noah Johnson, PhD**, to Senior Research Instructor  
**Md. Mahiuddin Ahmed, PhD**, to Senior Research Instructor  
**Athena Wang, PhD**, to Senior Research Associate

## Investigator Spotlight: Jessi Solomon Sanders, MD



In 2020, the CU Alzheimer’s and Cognition Center welcomed Jessi Solomon Sanders, MD, to the team! Dr. Sanders is a behavioral neurologist who specializes in neurodevelopmental disabilities.

She sees patients at our Memory Disorders Clinic who have neurodevelopmental disabilities, and she serves as a consultant

to primary care physicians and other neurologists to help address developmental concerns that an adult may have in the scope of their medical care.

Dr. Sanders always knew that she wanted to work with and help people with developmental disabilities. She received her undergraduate degree in special education, and she recognized while working as a student teacher that as youth with disabilities grow up, they have a difficult time finding specialty medical care that is both age- and disability-appropriate. It was then that she decided to pursue a career in medicine to help fill this gap.

Her particular clinical interests include improving the transition from pediatric to adult medical

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# Get to Know the Colorado Aging Brain Lab

The Colorado Aging Brain Laboratory within the CU Alzheimer's and Cognition Center is dedicated to learning more about the complex relationship between the immune system, the aging brain, and memory through a series of studies with **healthy older adults**. The laboratory, run by Dr. Brianne Bettcher, conducts studies investigating how inflammation in the brain and/or body may be related to Alzheimer's disease-related risks factors. They currently have two research opportunities available for older adults who are in good general health, have not been diagnosed with a memory or thinking disorder, and want to contribute to healthy aging and Alzheimer's disease research.

## LIIA Study

(COMIRB# 18-2607)

- Seeking 146 more healthy volunteers who are 60 and older!
- Healthy people who have *previously* been diagnosed with COVID-19 are also eligible.

## ImTAB Study

(COMIRB# 19-1423)

- Seeking 64 more healthy volunteers who are 65 and older!
- Healthy people who have had a concussion (confirmed by medical records) in the past 5 years may be eligible.

If you are interested in participating, please contact the Neurology Research Partners at 303-724-4644 or [NeurologyResearchPartners@cuanschutz.edu](mailto:NeurologyResearchPartners@cuanschutz.edu) to learn more. To learn more about the research we are doing, please visit our laboratory's website at [coloradoagingbrain.org](http://coloradoagingbrain.org).

## What the Colorado Aging Brain Lab knows:

- There are risk factors (e.g., concussions) and protective factors (e.g., exercise) that may impact healthy brain aging. Many of these factors impact the immune system in complex ways.
- Infections, such as respiratory illnesses, have previously been shown to impact thinking and hasten memory decline in people with Alzheimer's disease dementia.
- There is some evidence to suggest that people with dementia may be more susceptible to COVID-19 and that genetic risk factors, such as APOE, may impact COVID-19 outcomes.

## What They Hope to Find Out Through Their Research:

- How immune-related events (including recent infections) and late life concussions relate to **normal** brain aging.
- What changes occur in the immune systems of older adults who are generally healthy and don't have significant memory concerns.
- How changes in the immune system relate to Alzheimer's disease risk factors.
- How protective factors may help people stave off cognitive decline.
- How exposure to COVID-19 may influence neurological outcomes in healthy older adults.



# New CUACC Faculty Member

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care for patients with complex neurodevelopmental disorders, and caring for people with developmental disabilities as they age. In her role at the Memory Disorders Clinic, she also helps clarify diagnoses of developmental disorders, helps look for reasons for the developmental disability (such as conducting genetic testing or medical imaging), and helps manage complications of disabilities that change as people age.

Dr. Sanders' research interests are focused on increasing the comfort levels of providers when they are interacting with a person with a developmental disability. In the past, people with developmental disabilities did not receive health care from a medical doctor. It was only after 1990 that the Olmstead Law ensured that people with developmental disabilities could receive medical care outside of a state institution.

Her goal is to make people with developmental disabilities a part of every resident's and attending physician's wheelhouse, so that no person with a disability is turned down from a doctor's office because the provider is not comfortable treating them.

Her main research interest is in investigating how to improve care for adults with developmental disabilities. She is involved in Down syndrome research, and she is a member of a multi-disciplinary project team working to incorporate employment conversations into neurodevelopmental care for patients with disabilities.

Dr. Sanders is currently leading a national study looking at the impact the pandemic has had on the behavioral health of people with developmental disabilities. Links to the study survey can be found at: <https://redcap.link/covidimpact> (English version) and <https://redcap.link/CovidSpanish> (Spanish version).

Dr. Sanders is very excited to collaborate with the team at the CU Alzheimer's and Cognition Center.



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## Fun Fact

Dr. Sanders has been involved with Best Buddies, Special Olympics, and other related organizations for many years, and she particularly loves tandem bicycling. She cherishes these experiences, as they have provided a window into the dynamic lives and strengths of individuals with developmental disabilities.



## Interested in a Research Study?

Contact Neurology Research Partners at 303-724-4644 or fill out a research inquiry form at [www.cumemoryresearch.org](http://www.cumemoryresearch.org) to learn more about our ongoing research studies!

## Give to Research

HEALTHY  
BRAIN AGING  
- Starts Here -

If you are interested in making a donation to the CU Alzheimer's and Cognition Center, please contact Carrie Radant Flynn at 303-724-9146.

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