



Alzheimer's and Cognition Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS**

“Healthy Brain Aging Starts Here”

June 2024

Volume 6, Issue 1

Welcome to the Team

Research Services Professional



Abi Sheridan, BA

Abi Sheridan earned her BA in Human Physiology at the University of Iowa in 2021. Abi works as a coordinator and cognitive rater for studies of Alzheimer's disease and frontotemporal dementia. Her research interests are in what predisposes us to neurodegenerative disease and neuroinflammation. For fun, Abi enjoys hiking and trying new coffee shops.

The Value of Community Engagement



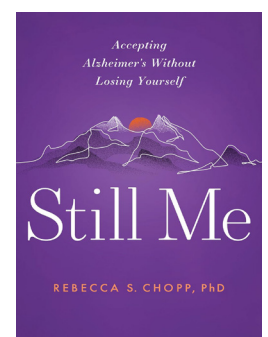
This spring, members of the CU Alzheimer's and Cognition Center (CUACC) and the Neurology Department actively participated in several community outreach events. Neurology recruitment specialists represented us at the Aurora Wellness Community Health Fair. Meanwhile, a team of our research coordinators attended the Center for African American Health Expo with members of the CUACC's African American Alzheimer's Advisory Council (4AC). Showing off t-shirts that read "Alzheimer's Doesn't Discriminate," they highlighted the higher risk of Alzheimer's among people of color and the need for diverse representation in research. Both events allowed us to share educational resources and promote healthy brain aging strategies at all ages. These efforts reflect our dedication to engaging with the community, building trust, and ensuring that our research benefits everyone.

Learn more about the work of the 4AC [here](#)

Dr. Huntington Potter and Dr. Rebecca Chopp Join Forces to Educate on Alzheimer's Disease

This April as part of the Neuroscience Innovation Initiative's TED for your Head speaker event Dr. Huntington Potter, Director of the CU Alzheimer's and Cognition Center, and Dr. Rebecca Chopp, Chancellor Emeritus of the University of Denver and author, spoke from two very different perspectives when it comes to Alzheimer's Disease (AD).

Dr. Potter shared his research on the immune system's involvement in neurodegeneration and how his pre-clinical and translational research may lead us to a better treatment for AD by targeting inflammation. On the other hand, Dr. Chopp, who was diagnosed with AD in 2019, offered an inspiring, stigma-busting, firsthand perspective on how to stay true to yourself while living with the disease. She highlighted the importance of early detection and preventative lifestyle changes she has made. She discusses this and much more in her new book "Still Me: Accepting Alzheimer's Without Losing Yourself."





Meet Avani Shah, Physician Associate in Cognitive Neurology



A Day in the Life

Avani Shah, a physician associate in cognitive neurology, splits her time between clinical and research duties. At the Central Park Memory Disorders Clinic, she works with patients and families to manage cognitive and behavioral disorders. She also leads the Healthy Brain Aging Clinic offering tailored recommendations to patients with early stages of cognitive impairment/dementia and to patients with a family history of Alzheimer's disease who wish to be proactive about brain health. This clinic is perfect for those who are concerned about cognitive health, wish to mitigate risk factors, or want to slow the progression of dementia. Avani acts as a study clinician in various studies (Im-TAB, LIIA, Bio-AD) and a sub-investigator for SESAD, an Alzheimer's disease clinical trial. Her responsibilities range from conducting neurological exams

and cognitive screenings to performing lumbar punctures and skin biopsies. Avani keeps participants safe by regularly assessing lab values, reviewing cases, and monitoring research-related health events

Journey into Medicine

Avani has known that medicine was her calling since childhood. This was influenced by frequent interactions with medical providers and her early career experiences as a Nursing Assistant, Medical Assistant, and Ophthalmologic Technician. The complexity of the brain and the profound impact that neurological diseases have on patients' lives drew her to neurology. Personal experience with her grandmother's dementia cemented her interest in the field of behavioral neurology.

Research and Clinical Interests

Avani's research interests lie in exploring modifiable risk factors and lifestyle interventions to slow cognitive decline in neurodegenerative conditions like Mild Cognitive Impairment, Alzheimer's disease, and Lewy Body Dementia. She is particularly interested in the effects of culture, learning, and language on disease progression. Clinically, she takes a holistic approach to medicine by incorporating exercise, diet, sleep, stress management, socialization, and mental stimulation.

Personal Insights

Avani prides herself on her extensive experience in diagnosing and managing a wide range of neurological diseases, from headaches and neurocognitive disorders to multiple sclerosis and neuromuscular conditions. She values cultural awareness and shared decision-making with patients in order to achieve the best outcomes. Outside of work, Avani is an avid traveler, hiker, reader of mystery novels, and a culinary connoisseur who loves exploring new recipes and restaurants.

Looking Ahead

Avani looks ahead to her time at the CU Alzheimer's and Cognition Center with excitement and hope:

"I enjoy contributing to the development of a deeper scientific understanding of neurodegenerative diseases and to discovering better potential treatments for these unfortunately prevalent conditions in our aging populations. As my career grows and expands, I am hopeful that we will see the development of safer and more effective disease-modifying therapies in this field."

Stay tuned for more insights from the professionals at the CU Alzheimer's and Cognition Center

[Find your 2024 Walk to Cure Alzheimer's](#)

Alzheimer's Association Colorado:

Denver Walk at City Park:

Saturday, September 21st, 2024

Click [here](#) for our calendar of events





Charting a Course for Progress: CUACC Pursues ADRC Designation

Exciting strides ahead! This year, the University of Colorado Alzheimer's and Cognition Center (CUACC) is on a mission to attain designation as an Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC), awarded by the National Institute on Aging to a limited number of major medical institutions across the country. Situated on the cusp of the Great Plains and the Rocky Mountain West, the CUACC is increasing research opportunities for both investigators and participants in our region. By becoming an ADRC, we will have the resources to expand our research impact, especially with underrepresented groups such as American Indians/Alaska Natives, Black/African Americans, and Hispanics/Latinos. Our team is dedicated to this collective effort to leverage our expertise and drive meaningful change in the fight against Alzheimer's.

Celebrating the Career of Dr. Christopher M. Filley



The CU Alzheimer's and Cognition Center proudly celebrates the exceptional career of Dr. Christopher M. Filley, who is retiring after four decades of dedicated service.

Dr. Filley joined the University of Colorado School of Medicine in 1984 as the institution's first behavioral neurologist and he founded the Behavioral Neurology Section in 1991. He has been instrumental in advancing patient care, investigating brain-behavior relationships, and recruiting top doctors in behavioral neurology. His pioneering work at the School of Medicine, Neurobehavior clinic, and the Marcus Institute for Brain Health has significantly impacted the field.

As a leading expert on white matter, Dr. Filley has authored or co-authored over 180 peer-reviewed papers, and he has written key texts including "Neurobehavioral Anatomy," "The Behavioral Neurology of White Matter" and "White Matter Dementia". His research has been foundational in shifting the focus of neurologic study to include the crucial role of white matter in brain function and dysfunction.

Dr. Filley's dedication to education has influenced countless practitioners and other professionals. As he transitions to Professor Emeritus of Neurology, we are excited to announce the annual Christopher M. Filley Lectureship in Behavioral Neurology, with the inaugural lecture this fall, to honor his legacy and commitment to the field. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to Dr. Filley and wish him much enjoyment in his newfound free time, during which he plans to continue writing, playing music, and traveling.

Click [HERE](#) to read publications authored by Dr. Filley

Alzheimer's Clinical Trial

Phase II Trial to Evaluate Safety and Efficacy of GM-CSF/Sargramostim in Alzheimer's Disease (SESAD)

In order to qualify you must:

- Be between 60-85 years old
- Have a diagnosis of mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease
- Be willing and able to have a spinal tap or 2 PET scans and weekly blood draws
- Have a study partner willing to give daily injections after training



Location:

After initial screenings at the CU Anschutz campus in Aurora, CO, participants will be able to have weekly home nursing visits. Occasional visits to campus during the study will be required for procedures that cannot be done at home.

Participants will receive:

- study related care and medication at no cost
- stipend to defray some costs of participation

[Contact Us](#)



Faculty Spotlight: Samuel Guzman, M.D.

Assistant Professor - Head of Neuropathology Education Program - Head of Neuroautopsy

University of degree

University of Southern California Keck School of Medicine

Where did you grow up?

Downey California, which is in Los Angeles County

What are you most proud of?

My wife and two little kids

Favorite thing to do in Colorado.

Go to the park with my family to enjoy the wildlife

Best place you've ever traveled.

Paris, France was really fun. I enjoyed the museums and would like to go back and spend more time in the museums.

Something you're passionate about.

The human brain is a very interesting riddle to solve. It involves the mind and a lot of other functions, which are all controlled at the cellular level. As technologies advance, we are able to better characterize the neural networks, which can lead to identifying deviations that lead to diseases. Brain tumors (glioblastoma), neurodegeneration, and epilepsy have a biology that appear unstopable at times but with an in depth understanding of these entities, successful treatments are possible.

Who had the greatest influence on your education and/or career path?

Dr. Naritoku (USC Pathologist) and Dr. Gilles (USC Neuropathologist) were the two pathologists that helped the most. As a medical student I was most interested in Neurology and Psychiatry but had the opportunity to rotate through the USC pathology department and became very interested in understanding the cellular level of disease. Dr. Naritoku opened the microscopic world up for me, which encouraged my questions. Dr. Gilles was the Director of Neuropathology at Children's Hospital Los Angeles, and he loved having trainees around him. He had an inquisitive mind that encouraged imagination from solid science starting points. My curiosity for the brain was further ignited there.

Most impactful part of your job.

When I diagnose cases, I use the science up until that point to characterize the disease in an accepted manner that will be beneficial to the clinical teams. When I do research on topics like Alzheimer's disease, I am hoping to build a useful answer to understand the biological framework of the disease that will lead to better treatments in the future. Diagnostics and research work together to develop a momentum that can fuel the science and are most impactful for me.

What advice would you give to your younger self or someone still pursuing their education?

They should read a lot and ask lots of questions. Once the topic is understood, then begin pulling at the threads of assumptions made "once upon a time" to see if they still stand. If there are no treatments for the disease that you are looking into then you have a starting point of where to let your imagination loose and build from. Neuro is full of these areas to look into.





Informed Consent: Questions Answered



What is informed consent?

Informed consent is the process by which a research participant confirms their willingness to participate in a research study. This looks like a discussion with the study's research coordinator and/or the principal investigator to inform the participant of all aspects of the research that are relevant to their decision regarding participation.

What do informed consent forms include?

Informed consent forms should be written in language that is understandable and should avoid the use of scientific jargon or legalese. Informed consent forms contain information about the study's purpose, experimental procedures, study duration, risks, benefits, and alternatives to participation and more.

What is the goal of informed consent?

The goal of informed consent is to present information about the study in a way that is easy to understand, allows participants ample time to consider, and imparts no undue pressure to participate. Research participation is a voluntary act and participation can be withdrawn at any point.

What is a Legally Authorized Representative (LAR)?

A legally authorized representative or LAR is anyone who is legally authorized to make medical decisions, including consenting to research, on behalf of a prospective participant. Often, this means someone with a Medical Durable Power of Attorney (MDPOA), or court-appointed guardianship. A LAR is required to sign when the research participant lacks the capacity or competency to consent to research on their own, often called decisional capacity.

What is decisional capacity?

Decisional capacity refers to the ability to retain information presented during informed consent and to weigh this information long enough to be able to make a decision. For example, what is the decision, why are you being asked to make it, and what the consequences of this decision? The person should also be able to understand the study's purpose, procedures, risks and benefits. The key is being able to link participation to one's values in order to understand how participating might affect them personally. Sometimes, decisional capacity is intact at the beginning of the study but declines over the course of the study. This is particularly true for research on neurodegenerative conditions.

HEALTHY
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Give to Research

If you are interested in making a donation to the CUACC, please contact Marti Laule at 720-202-7845.



Interested in a Research Study?

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

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