



Alzheimer's and Cognition Center

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO **ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS**

"Healthy Brain Aging Starts Here"

Spring 2026

Volume 7, Issue 2



Welcome to our Spring 2026 Newsletter!

Dear friends and colleagues,

Spring is here, and with it comes an exciting season of events, discoveries, and milestones at the CU Alzheimer's and Cognition Center. As the days grow longer, we are energized by the continued progress across our research, clinical, and community-based efforts. We are happy to share this newsletter filled with updates from our research programs, community events, and celebrations of our outstanding faculty. Thank you to our patients, families, research participants, donors, and community partners who make this work possible. We are deeply grateful for your trust and generosity, and we look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

- CU Alzheimer's and Cogniton Team

**HEALTHY
BRAIN AGING**
- Starts Here -

In this newsletter you can expect:

Center Highlights

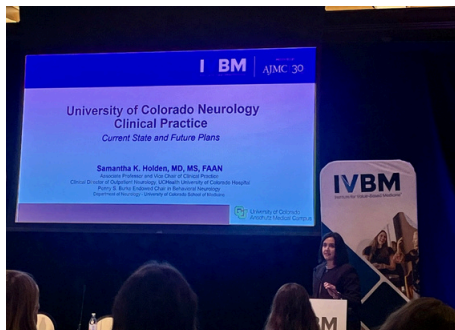
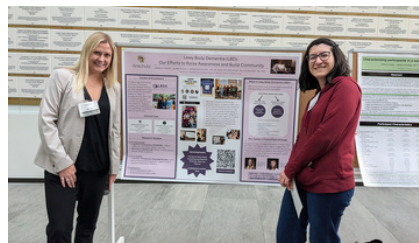
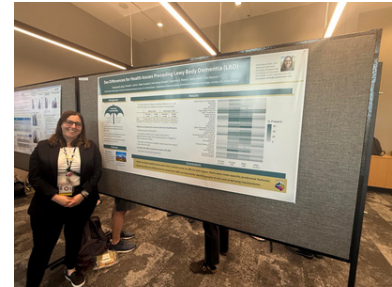
Congratulations!

Driving and
Dementia

Therapeutic
Horticulture

Research
Updates

Upcoming Events



From left to right:

Row 1: The CUACC Team at the Walk to End Alzheimer's in Denver's City Park; Dr. Victoria Pelak presents at the Annual Community Geriatrics Conference; Dr. Huntington Potter and Ellie Carter attend the Be Beautiful Be Yourself Fashion Show for the Global Down Syndrome Foundation.

Row 2: Dr. Ece Bayram participates in the Project Bridge Community Gong Show; The LBDA Research Center of Excellence (RCOE) hosts a showing of Mrs. Doubtfire for the Lewy Body dementia community; Francesca Dino presents at the Neurology Research Retreat.

Row 3: Dr. Ece Bayram attends the Pan American Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorders Congress; Lauren McCall and Dr. Ece Bayram present at CU's Healing the Divide conference; Ellie Carter poses at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference.

Row 4: Dr. Samantha Holden presents at an AJMC: Institute for Value Based Medicine seminar; Richard McClintock, Carol Willis, and Franklin Roberts attend the CU Anschutz Block Party; Ellie Carter and Nicole Leith represent the CU Movement Disorders Center at Parkinson's Revolution.

Congratulations!



Samantha Holden, MD, MS, FAAN is the inaugural chairholder of the Penny S. Burke Endowed Chair in Behavioral Neurology. This honor recognizes her dedication to advancing memory disorder care, research, and education.



Tara Carlisle, MD, PhD received the 2025 Journal of Neuropsychiatry editor's choice award for a paper on patient selection for anti-amyloid therapy which is part of a two-part series that also covered systems of care.



Christina Coughlan, PhD is a recipient of a 2025 Gates Institute Crubstake Award for AD-Exo, an exosome-based blood diagnostic for Alzheimer's disease that matches PET imaging accuracy and identifies sex-specific differences in disease risk.

Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience

Last fall, the Department of Neurology partnered with the Multidisciplinary Center on Aging to host Guiding an Improved Dementia Experience, highlighting the **CU Medicine GUIDE program**, a comprehensive care model designed to support individuals living with dementia and their care partners. The event brought together CU Anschutz clinicians and community partners to share resources, care navigation strategies, and practical communication tools. The event included a fun improv-based educational session and support group leader luncheon. One attendee shared the following about her experience at the event:

"Super well organized, and the speakers were very knowledgeable of the subject matter. I went away feeling much more confident and reassured in regards to supporting my mother with dementia and my father who is her caregiver. Thank you so much for a wonderful time."






A special thank you to Laura M. Jensen Family Fund which made this event possible!



Publication Highlight

Risk factors and predictors for Lewy body dementia: a systematic review

Who you are

-  Genes
APOEε4 and GBA
-  Male sex
-  Older age

Movement issues

-  Slower movements with stiffness and shakiness
-  Walking and posture issues
-  Speech issues
-  Older age at Parkinson's disease onset
-  Need for more Parkinson medications & having more side effects

Lewy body dementia (LBD), including Parkinson's disease dementia (PDD) & dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB), is a common and burdensome type of dementia

We looked into 4,368 studies and identified 167 studies for LBD risk factors and early signs









Most work focused on PDD, with less on DLB. Most work was done in Western Europe, North America, and Asia.

Early signs and risk factors of Lewy body dementia



Not everyone with these signs will develop LBD. We may be able to address some of these early signs to potentially prevent LBD, but we need more research to better understand that.

Other health issues

-  Rapid eye movement sleep behavior disorder (sleep issue, acting out dreams)
-  Hallucinations
-  Autonomic issues; constipation, orthostatic hypotension (drop in blood pressure upon standing up)
-  Smell loss
-  Depression
-  Mild cognitive issues
- Medical test results**
 -  More white matter disease on brain imaging (MRI)
 -  Markers in blood (higher neurofilament light chain (NFL) & cerebrospinal fluid (from lumbar puncture); lower amyloid β42 and higher NFL)



Ece Bayram, MD, PhD is an assistant professor whose research is focused on differences in sex, gender, ethnicity and race in Parkinsonian disorders, and is funded by the NIH and Lewy Body Dementia Association.



In the News



The former Chancellor of the University of Denver was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. Then, she wasn't



Colorado scientists say the drug Leukine halts brain cell loss in patients with Alzheimer's and could improve cognition



'Second Verse' is a new choir in Colorado for people with dementia



Can Annual Eye Checkups Reduce Risk of Alzheimer's and Other Dementias?



Making Memories: Brain Waves During Sleep Provide a Picture of How It Works



The Silent Symptom Most People Don't Realize Could Be a Dementia Sign, According to Neurologists

Driving and Dementia: Navigating a Difficult Transition

For many, driving represents independence, routine, control, and is closely tied to identity. Changes in driving can be one of the more difficult transitions for individuals living with dementia and their families. In Colorado, long distances, limited public transportation in some areas, and car-dependent access to much of our beautiful state, makes it all the more important. At the same time, these factors can make driving more complex as cognitive changes progress. Here we share some common beliefs and perspectives to consider when thinking about driving and dementia:



“As long as they can still get where they’re going, there’s no concern.”

Getting to a destination doesn’t always reflect how easy or safe the drive felt. Changes in reaction time, decision-making, or navigation can make driving challenging, even if the trip is completed.

“They haven’t had any accidents, so it seems safe.”

Subtle changes in driving patterns happen over time, sometimes before any incident occurs. Some signs to watch for might be getting lost in familiar places, becoming more reliant on GPS, missing traffic signals or stop signs, changes in driving speed or confidence, and increased avoidance of challenging driving conditions.

“Taking away the keys is the only option.”

Changes in driving can happen gradually rather than all at once, so it may be helpful to start conversations early, ride along to better understand current driving experiences and seek input from professionals who specialize in driving evaluations.

“They’ll know when it’s time to stop.”

Changes in insight and awareness can be part of dementia, which makes it harder for someone to recognize their own limitations, even if they are usually thoughtful and careful. Support from family members and healthcare providers can be helpful in navigating next steps here.

“My Doctor will just take my license away”

This is a common fear. Healthcare providers are there to help monitor changes and support conversations about safety. They may recommend driving cessation or may refer you for specialized driving evaluations. In Colorado, safety concerns can only be submitted to the DMV by an immediate family member, medical provider, eye doctor, or law enforcement officer. Doctors are not required to report concerns, but if they choose to, a re-examination notice to be sent to the individual and they will likely be asked to complete an eye test, written test, and then take a drive test with a driving school.

The Conversation:

- Start early
- Focus on safety and shared goal
- Acknowledge the importance of driving
- Revisit the topic over time
- Use a [conversation guide](#) or [driving contract](#)

Explore driving alternatives:

- RTD buses and light rail
- Uber/Lyft
- Carpooling with family or friends
- Community ride programs. The following resource guides provide many options for transportation for aging individuals:
 - [GUIDE resource guide](#)
 - [Age wise Colorado](#)
 - [DRCOG Choice Services Program](#)

Written by: Andrea Estupinan

Andrea is a student at the University of Colorado Denver

Rooted in Healing:

How the Denver Botanic Gardens Is Using Plants for People with Neurologic Conditions

We had a conversation with Alyssa Scott, Denver Botanic Gardens' Assistant Manager of Horticulture and registered horticultural therapist, to learn how taking care of plants benefits people living with Alzheimer's, dementia, and Parkinson's. Along the way we learned how plants heal, who can benefit from therapeutic horticulture, and how to get started.



What exactly is therapeutic horticulture?

"Working with plants, caring for plants, working with other people in the garden, is inherently therapeutic," Alyssa told us. "It benefits us physically, psychologically, emotionally, socially, spiritually, and ecologically, by learning patience, persistence, faith, resilience, and balancing control with letting things be on their natural time." She also pointed out that horticultural therapy is nothing new, "We've been doing this for millennia. Since ancient Egyptian healing gardens, people have understood the benefits of gardens in some capacity. We're realizing now this can be an interventional tool for health and well-being."

"Who is this for?"

The short answer: everyone can benefit! Alyssa explained the impact "We have programs for people with dementia and Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, patients going through cancer treatment, people with low and no vision, folks with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It can be used for folks with substance abuse disorders and people dealing with depression in psychiatric facilities and health facilities."

"What does it actually do for people?"

There are many benefits to horticulture. Improved strength and balance, better attention and recall, reduced anxiety, to name a few, but the social benefits stand out. For many of Alyssa's participants, especially those living with a progressive diagnosis, isolation is a quiet crisis.

"I've had care partners tell me, my mom doesn't like to leave the house, except for this program," she shared. Over time, strangers become friends, exchanging lunch dates and showing up for each other. Therapeutic horticulture can also benefit caregivers. A chance to be around others who understand what they're living through can make an enormous difference.

There are also specific benefits for those living with memory loss: "You give them a certain plant, and we talk about their memories of it, like, when was the first time you saw this plant? or, did you have any memories of planting when you were growing up? There's a lot of nostalgia and joy that folks get just from being at the gardens and in the program."

How do I get started?

You don't need a diagnosis or a garden plot, Alyssa recommends starting small: visit a park or botanic garden, grow a few herbs on a windowsill, or pick up a houseplant. "Just nurturing that love for plants, that good feeling you get when you're out in nature, that's a good way to find the motivation to start on your own." When you're ready for more, she suggests reaching out to public gardens or local organizations for guidance.

Learn more about the [Denver Botanic Gardens' Therapeutic Horticulture Program](#).



Upcoming event with CU Neurology: You are invited to Denver Botanic Gardens on September 14 for a special program: Cultivating Wellness with Lewy Body Dementia. Limited space is available. [Sign up now!](#)



Written by: Joshua Quigley
Josh is a student at the University of Colorado Denver

**View our calendar of
[upcoming events](#)**



Research Update:

ALLFTD2 Study Advances FTD Research

We are excited to be a participating site in the ALLFTD2 study, the next phase of a major North American research effort supported by the National Institutes of Health. Building on the original [ALLFTD](#) study, ALLFTD2 is a large, multi-site natural history study designed to better understand how frontotemporal degeneration (FTD) develops and progresses over time.

Through longitudinal clinical evaluations, brain imaging, and biosample collection, this study is helping researchers identify key biomarkers and track disease changes even before symptoms appear.

With more than 3,000 participants enrolled across North America, ALLFTD2 is a critical resource for improving diagnosis and accelerating the development of future treatments and clinical trials for FTD.

[Read more from the AFTD](#)



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!

Contact us

CUALZ@CUANSCHUTZ.EDU

Follow us



Give to Research

If you are interested in donating to the CUACC please contact Marti Laule at 720-202-7845

Written & designed by:

Ellie Carter

Contributors:

Joshua Quigley
Andrea Estupinan
Alyssa Scott

Thank you for reading!

SCREENING OF

FACING THE WIND

AND CONVERSATION WITH
PRODUCER, MARY LOU FALCONE

MONDAY, APRIL 20, 2026

10:00 AM - 12:30 PM



ANSCHUTZ HEALTH SCIENCES
BUILDING, AURORA CO

- Interactive Brain Stations by MHA program
- Presentation from Mary Lou Falcone, executive producer of *Facing the Wind* and author of *I Didn't See It Coming: Scenes of Love, Loss, and Lewy Body Dementia*
- Watch *Facing the Wind* on the big screen
- Moderated Q & A with Mary Lou and Dr. Samantha Holden

This is a free in-person event. Snacks provided!



REGISTRATION IS ENCOURAGED



Supported in memory of John "Jack" Pogge by his family



Anschutz

School of Medicine



LBDA

LEWY BODY DEMENTIA ASSOCIATION

RESEARCH CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE



Department of Neurology

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

Section of Neuropalliative Care Presents

The Art and Science of Dementia Care

made possible by a generous donation from [Dignify Dementia](#)

Loss, Loneliness, & Love in Caregiving

Addressing What Matters Most to Carers of
Persons with Parkinson's and Lewy-body Dementia



Sandhya Seshadri, PhD, MA, MS

Assistant Professor of Neurology

Assistant Director of Neuropalliative Care Research

Division of Neuropalliative Care

Department of Neurology & Center for Health & Technology

University of Rochester



Drawing on prior work and her own research studies, Dr. Seshadri will outline top caregiver priorities and how her work aims to address them.

Wed, April 29, 2026

1:00-2:00 PM

To register:



Please direct any questions to Candace.Ellman@cuanschutz.edu.

SECOND VERSE CHOIR

COME SING WITH US!

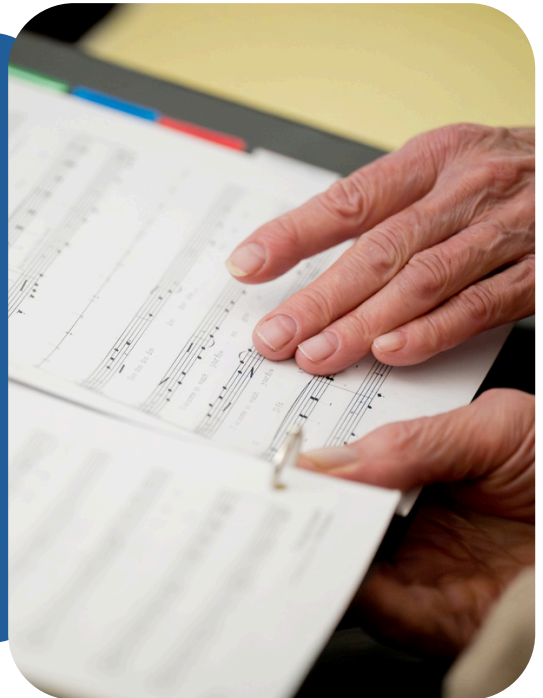
For people living with dementia and memory loss

Music boosts mood, sparks memory, and fosters connection offering a joyful space for engagement, creativity, and community.

Summer 2026 Session

- 15-week session from May 7 - Aug 13
- Thursdays 10:00 - 11:30 AM
- Concludes with concert and reception
- Fee: \$150 (care partners join for free, financial assistance available)


Central Christian Church, 3690
Cherry Creek S Dr., Denver



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  Second Verse Choir

Program director: Anne Rigley
anne@secondversechoir.org
303-349-1833

Program manager: Kris Boggs
kris@secondversechoir.org
303-551-3908

Alzheimer's Clinical Trial



Do you have mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease?

You may be eligible for a clinical trial for an investigational drug for the treatment of mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease. Participants will be asked to participate in weekly visits for 24 weeks, as well as screening and follow-up visits.

In order to qualify you must:

- be between 60-85 years old
- meet criteria for mild-to-moderate Alzheimer's disease
- complete PET scans (or optional lumbar punctures) before and after study completion and receive weekly blood draws
- have a study partner willing to give daily injections after training

Check your eligibility
at www.cumemoryresearch.org

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

To learn more please call: 303-724-4644

You can also email NeuroResearch@cuanschutz.edu or visit our website at:

www.cumemoryresearch.org

Health insurance is not needed for this study.



Alzheimer's and Cognition Center
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO ANSCHUTZ MEDICAL CAMPUS

COMIRB# 19-2727 PI: Huntington Potter, PhD v30May2024

The TRAC-PCA Study

TRIAL READINESSSAND ASSESSMENTS
OF CLINICAL AND BIOMARKER
OUTCOMES FOR POSTERIOR CORTICAL
ATROPHY

WHAT TO EXPECT

We are looking for people with a diagnosis of **Posterior Cortical Atrophy syndrome** for a 12-month observational research study. We will be assessing changes in visual processing and perception, as well as activities of daily living, during a 12-month time period.

Open for Recruitment

October 5th 2024

ELIGIBILITY

- Between ages of 45-85
- Have a study partner willing to attend visits
- Able to attend in person visits

JOIN US

PI: Dr. Victoria Pelak, MD

+1(303) 724-4644 📞

NeuroResearch@CUAnschutz.edu ✉️



University of Colorado
Anschutz Medical Campus

