

NIDA-IRP Peer Mentoring Program

Navigating the transition from undergraduate education to graduate/professional studies or from graduate school to postdoctoral research can be complex and daunting. The NIDA-IRP Peer Mentoring Program was established to bring “seasoned” postdocs, grad students, and postbacs together with new trainees to develop support networks, provide advice and guidance, and foster a sense of community.

We meet the **third Monday of each month at 2:00 p.m.** in the **BRC 5th floor conference room (5A508)** for informal discussions. Peer Mentors are also available via e-mail or phone.

Tom Keck, Ph.D. (coordinator)

Postdoctoral Fellow, Medicinal Chemistry Section, Molecular Targets and Medications Discovery Branch

Email: thomas.keck@nih.gov Phone: ext. 2592

Our section develops novel drug-like molecules with the goals of developing new research tools and medications to treat addiction and other neuropsychiatric disorders. I manage the *in vitro* and *in vivo* testing of compounds targeting mGluR5 and dopamine D2-like receptors.

Caitlin Burzynski, B.A.

Postbaccalaureate Fellow, Medicinal Chemistry Section, Molecular Targets and Medications Discovery Branch

Email: caitlin.burzynski@nih.gov Phone: 570-971-9131

Our section develops novel compounds as tools for probing dopamine D2-like receptors as targets for the treatment of substance abuse. My research is focused on testing the selectivity and affinity of these dopamine D2-like receptor-selective compounds in cell membranes. My research has also focused on examining the cognitive deficits associated with methamphetamine use in rats.

Ignacio Cerdeña, B.S.

Postbaccalaureate Fellow, Treatment Section, Clinical Pharmacology & Therapeutics Branch

Email: cerdenai@mail.nih.gov Phone: ext. 2285

I am involved in several studies: a clinical trial with a CRF-1 antagonist, a longitudinal epidemiological study of drug use, and an Ecological Momentary Assessment study of drug use and stress within a methadone maintenance population. I have also participated in the NIH Academy, designed my own spatial epidemiological study, and am applying to medical schools.

Sarah Himes, B.S.

Predoctoral Fellow, Chemistry & Drug Metabolism, Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics Research Branch; Doctoral Candidate, University of Maryland, Baltimore

Email: sarah.himes@nih.gov Phone: ext. 2488

I'm a 4th year doctoral student in the Toxicology Ph.D. program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore. My research focuses on *in utero* drug exposure to antiretroviral drugs and alcohol. I develop and validate analytical methods to detect biomarkers in meconium and utilize meconium concentrations to predict infant outcomes.

Yomi Okunola-Bakare, Ph.D.

Postdoctoral Fellow, Medicinal Chemistry Section, Molecular Targets and Medications Discovery Branch

Email: okunolaoa@nida.nih.gov Phone: ext. 2894

My research is focused on the design and synthesis of small molecules as tools for studying the dopamine transporter and the dopamine D3 receptor as targets in substance abuse disorders.

Vani Pariyadath, Ph.D.

Postdoctoral Fellow, Neuroimaging Research Branch

Email: vani.pariyadath@nih.gov Phone: ext. 2623

My postdoctoral research focuses on differences in susceptibility to addiction, especially those stemming from gene \times adversity interactions, and I address questions related to this topic using functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging and cognitive testing in human participants.

Ingrid Tulloch, Ph.D.

Postdoctoral Fellow, Molecular Neuropsychiatry Branch

E-mail: ingrid.tulloch@nih.gov

I investigate molecular mechanisms of addiction with a focus on transcriptional and epigenetic changes after chronic methamphetamine exposure. I received my PhD in biological psychology and behavioral neuroscience from the City University of New York.

Derek Wilkinson, Ph.D.

Postdoctoral Fellow, Psychobiology Section, Molecular Targets and Medications Discovery Branch

E-mail: derek.wilkinson@nih.gov Phone: ext. 2557

My research is focused on evaluating novel compounds to treat psychostimulant abuse. I am currently using behavioral economic models of drug self-administration to determine the ability of certain compounds to reduce the reinforcing effects of cocaine and in vivo binding to determine the rate of association of compounds to the dopamine transporter.