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 **1st Thursday 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.

Vani Pariyadath, Ph.D. (coordinator)
Postdoctoral Fellow, Neuroimaging Research Branch
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My research focuses on differences in susceptibility to addiction, especially those stemming from gene × adversity interactions. I address questions related to this topic using functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging and cognitive testing in human participants.

Eduardo Gigante, M.S.
Postbaccalaureate Fellow, Behavioral Neuroscience Branch
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Through the use of optogenetic stimulation I am investigating the well documented role of the lateral hypothalamus on feeding in rats and transgenic mice. Additionally, we are documenting the parameters through which optogenetic stimulation is used as a behavioral tool.

Luke Hartstein, B.S.
Postbaccalaureate Fellow, Neurobiology Branch
Email: luke.hartstein@nih.gov Phone: ext. 2737

My lab investigates cell adhesion molecules that have been implicated in differing responses to amphetamine in humans. Using behavioral and molecular techniques, we evaluate the potential of these proteins as targets for pharmacological intervention in the treatment of drug addiction.

Yuzheng Hu, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow, Neuroimaging Research Branch
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My research focuses on neurobiological mechanism of drug addiction. In my study, drug (especially cocaine) effects on brain structure and function are examined using multiple magnetic resonance imaging techniques including task-based fMRI, resting-state fMRI, DTI and MRS.

Meredith McHugh, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow, Neuroimaging Research Branch
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I investigate the neurobiological mechanisms that drive relapse to substance use following treatment for nicotine, opiate/heroin, and cocaine addiction in humans. I am also interested in characterizing the neurobiological processes that underlie symptoms experienced during acute withdrawal from nicotine. I use a combination of multimodal brain imaging, self-report, behavioral, neuroendocrine, and physiological measures.

Oscar Torres, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Fellow, Molecular Neuropsychiatry Branch
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I am investigating the molecular mechanisms of addiction with a focus on epigenetic regulation of transcriptional changes after acute exposure to methamphetamine. Additionally, I am examining changes in gene expression that occur in the rat brain after immediate and protracted withdrawal from methamphetamine self-administration.

Veronica Wallace, M.S.
Postbaccalaureate Fellow, Behavioral Neuroscience Branch
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My lab is interested in neuronal ensembles involved in drug-related cues and drug-seeking behavior. I am exploring how neuronal ensembles may be further elucidated utilizing nano- and micro-sized particles with modified surface chemistries.

Danielle Sisto Young, B.S.
Graduate Student, Molecular Neurobiology Branch
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Our lab is interested in the role of cell adhesion molecules (CAMs) in shaping brain connections. Currently, I am using protein expression and enzyme assays to identify small molecules that could modify CAM activity.