

# THE BRAINSTORM

*The McKnight Brain Institute of the University of Florida e-newsletter*

Issue 33, Late Fall 2023

## Message from the Director, Dr. Jen Bizon

As we celebrate the MBI's 25th anniversary, it's a time to reflect upon our achievements of the past and plan strategically for our groundbreaking discoveries to come.

Please mark your calendars for the MBI celebration on Feb. 2 which will feature the annual William G. Luttge Lecture in Neuroscience, sponsored by the McKnight Brain Research Foundation. This year's lecture will be delivered by Dr. Adam Gazzaley who is the David Dolby Distinguished Professor of Neurology, Physiology and Psychiatry at University of California, San Francisco and the founder and executive director of Neuroscape, a translational neuroscience center focused on technology creation and scientific research. Check out our [25th anniversary webpage](#) to keep up with details about the event.

As we come together to recognize this important milestone in our institute's history, the MBI leadership team has been working hard to finalize our strategic plan. We've appreciated all of the input so far and are in the process of scheduling some detailed updates for our neuroscience and neuromedicine community.

Congratulations to all who have contributed to the MBI's robust research collaborations over the past two and a half decades. I hope you will join us in celebrating this February.



## MBI Rising Stars: Dr. Didem Pehlivanoglu

Working in the lab of Dr. Natalie Ebner, Dr. Didem Pehlivanoglu is focused on understanding whether people become more susceptible to deception in advanced age and, if so, identifying any cognitive, socioemotional and neurobiological mechanisms behind it.

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Neurodegeneration experts present latest advances, focus on young investigators



At the Southeastern Neurodegenerative Disease Conference, co-led by MBI members, the main focus was advancing careers of newest investigators.

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## Dr. Gordon Mitchell honored with UF Foundation Term Professorship

MBI deputy director Dr. Gordon Mitchell was named one of two UF Preeminence Foundation Term Professors for 2023-24 to support UF's goal to further advance faculty research efforts.

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## Latest edition of College of Medicine's Florida Physician magazine highlights neuroscience and neuromedicine

The fall edition of Florida Physician magazine highlights several MBI researchers and initiatives including the use of AI to accelerate discoveries, community outreach efforts, programs supporting early-career neuroscientists and more.

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## Celebrating scientists during Hispanic Heritage Month

Dr. Nancy Padilla-Coreano and Laura Falceto Font discuss their cultures and work.

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*Hispanic Heritage Month*



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## Dr. Sara Jo Nixon receives research award



Dr. Sara Jo Nixon co-authored a paper that was recently honored with the 2023 Charles A. Lewis Excellence in Research Award. The pilot study examined the impact of gardening and art-making on psychosocial health.

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## Dr. Daniel Hoh elected president of the Congress of Neurological Surgeons

An expert in spine surgery, Dr. Daniel Hoh will lead the 10,000-plus-member professional society.

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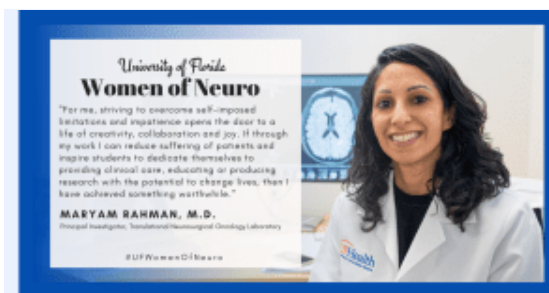


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## University of Florida Women of Neuro

Our UF Women of Neuro series shines light on some of the incredible women leading our neuroscience and neuromedicine research initiatives. In this issue, we're featuring Dr. [Maryam Rahman](#), principal investigator of Translational Neurosurgical Oncology Laboratory, and Dr. [Sheila Carrera-Justiz](#), neurology service chief of small animal clinical sciences.

[SEE MORE UF WOMEN OF NEURO»](#)



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## Bridging neuroscience and AI

Dr. Ruogu Fang will serve as principal investigator on new National Science Foundation-funded study seeking to build AI systems with the ability to sense emotion as the human brain does.

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## PHHP Researcher Spotlight Series: Dr. Karen Hegland

Learn about Dr. Karen Hegland's research on swallowing and upper airway disorders among patients with Parkinson's disease.

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## Postdoc appreciation breakfast

On Sept. 22, the MBI hosted a Postdoc Appreciation Breakfast for fellows affiliated with the MBI. We are thankful for all of the efforts of these talented scientists.



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## MBI researchers in the spotlight

Journalists regularly reach out to our MBI members for their expertise on many subjects. If a reporter contacts you, please alert assistant director of communications [Todd Taylor](#) or science writer [Michelle Koidin Jaffee](#) so we can assist with, archive and promote your media endeavors. Here are recent examples of MBI researchers in the news:

- **Dr. Steven DeKosky (Neurology Today)** — [Here's where the prevalence of Alzheimer's dementia is highest and lowest](#)
- **Dr. Gordon Mitchell (Newswise)** — [Breathing memory depends heavily on time of day for hypoxia](#)
- **Dr. Michael Okun (Scientific American)** — [A newly discovered brain signal marks recovery from depression](#)

[SEE MORE EXAMPLES OF MBI RESEARCHERS IN THE SPOTLIGHT»](#)

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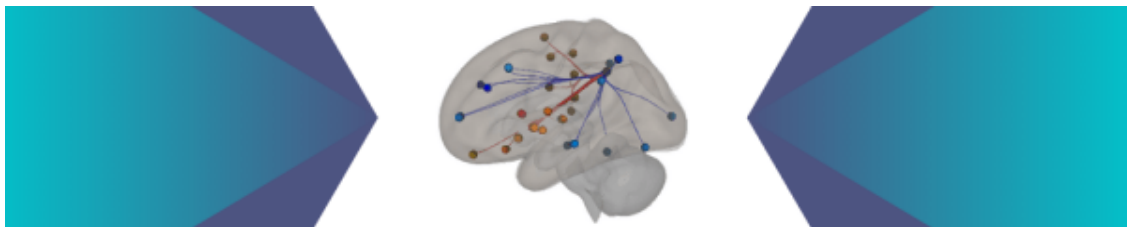
# THE CONVERSATION

Check out these recent Conversation piece written by MBI members:

- **Brian Ho & Dr. Ronald Cohen** — [Aerobic and strength training exercise combined can be an elixir for better brain health in your 80s and 90s, new study finds](#)
- **Dr. Steven DeKosky** — [Alzheimer's disease is partly genetic – studying the genes that delay decline in some may lead to treatments for all](#)
- **Dr. Habibeh Khoshbouei** — [Misuse of Adderall promotes stigma and mistrust for patients who need it](#)

The Conversation is a nonprofit, independent news organization publishing trustworthy and informative articles written by academic experts for the general public and edited by a team of journalists. [The Conversation](#) reaches 5 million-plus unique readers monthly and then the articles go farther, often picked up by major outlets such as The Washington Post, Scientific American, Smithsonian Magazine and the Chicago Tribune.

Contact science writer [Michelle Koidin Jaffee](#) or assistant director of communications [Todd Taylor](#) with your ideas for The Conversation.



## Highlight your work with MBI's Research Snapshots

*Showcase your discovery by pairing an impactful image from your latest published research with a written description of your findings. Share with our MBI communications team and work together to convey how this research has influenced your field of study.*

**Drs. Alexandria Marciante & Gordon Mitchell** examined how time of day influences efficacy of oxygen therapy being tested for spinal cord injury, ALS in rat-model study. [Read the Snapshot »](#)

**Drs. Vivekananda Budamagunta & Thomas Foster** reported that removal of senescent cells beginning in a middle-aged rat model and extending to old age led to reduced systemic inflammation and lessened cognitive decline. [Read the Snapshot »](#)

**Elizabeth Chapman & Dr. Carol Mathews** found evidence of alterations in one of the earliest stages of visual processing in people with obsessive-compulsive disorder. [Read the Snapshot »](#)


[READ MORE SNAPSHOTS AND SUBMIT YOUR OWN »](#)


## Reminders from the Communications Team

Please [become an MBI member](#) (if you haven't already), update your [UF Health Directory profile](#) and let our [communications team](#) know early and often when you have big news or research coming out of your area. All of these efforts will help us shine an even brighter light on neuro research at UF.



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