JHPDA

NEWSLETTER

October 2026

The Fall Edition – Achievements, Awards & Celebration Highlights



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October 2026 - Fall Issue



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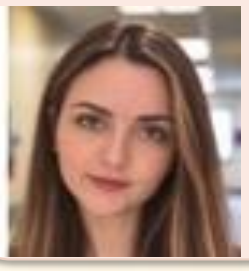


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Awards, Grants and Honors

Researchers at Johns Hopkins work exceptionally hard. Please join us in congratulating the individuals whose dedication has been recognized with recent awards, prizes and publications.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION



Pooneh Jabbaripour Sarmadian, MD

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Division of Endocrinology, Diabetes & Metabolism, Johns Hopkins University

Received the Women in Endocrinology Young Investigator Award at ENDO 2026 in recognition of her research contributions in endocrinology.

Marissa McGilvrey, PhD

Postdoctoral Fellow, Johns Hopkins All Children's Hospital



Selected as a 2026 Toffler Scholar by the Karen Toffler Charitable Trust. The award will support her research investigating how metabolic signals from peripheral organs influence mitochondrial function and energetics in the brain, with the goal of better understanding how metabolic disease may contribute to early neurodegenerative risk.



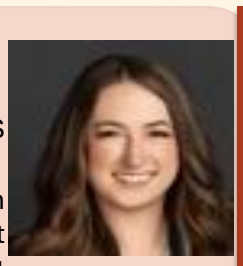
Dr. Merve Gozel

Reviewing Editor, Springer Nature Reviewer Programme

Appointed as a Reviewing Editor for Springer Nature, recognizing her ongoing contributions and peer-review service in academic research.

Dr. Summer Paulson

Researcher



Won a prize for Best Poster at the Live Like Lou Foundation Biennial Research Symposium in July.
Poster title: Examining the effect of gain of function serine palmitoyltransferase-related juvenile ALS variants on mitochondrial function
The work: Gain of function mutations in the serine palmitoyltransferase (SPT) complex related to in juvenile ALS development demonstrated an overall decreased mitochondrial bioactivity readout compared to control cells, and preliminary staining points toward less complex mitochondrial formations.

PUBLICATION SPOTLIGHT

NEW IN PNAS

Catechol-O-methyltransferase connects dopamine homeostasis to redox signaling, metal homeostasis, and protein folding in schizophrenia

By Dr. Sunil Jamuna Tripathi and Dr. Suwarna Chakrabory

Dysregulated dopamine signaling is central to the pathogenesis of neurodegenerative and neuropsychiatric disorders. Dopamine homeostasis is regulated by multiple catabolic enzymes, among which membrane-bound catechol-O-methyltransferase (MB-COMT) plays a particularly important role in brain regions with low dopamine transporter expression, such as the prefrontal cortex. Our findings show that MB-COMT depletion significantly alters redox homeostasis and disrupts protein-folding pathways. Dysregulation of these pathways may contribute to the pathophysiology of schizophrenia and other affective disorders. Overall, our findings identify MB-COMT as a potential molecular link between dopamine homeostasis and cellular stress pathways implicated in neuropsychiatric disease.

READ THE FULL PAPER: https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2606205123

NPAW events highlights

Nobel Laureate Dr. Peter C. Agre Talk









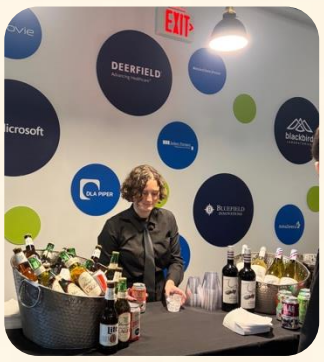
- A major highlight of the Postdoc Appreciation Week was an inspiring talk by Dr. Peter C. Agre, recipient of the 2003 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for the discovery of aquaporins.
- His insightful talk and the engaging science and advocacy session were a huge success, offering incredible inspiration to our postdocs.
- As a special token of appreciation, Limin An, a graduate student at the Bloomberg School of Public Health, presented Dr. Agre with a beautiful portrait she had drawn.
- The event ended with a dinner hosted by the JHPDA, HWPDA, and Proteintech association, which gave our postdocs a wonderful chance to connect.

Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures Event

- As part of the Postdoc Appreciation Week, JHPDA partnered with Johns Hopkins Technology Ventures (JHTV) to host an informative session highlighting the resources and opportunities available for postdocs.
- JHTV supports postdocs by providing guidance on intellectual property, entrepreneurship, mentorship, and industry connections to help translate their research discoveries into real-world impact.
- Dr. Elizabeth Harper and Dr. Stewart Neifert from JHTV explained how JHTV can support postdocs in advancing their research, developing their ideas, and pursuing their career goals.
- To learn more about JHTV and to contact the team, visit their website (https://ventures.jhu.edu/).









Professional Headshots Event





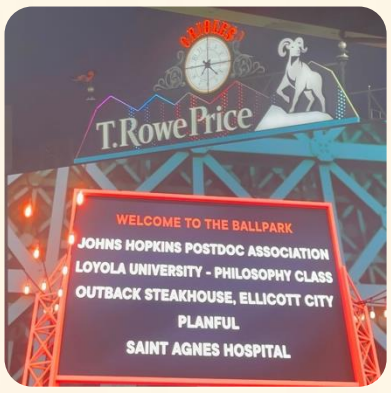


- Another highlight of the Postdoc Appreciation Week was the Professional Headshots event, sponsored by Novogene in association with JHPDA.
- JHPDA invited photographer Larry Canner to take professional headshots. This event received an overwhelmingly positive response, with many postdoctoral fellows (PDFs) taking advantage of the opportunity to update their professional profiles.
- Attendees also enjoyed interacting with Dr. Victor Stolzenbach and Dr. Swarup Mishra, who introduced services offered by Novogene.

Moments of Joy at NPAW

Orioles Games





A baseball night…..

Postdocs had a fantastic time cheering on the Baltimore Orioles against the Toronto Blue Jays, making memories during their Hopkins days!

Wellness Table

Pet Therapy with Kissie

Kissie joined us for a relaxing break, bringing smiles, comfort, and a little extra joy!





Coffee and Bites











Connecting over breakfast

JHPDA, with support from Rooster Bio, organized a cheerful Coffee & Bites event where postdocs enjoyed breakfast and chats with fellow researchers! Special thanks to Crystal M. Cruz, from Rooster Bio for joining the event and introducing postdocs to the resources offered by the company.

Postdoc community JHU

A week to remember

Great events, delicious food, and wonderful conversations made this Postdoc Appreciation Week truly memorable! These moments brought postdocs together, strengthened the Johns Hopkins postdoctoral community, and created opportunities to build friendships and support one another.



Mentor–Mentee Spotlight

The complete interview • Elias Zambidis and Willem Buys

Oncology and Pediatrics

MENTOR

Dr. Elias Zambidis



THE MENTOR'S PERSPECTIVE

Why did you choose this specific mentee for your lab as a postdoctoral fellow?

I served as Willem's mentor with direct oversight of his research projects from November, 2022 until his graduation into a faculty position in 2026. Prior to pursuing a fellowship in my lab, Willem completed his MD/PhD in 2021 at the University Duisburg-Essen, and his doctoral thesis in the BIOME graduate school as an ELAN scholar in 2022. Willem started his clinical career as resident physician at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum in Germany, which he paused to undertake research in my lab while also establishing a clinical connection to our Johns Hopkins Hematology department. Willem was already accomplished prior to enering my group and had published two papers based on his thesis project on the *ex vivo* testing of immune modulatory drugs in early sepsis.

He was subsequently awarded a two-year hematology research scholarship (2022-24) to work in my lab by the Dr. Werner Jackstädt Foundation followed by being awarded a competitive postdoctoral research grant from the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund (MSCRF; 2025-2027) to continue his work in my lab. My assessment was that Willem would do well with my group and he indeed did not prove me wrong. He possessed not only clinical expertise but also great aptitude for basic research. He ultimately proved to be a diligent, independent, promising and highly productive young scientist!

During the on-going research, did you have a particular result or 'eureka' moment from your mentee that has stuck with you?

Willem was a highly motivated young researcher in my group and routinely self-educated himself with great ease in basic stem cell biology literature to solve technical problems. It was clear Willem possesses the talent and drive to establish himself as an independent physician-scientist in the fields of hematology and regenerative medicine.

Willem contributed extensively to the research efforts of the Zambidis laboratory to improve the generation of clinical-grade myeloid progenitors from human induced pluripotent stem cells. He wrote a first author on an article published in the high impact jourla Nature Regenerative Medicine (Buys and Zambidis. 2023), as well as a contributing author on at least two additional major Zambidis lab manuscripts in preparation. Willem's work in my group focused on clinical translation of bioengineered myeloid progenitor cell therapy products. He employed a new class of naïve human stem cells discovered in the Zambidis Lab that possess improved differentiation potential. Dr. Buys independently developed a protocol for efficient differentiation of myeloid immune cells from these improved stem cells that will have high impact for regenerative medicine with adaptation into cGMP-compliant conditions. His goal is to generate and functionally characterize differentiated myeloid progenitors in cGMP cultures for subsequent phase I clinical trials. The training he received with the projects in my lab will allow Willem to obtain the experience to become an independent physician-scientist investigator and to advance human stem cell-based therapies for human disease.

THE MENTEE'S CHOICE

MENTEE •

Dr. Willem Buys



Why did you choose this specific lab/mentor for your pdf as a postdoctoral fellow?

I was and still am fascinated by pathogen-host immune interactions, especially in innate immunity. Elias' hematopoietic work is super fascinating, and I felt his work aligned sufficiently with my myeloid immunity background to provide a natural starting point but was foreign enough to me to feel like a fresh start. This represented a pivot from my doctoral work, which worked out for me, but which I can't recommend to choose lightly. This was a stem cell lab and I had never worked with stem cells before. It complemented, rather than building on my thesis work. Elias is a prolific scientist and successful clinician at one of the most prestigious medical research institutions in the world, making him a natural role model for my own career as a physician scientist. The timing was opportune, too. When we got in contact via my thesis supervisor, I was about to finish my doctorate and could immediately start writing grant applications to finance my postdoc work. The lab had a strong and ongoing publication record (something I recommend checking early after some not so great experience earlier in my career).

The PI (Elias) was sympathetic, approachable, and supportive not just talking about my academic progress but also everyday issues, like transport or public safety in Baltimore City.

Mentorship, Challenges & Advice

The complete source interview • all challenge and advice content retained

PROJECT CHALLENGES & HOW THEY WERE ADDRESSED

Were there any specific challenges associated with your project? If so, how did you overcome them with the help of your mentor? How was their guidance special?

Case story 1: About half a year before my initial 2-year postdoc grant ran out, I faced a major experimental roadblock. I knew working around this would take longer than my remaining funding allowed. At this critical time, I am incredibly grateful for the clarity and timeliness of Elias' guidance. When the issue materialized, we sat down in two 1:1 meetings within a short timeframe to discuss the outlook and formulated a tiered plan to overcome the issue or at least mitigate the damage: 1) seek an extension from the original funding agency, 2) apply for two other grants by deadline X, Y with concept Z based on this and that preliminary data. While these discussions weren't easy, I appreciate how unfiltered and honest they were, because that allowed me to plan for every outcome early. Postdocs at many institutions struggle to establish even a 90-day termination notice requirement. Due to our clear and timely communication, I now had a detailed roadmap for at least the next 8 months, large parts of which could only be financed because Elias was able to mobilize other funds to bridge the hiatus. As a medical doctor I was lucky to have the fallback option of going back to working as a physician in full time. Due to our early and clear crisis communication I also probed this third option, just in case the grants wouldn't materialize. While I was eventually able to acquire funding to finish the project, this probing ended up leading into my next career step of becoming a Junior PI at my current institution.

Case story 2: During the first 2 years of my postdoctoral fellowship, I didn't have enough structured data to pour it into a first author primary manuscript, so Elias suggested I develop an interesting topic for a secondary manuscript to get the ideas flowing, which kept me in writing-mode and produced some visible academic output while developing models and establishing experimental setups.

ADVICE FROM THE MENTOR

Advice you would give to the incoming postdocs:

Mentor –The best mentoring advice for postdocs is to treat the position as a structured training period for independence, not just extended research labor. The advice I give is that the best Postdocs are that they must use the position to accelerate their transition into their next role (e.g., academic, industry) while protecting the scientific work of the lab.

Specific Goals include:

1) Align expectations early and explicitly. Discuss communication style, meeting frequency, work hours, authorship criteria, data ownership, and career goals from the beginning of the postdoc experience. It's also important to give specific, timely feedback. Focus on gaps in writing, experimental design, or independence before external reviewers do it! Also: discuss authorship and credit early and fairly.

2) Develop an individual career plan. Require that covers research milestones, skill gaps, and short-/mid-/long-term career goals. Review it at least annually, ideally more often. This forces both mentor and mentee to look beyond the next experiment. It's important to have research progress meetings every 1–2 weeks, plus separate, protected time for career discussion. Consistency builds trust; repeated cancellations signal that the postdoc is not a priority.

3) Cultivate independence. Give clear scientific direction at the outset, then deliberately step back. The best postdocs can design, troubleshoot, write, and present their own work. Micromanagement or solving every problem is counterproductive to the postdoc's development. Encourage the postdoc to own the projects and to bring solutions, not just problems.

4) Sponsor them to colleagues. Introductions, invitations to speak, co-authorship on high-visibility pieces, and active advocacy for awards or jobs matter more than general encouragement. Help them build a network beyond your lab.

5) Help them Develop skills beyond the bench. Explicitly support grant writing, manuscript preparation, presentations, collaboration, mentoring of juniors, and project management. These are the competencies that determine career success.

6) Help them become effective mentors themselves: this is a skill that improves with deliberate practice and feedback from your own trainees. Teach them to adopt with their own trainees that the highest-leverage habits with their own mentees are clear expectations, regular structured meetings, genuine sponsorship, and an explicit focus on the postdoc's next independent step.

Mentee Advice

The complete source interview • all challenge and advice content retained

ADVICE FROM THE MENTEE

Mentee – Try to solve problems on your own but when asking for help, clearly formulate that you're asking for help and what you require help with. Be fair with your colleagues, respect their time, but avoid being apologetic: We've all been there and hit a wall and that's okay. Communicate as clearly with your mentees as you want your mentor to communicate with you. As a postdoc, you may co-supervise students and techs. Always be friendly and as helpful as your time allows. Set boundaries, especially when you constantly provide more input than you can delegate work in return. In my experience, you developing detailed experimental plans with a good rationale while the student spearheads physical experimentation is often the most productive strategy for a postdoc-student duo. Grant writing becomes more important as your career moves forward, but during your postdoc fellowship, your research must always go first. It is surprising how quickly time can pass when writing a serious grant application, let alone multiple. Grant writing is, however, a great opportunity to discuss building scientific independence with your mentor. Whether the grant requires you to formulate a path to independence or not, it's good to seek these discussions with your mentor – what topic are you going to "take with you" when you eventually leave the lab? Seek out local meetings and conferences, where it can be easier to connect 1:1 and to get recognition for your work. Before attending major conferences, proactively research and contact attendees whose research you find interesting: Most scientists love talking about their science and you never know where their input, a contact, (or a job offer) will lead you. Force yourself to ask questions at every talk you attend. It forces your own attention and makes people remember you. Save, comment, and tag your data excessively, preferably in one central automatically backed-up digital place and in future-proof data formats, with informative file names, and avoiding proprietary formats and data stores that you might lose access to. If in doubt, you are not documenting with enough detail. The thing you set out to discover will rarely be the thing you end up reporting, so documenting only your primary findings in detail or documenting through the lens of "what worked" takes away your opportunity to spontaneously discover interesting "weird stuff". Hopkins has an incredible social environment both inside many labs and among the general community. Use these opportunities to connect: Those are your future colleagues, research leaders, collaborators. Even just for well-being, time spent with peers and friends is time well-spent.

Mentor, mentee and lab colleagues



Halloween Celebrations
October 20th 2026













The Webbed Halloween

The joyful steps from floor to floor across the cold night
Knocking every neighborhood door in the no-moon scary light
Masquerades in a woven web of laughter with tricks & treats
Lead the joyful steps, gathered through the dark streets
Guising cloths put a smile on a kid's face as an elf, prince, or pirate
Bringing the excitement with the fun and fancy masks without a riot
Costumed as heroes, ghosts and kings make everyone smile
Unleashing the happiness with fantasy for a while
Suspended here in the transient magical spell
This web of Halloween, never stops ringing the bell

Indira Paddibhatla

GRANTS

Funding opportunities for postdoctoral scholars

Name of Grant / Fellowship	Deadline	Eligibility	Grant Sum / Amount	T32 Required?	Official Application / Info
Life Sciences Research Foundation (LSRF) Fellowship	October 1 annually	Within 5 years of PhD/MD/DVM; must change labs from thesis work. U.S. citizens can work anywhere; international scholars must work in U.S. labs.	$62,000–$66,000/year (plus healthcare/child care allowance adjustments) for up to 3 years	**Not required**	LSRF Application Portal
Weston Family Boreal Research Fellowships	Winter (January)	Early-career researchers (postdocs/doctoral) protecting/restoring northern Canadian biodiversity.	Up to $130,000 over 2 years	**Not required**	Weston Family Foundation Page
DuBose Postdoctoral Research Scholar Award	Fall cycle (October /November varies annually)	JHU School of Medicine postdocs doing foundational/translational medical discovery.	$25,000 prize/supplement	**Not required**	JHU SOM Postdoctoral Affairs
American Cancer Society (ACS / "ASC") Postdoctoral Fellowships	June 1 and December 1 annually	Postdocs at U.S. non-profits with 3 years or less of prior post-degree research experience.	Progressive stipend ($66k, $68k, $70k) + $4,000/year institutional allowance	**Not required**	ACS Postdoctoral Portal
Samuel Jordan Graham Postdoctoral Fellowship	Spring cycle (varies annually)	JHU Bloomberg School of Public Health or SOM fellows co-mentored across both schools.	$65,000 in project support	**Not required**	Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School
Research Fellowship Grants (American Society of Anesthesiologists / FAER)	February 15 and August 15 annually	Anesthesiology residents/clinical fellows after CA-1 year enrolled in ACGME-accredited pathways. Excludes J-1 visas.	$75,000 over 1 year (requires 80% protected research time)	**Not required, but tied to accredited clinical fellowships**	ASA FAER Funding Framework
Dean's Excellence Accelerator Awards (JHU)	Fall semester	Internal faculty/conservatory tracks (typically used to transition advanced instructional fellows or junior faculty).	$5,000 to $50,000 per award	**Not required (internal institutional mechanism)**	JHU Peabody Dean's Office

GRANTS

Funding opportunities for postdoctoral scholars

Name of Grant / Fellowship	Deadline	Eligibility	Grant Sum / Amount	T32 Required?	Official Application / Info
PhRMA Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowships (Drug Discovery / Translational Medicine)	October 30 (letter of intent); full application in March	PhD, PharmD, or MD awarded after Jan 1, 2024; position must be at a U.S. university; minimum 2 first-author publications	$120,000 total ($60,000/year stipend for up to 2 years)	**No (must forgo or drop T32 slot upon activation; no concurrent stipend allowed)**	https://pharmafoundation.org
Hanna H. Gray Fellows Program (HHMI)	December 15 annually; portal opens Nov 3	Underrepresented early-career life scientists; maximum 7 years postdoctoral experience; 1 to 3 primary-author peer-reviewed papers	Postdoc phase (up to 2 years): full salary ($80k–$104k) + $50k/year expense allowance. Transitions to $500k+/year if appointed to faculty.	**No (mentored academic postdocs at eligible U.S. research sites)**	https://hhmi.org
Burroughs Wellcome Fund (BWF) Postdoctoral Enrichment Program	January 20 annually	Underrepresented minority postdocs in US/Canada; US or Canadian citizens/residents; max 48 months postdoc experience and within 5 years of PhD	$60,000 total over 3 years ($20,000/year supplement for supplies, travel, and professional prep; not for base salary)	**No (career enhancement supplement to existing research salary)**	https://bwfund.org
Helen Hay Whitney Foundation (HHWF) Fellowship	June 15 annually	PhD within 2 years or MD within 4 years; less than 1 year in proposed host lab; foreign nationals eligible for U.S. labs only	3-year fixed award: Yr 1 $73k; Yr 2 $75k; Yr 3 $77k (plus $1,500/year research allowance & childcare credits)	**No (purely academic, non-commercial settings; administered directly by candidate)**	https://hhwf.org
Damon Runyon Cancer Research Fellowship	August 14 and March 15 (bi-annual deadlines)	MD, PhD, DDS, or DVM candidates conducting cancer research; basic scientists: ≤18 months post-degree and ≤1 year in host lab	4-year fixed award: stipends scale from $70,000 (Yr 1) to $76,000 (Yr 4), plus a $2,000/year expense fund and up to $100,000 in medical school loan retirement	**No (requires 100% time dedication to the Damon Runyon project; no concurrent awards)**	https://damonrunyon.org
L'Oréal USA For Women in Science Fellowship	12-Feb-27	Female postdocs in STEM; PhD held/started by Jan 31, 2027; U.S. citizen or valid visa status; requires 20 hours community outreach	$75,000 for one fellowship year	**No (independent award administered by AAAS)**	https://aaas.secure-platform.com/

Positions open

Postdoctoral Fellowship positions can be found on the website: Johns Hopkins University Faculty Careers Link:
https://facultyjobs.jhu.edu/positions

1. Postdoctoral Fellowship
School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD
Opened: Oct 19, 2026
Closing Date: Open until filled
To apply: https://apply.interfolio.com/195874

2. Postdoctoral Fellow in Bioinformatics - Gastroenterology
School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD
Opened: Oct 15, 2026
Closing Date: Open until filled
To apply: https://apply.interfolio.com/195723

2. Postdoctoral Research Fellow in Genetic Medicine
School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD
Opened: Oct 1, 2026
Closing Date: Open until filled
To apply: https://apply.interfolio.com/194616

3. Postdoctoral Fellow in Endoscopy Research
School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD
Opened: Sep 16, 2026
Closing Date: Open until filled
To apply: https://apply.interfolio.com/193675

4. Postdoctoral Fellow in Human Brain Mapping
School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD
Opened: Aug 3, 2026
Closing Date: Open until filled
To apply: https://apply.interfolio.com/190617

5. Postdoctoral Fellowship in Multi-Parametric MRS
School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD
Opened: Jun 1, 2026
Closing Date: Open until filled
To apply: https://apply.interfolio.com/187535

6. Postdoctoral Fellow in Precision Medicine Translational Research
School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD
Opened: Apr 24, 2026
Closing Date: Open until filled
To apply: https://apply.interfolio.com/185422

7. Retina Postdoctoral Research Fellow
School of Medicine, Baltimore, MD
Opened: Mar 27, 2026
Closing Date: Open until filled
To apply: https://apply.interfolio.com/183962

8. Postdoctoral Fellowship Opening: Statistical Methods for Health Policy
Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD
Opened: Jul 24, 2026
Closing Date: Open until filled
To apply: https://apply.interfolio.com/190089

9. Postdoctoral Fellowship Position: Data Science and AI in Health and Medicine
Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, MD
Opened: Jul 23, 2026
Closing Date: Open until filled
To apply: https://apply.interfolio.com/190011

JHPDA COMMITTEES & LEADERSHIP

Meet the people behind JHPDA! Our committees bring together postdoctoral fellows to foster community, advocacy, professional growth, and engagement

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