Dear Reader,

With this newsletter, we have the pleasure to give you insights into ongoing research activities at our Department and to portrait the people behind it. In addition, we would like to inform you about upcoming events, recent publications and open calls for proposals.

We hope you will enjoy reading it!

The Research Board of the Department of Neurology

September / October 2022

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Mario Jorge Nogueira da Silva e Sousa, MD MSc

What are your main research interest?

My main research interests have been on neuropsychiatric symptoms of Parkinson’s disease (PD) and Dystonia, and on finding reliable biomarkers to diagnose, understand and track the symptoms of parkinsonian disorders.

My current research projects nicely combine these two main interests. Currently, our main goal is to find speech biomarkers that can index motor, emotional and cognitive symptoms of PD. With these projects, we hope to prove that computerized speech analysis can be a sensitive, non-invasive and non-intrusive way to monitor the fluctuations of the disease throughout the day, including not only the motor aspects but also emotional and cognitive aspects of disease.

Additionally we will also look into computerized speech biomarkers that can identify motor, cognitive and emotional side effects induced by medication and/or Deep Brain Stimulation (DBS) treatments. Ideally, using the computerized speech biomarkers we will be able to detect these side effects earlier than our ears are able to do so.

We are confident that some of these different computerized speech biomarkers one day can be used to inform patient’s medication management and DBS programming, which currently are laborious and time-consuming procedures. In addition, these computerized speech biomarkers we are now studying, could in future potentially be used to calibrate smarter DBS systems, called adaptive closed-loop DBS perhaps in combination with other biomarkers (e.g. Local Field Potentials (LFP), and wearable sensors).

What is your motivation to do research?

My background is clinical and because of that, I would say that my main motivation for research comes from day-to-day out clinical questions and unmet needs in clinic practice. Each day in clinics, we learn something new from patients or realize there is something that transcends current knowledge and makes us questioning about our decisions, and to me this is the main driver to do research and to want to be involved in translational research.

As neurologists we are taught the importance of meticulous examination to characterize each neurological syndrome and we train our vision, our hearing and our touching in order to deep-phenotyping each patient. However, to become a “noticer” soon we realize that listening to the patient is different from hearing, and looking is different from just seeing.

With the recent explosion of machine learning (ML), and Artificial Intelligence (AI), its application to healthcare sector is not just a future possibility but instead an upcoming reality. I believe that its
application in clinical practice should have in its fulcrum an approach centered in the patient and be seen as a tool to better inform clinicians. Our senses are limited and arguably, machines can provide us tools with better granularity and sensitivity to track disease progression or modification of the symptoms throughout days, months, or years. Moreover, nowadays while treating a patient we only have a very time-limited glimpse of the patient’s condition and all the remaining time we rely on subjective information transmitted by patients/caregivers from many days/weeks ago. Thus, I believe sensor and device-derived data will change the way we treat patients, giving us a much better and ecological picture of what goes on in patient’s daily life and what troubles them. This will be a huge advance in patient’s care and I think can improve patient’s quality of life as never before and empower them with better tools to monitor their health.

I think it is undeniable the impact these tools can have in clinical practice and naturally will give rise to new questions and problems. Being part of the development and potential application of some of these tools, and helping molding these machines to become also “noticers”, extracting from these sensors the information that we need to improve the care of our patients is something that greatly stimulates me in research.

Mario is a PhD candidate / Research Fellow at the Parkinson’s and Movement Disorders Center (ZIPB), Department of Neurology, Bern University Hospital and University of Bern. 
Contact: mario.sousa@insel.ch

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Congratulations

1) Promotions

At the request of the Faculty of Medicine, the Executive Board of the University of Bern appoints

**PD Dr. med. Mirjam Rachel Heldner**
as *Associate Professor.*

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At the request of the Faculty of Medicine, the Executive Board of the University of Bern appoints

**PD Dr. med. David Seiffge**
as *Associate Professor* as per 1\textsuperscript{st} of November 2022.

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At the request of the Faculty of Medicine, the Executive Board of the University of Bern appoints

**PD Dr. med. Vincent Pernet**
as *Associate Professor* as per 1\textsuperscript{st} of November 2022.
At the request of the Faculty of Medicine, the Executive Board of the University of Bern awards/appoints

**Dr. med. Anelia Dietmann**

the habilitation/the title of **private lecturer**.

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Prof. Dr. med. Claudio L. A. Bassetti

Has been awarded **Doctor honoris causa of the University of Medicine Pharmacy Iuliu Hateganu, Cluj-Napoca, Romania**.
2) Awarded Grants (in chronological order)

Dr. med. Antonia Klein

Funding Institution: Schweizerische Kopfwehgesellschaft «Hansruedi Isler Forschungsstipendium» Link

Title: Diagnostic markers of the Visual Snow Syndrome

Awarded Grant: CHF 10’000

SNG Research Grant and SNG Prize 2022

Dr. med. David Schreier (left), PD Dr. med. Anke Salmen (centre) und Dr. Alessandro Cagol (right) at this year’s SNG award ceremony. This year, the research grant, as well as the prize for applied basic research, went to the Department of Neurology, Inselspital Bern.
Dr. med. David Schreier

Funding Institution: Swiss Federation of Clinical Neuro-Societies/ SNG Forschungsstipendium 2022 [Link]

Title: Modulation of Brain Network Promoting Consciousness in Anaestetised Asleep, and Injured Brains (ARISE)

Awarded Grant: CHF 10'000

Dr. med. Morin Beyeler

Funding Institution: University of Bern; UniBE Doc.Mobility [Link]

Host Institution: Prof. Babak Navi; Stroke Center and Neurovascular Research Group, Department of Neurology Weill Cornell Medical College Brain and Mind Research Institute, NY, USA [Link]

Title: Detection of Occult Malignancy and Identification of Paraneoplastic Coagulopathy in Ischemic Stroke Patient

Awarded Grant: CHF 55'936
3) Awarded Prizes (in chronological order)

**PD Dr. med. Anke Salmen**

Has been awarded the SNG Prize for Applied Basic Research 2022. [Link](#)

**Title:** Antineonatal Fc Receptor Antibody Treatment Ameliorates MOG-IgG–Associated Experimental Autoimmune Encephalomyelitis

**Dr. med. Max Pistor**

Has been awarded the 1st prize of the YouClin Thesis Award for the best neuroscientific thesis. [Link](#)

**Title:** Immunotherapies and COVID-19 mortality: a multidisciplinary open data analysis based on FDA’s Adverse Event Reporting System

**Supervisors:** Prof. A.Chan and PD R.Hoepner

4) Appointments

**Dr. med. Lara Diem**

Has been elected as a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Swiss MS Society. [Link](#)
5) Successful degrees

We congratulate Andrea Kurmann from the Stroke Unit on her successfully completed master’s degree from Berner Fachhochschule:

**Master of Science in Nursing** (nurse practitioner specialization)

Since 1 October 2022, Andrea works as Pflegeexpertin APN in the neurological acute bed unit.
Call for Grants and Prizes

Young Investigator Grant for Translational Research: “Protected Research Time” for clinically active junior researchers

**Focus:** Protected Research Time/ translational clinical research

**Eligible for:** PhD students (GHS Clinical Sciences), clinicians (AA, OA)

- With the announcement of grants for “Protected Research Time”, the Faculty of Medicine supports the possibility of creating clinical research time for young academics in translational research.

Applications are open to:

- PhD students of the GHS in Clinical Sciences
- Assistant and senior clinicians who:
  - Hold a medical degree
  - Have been cumulatively employed for at least 3 months at the Inselspital Bern, the UPD or a service institute of the University
  - Who are younger than 40 years and do not have a postdoctoral qualification

**Submission Deadline:** 30 November 2022 [Link]

SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowships (SPF)

**Focus:** Candidates for MSCA PF with Switzerland as host country/ all disciplines

**Eligible for:** PhD; max. 8 years as postdoc

- The funding scheme is for people of any nationality who wanted to apply for a Marie Sklodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship (MSCA PF) with Switzerland as their destination country.
- The scheme is open to all research disciplines and topics.
- This funding scheme will offer applicants with a PhD and no more than eight years of postdoctoral experience a position at a non-commercial research institution in Switzerland for 12-24 months.
- The grant includes the postdoctoral fellow’s salary with social security contributions, financial contributions to research, and conference costs.

**Submission Deadline:** 1 December 2022 [Link]
SNSF: Postdoc.Mobility

Focus of the grant: Clinical and Basic Research; research stay abroad
Eligible for: Researchers after MD, MD-PhD or PhD

- Postdoc.Mobility fellowships are aimed at researchers who have done a doctorate and who wish to pursue an academic career in Switzerland.
- The fellowships include a grant for subsistence costs, a flat-rate for travel expenses and a possible contribution to research, conference costs and matriculation fees.
- The funding period is in principle 24 months (fellowship) and 3 to 12 months (return phase).

Deadline: 1 February 2023 [Link]

EAN Student Teaser Fellowship for 2024

Focus of the grant: Fellowship abroad
Eligible for: medical students after 1st year

- The aim of this new scholarship is to give medical students the opportunity to gain insights and experience in neurology in general or in a special field of interest in neurology during their medical studies.
- Prerequisite: Successful completion of the first year of medical school:
  1) Medical students in the initial phase of medical studies (1st-3rd year of studies) or.
  2) Medical students in the later phase of medical studies (4th to 6th year).
- Each year, 15 students are funded with up to EUR 1,000 to spend a a stay in a European neurological department outside of their place of residence.

Deadline: 31 March 2023 (call for applications will be opened on 1 February 2023) [Link]
Other Open Calls for Proposals

- **DBMR Travel Grant**
  Deadline: rolling application throughout the year, as long as funding available [Link]

- **DLF Nachwuchsförderungs-Grants für patientenorientierte Forschung**
  Deadline: 30 November 2022 [Link]

- **Nachwuchsförderungs-Grant für translationale Forschung: «Protected Research Time»**
  Deadline: 30 November 2022 [Link]

- **Olga Mayenfisch Stiftung**
  Deadline: 1 December 2022 [Link]

- **SNSF Swiss Postdoctoral Fellowship (SPF)**
  Deadline: 1 December 2022 [Link]

- **2022 ECTRIMS-MAGNIMS Research Fellowship Programme**
  Deadline: 1 December 2022 [Link]

- **Nationales MD-PhD-Grants Programm**
  Deadline: 15 December 2022 [Link]

- **Forschungspreis Schweizerische Herzstiftung**
  Deadline: 31 December 2022 [Link]

- **Epilepsie Liga: Promotionspreis**
  Deadline: 31 December 2022 [Link]

- **SSN: Publication Awards**
  Deadline: 15 January 2023 [Link]

- **sitem Insel-Support Fonds (SISF)**
  Deadline: 15 January 2023 [Link]

- **SNSF: Postdoc.Mobility**
  Deadline: 1 February 2023 [Link]

- **ERC Consolidator Grant**
  Deadline: 2 February 2023 [Link]

- **EAN Student Teaser Fellowship**
  Deadline: 31 March 2023 [Link]
Support

1) Support for Postdocs

Training for PhD Supervisors

The two-day block course “Training for PhD Supervisors” addresses the goals, challenges and content of good supervision of PhD students. The course participants are given the opportunity to reflect on their own role as supervisors.

The block course is aimed at all persons at the University of Bern who are authorized to supervise doctoral students.

The block course will be offered in February 2023 and June 2023 with identical content:

- 01.-02. February 2023 (each 9.00 - 17.00)
- 07.-08. June 2023 (each 9.00-17.00)

The course will take place in the main building of the university, in room 028.

You can find the registration on the website.

Transferable Skills Program for (Post)Docs

Transferable skills are competencies acquired in one context that can be applied to other contexts, jobs, position or fields of work. A goal of this program is to help postdocs advance in their academic career. Thus, the courses offered also give postdocs the chance to further develop relevant skills and enhance their professional profile. The course program is free of charge for postdocs and doctoral candidates of the University of Bern.

You can find the program and further information on the website.
2) Trainings and Workshop

CTU Trainings:

a) Clinical Investigators I/II: Basic/ Advanced GCP & clinical research training

The course is designed to introduce basic concepts of patient-oriented clinical research to health care professionals involved in the recruitment of study participants. It is split in two parts. The first part consists of self-learning and home-based exercises. For the second part, participants will attend the lectures and workshops.

Next Course Dates 2023 Clinical Investigators I: Link and Registration
Next Course Dates 2023 Clinical Investigators II: Link and Registration
Next Course Dates 2023 GCP Refresher for Clinical Research: Link and Registration

b) The Clinical Study Protocol Basics

The study protocol is the basis of any clinical investigation and a key factor in the success of the trial. This half-day course is a very condensed version of the former “Writing a clinical trial protocol”-course.

Next Course Dates 2023: Link and Registration

c) Stata Training

In this workshop we will learn how to do statistical inference with Stata. Basic statistical methods for the analysis of continuous, binary, count and time-to-event data will be covered, e.g. linear and logistic regression, or Cox proportional hazard models.

Introduction to Stata: Course dates 2023: Link and Registration
Statistics Using Stata: Course dates 2023: Link and Registration

For other CTU Trainings and Courses, check the CTU website here.

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Equal Opportunities

If you come across interesting news and/or would like to read about a specific topic related to gender equality and diversity, please let us know (chantal.kottler@insel.ch).

Diversity lecture series at the University of Bern

For the autumn semester 2022 the Equal Opportunities Office organized a lecture series about “Diversity Research”. Researchers from different faculties will be presenting, since diversity research is conducted in many different categories and disciplines. The lectures will be held on Mondays from 18:15 until 20:00 at UniS, in the Room A022. The exact dates can be found on the website.

Familie in der Hochschule

The association “Familie in der Hochschule” was founded to promote family orientation at universities. This is done by developing measures, instruments and materials that are applied in the member institutions. The association is committed to shaping public opinion and social development towards more family orientation and appreciation of responsibility for caring. Close cooperation and an exchange at eye level are encouraged through various forms of cooperation. The association is promoted by the Equal Opportunities Department of the UniBE. For more information, please visit the website.

SNSF Study “Vereinbarkeit von Arbeit und Familie”

The SNSF is conducting a study on the topic of reconciling work and family. There are already many studies on the topic of work and family. However, no research has yet been done on the impact of conflict between the two central roles on our emotions and well-being. Especially in today’s world, there are daily challenges to family and work life with implications at work and at home.

This is an online study. With the help of an app, you receive invitations to complete questionnaires. The study lasts between five to a maximum of eight weeks.

The study is open to anyone who is at least 18 years old, has a workload of at least 60% and at least one child under the age of 12. There should be no holidays during the study.

You can find the online survey here.
Recommended by the Equal Opportunities Board: Article about Mental Health in Academia

The life of a professor is a constant balancing act where we try to juggle personal and professional responsibilities under the pervasive stress of managing expectations in an often hypercompetitive culture. After two heart attacks in three years, an associate discusses the challenges of faculty life. For the full article visit the website.


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Recent Publications

**Stroke**


ZfPB


Neuroimmunology


Headache


Neurorehabilitation


ZEN


Dear Reader

My Name is Riana Digirolamo. Since August 2022, I am the new intern in the Neurology Communications Team. For the past 2 months, I have been supporting Chantal Kottler with the slides for the Monday report, as well as with the research newsletter that you just finished reading.

I hope you liked it and I look forward to continuing this work!

Please note that all relevant information (publications, calls for proposals, grants and awards received, etc.) should continue to be sent to chantal.kottler@insel.ch. Thank you.

Contact

For any comments on the newsletter as well as all research related questions, please contact:

Chantal Kottler
chantal.kottler@insel.ch
031 66 4 06 19