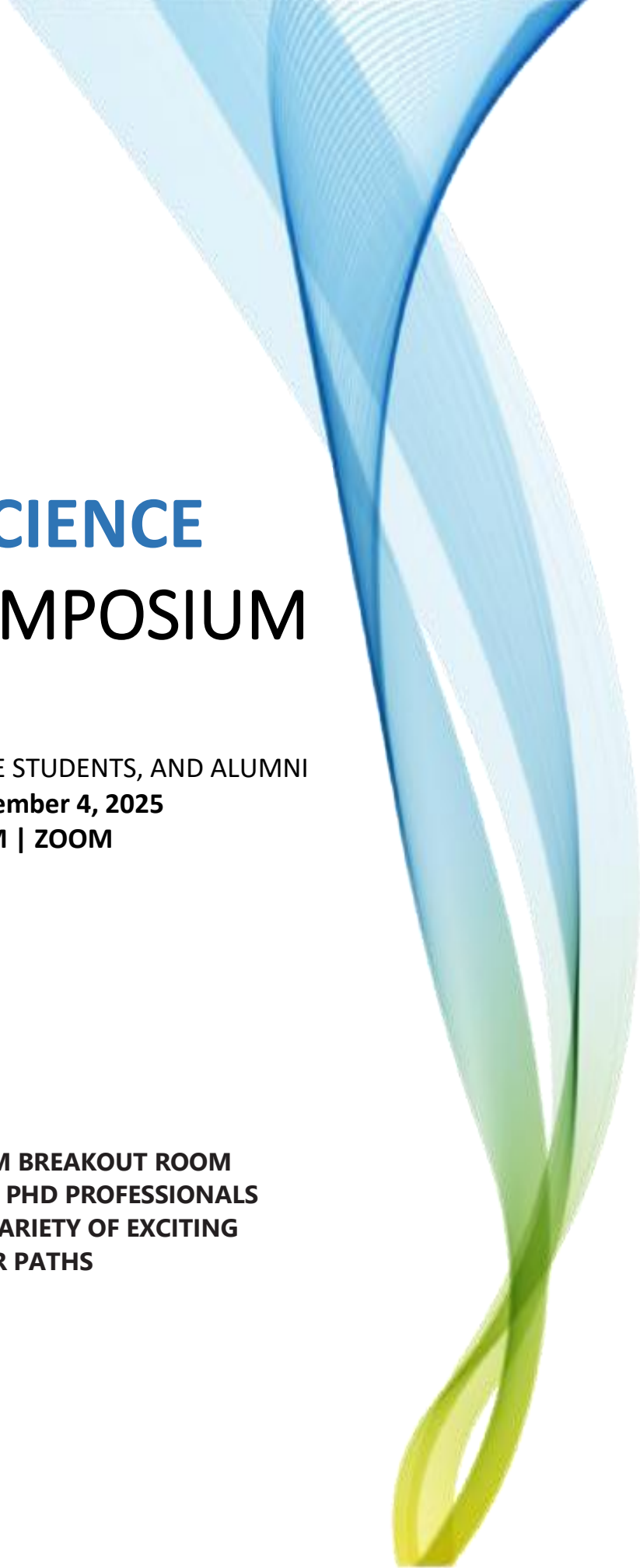




2025 SCIENCE **CAREER SYMPOSIUM**

FOR POSTDOCS, GRADUATE STUDENTS, AND ALUMNI
Thursday, December 4, 2025
3:30 – 5PM | ZOOM

**FEATURING ZOOM BREAKOUT ROOM
DISCUSSIONS LED BY PHD PROFESSIONALS
REPRESENTING A VARIETY OF EXCITING
CAREER PATHS**



Whether you are a medical or graduate student just starting advanced study in your chosen field; a postdoctoral fellow, resident, or clinical fellow embarking on even more specialized training; or a junior-level faculty member serving as a teacher, researcher, or clinician, we want to help you achieve your professional potential.

Visit oacd.pitt.edu or email oacd@pitt.edu to learn more about the academic career development programs and resources available to help guide you on your journey toward a professional life.

2025 SCIENCE

CAREER SYMPOSIUM

PROGRAM

3:30 pm Zoom

WELCOME

Laura Miller, PhD, PC
Acting Director,
Office of Academic Career Development

BREAKOUT ROOM DISCUSSIONS

Participate in four, 15-minute virtual roundtables where you will meet and interact with PhD professionals from science-related fields who will discuss their careers across a range of roles. Review the table and bios below to plan out your individualized experience.

4:45 - 5 pm Zoom

FINAL DISCUSSION

Return to the main room to share insights gained from this experience with your peers. What surprised you? What reaffirmed or changed your thoughts about a future career? What steps do you plan to take that came from ideas you heard today?

SPEAKER INDEX

#	Topic	Speaker	Title & Company	Contact Information
1	Academic Research	Kate Perepezko	Assistant Scientist, Scripps Gerontology Center, Miami University of Ohio	perepek@miamioh.edu
2	Drug Development, Preclinical	Dana Previte	Senior Scientist, Preclinical Development, Krystal Biotech,	dana.previte@gmail.com
3	Entrepreneurship	Krista Kutina	President/Founder, Movement Mastery LLC--Mobile Sports Medicine and Athletic Performance	kkutinadpt@gmail.com
4	Faculty	Cecile Verbaarschot	Assistant Professor, Neurological Surgery and Biomedical Engineering, University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center	Cecile.Verbaarschot@UTSouthwestern.edu
5	International Trainee Job Search	Monojit Bhattacharjee	Postdoctoral Associate, University of Pittsburgh	mob114@pitt.edu
6	Medical Affairs	Azia Evans	Director of Medical Affairs, HealthTrackRx	azia.evans@healthtrackrx.com
7	Medical Science Liaison	Janie French	Medical Science Liaison	afrench418@gmail.com
8	Postdoctoral Trainee Experience	Jessica Nuwer	Postdoctoral Associate, University of Pittsburgh	j.nuwer@pitt.edu
9	Product Management	Chelsea Merkel	Product Manager, Revvity	cmerkel2491@gmail.com
10	Regulatory Affairs	Dulce Mariscal	Clinical and Regulatory Affairs Project Lead, Clinical Research Strategies	dulce@clinicalresearchstrategies.com
11	Technical Sales	Priya Raja	Scientific Sales Representative. Proteintech	sripriya.raja@ptglab.com

BREAKOUT ROOM HOSTS

Monojit Bhattacharjee, PhD, is a Postdoctoral Associate in the Department of Dermatology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, working under the mentorship of Dr. Louis D. Falot and Dr. Emrullah Korkmaz. His current research focuses on skin-targeted immunoengineering using metal-organic framework (MOF)-based delivery platforms with the goal of advancing translational applications in dermatology, vaccine delivery, and immunotherapy.

Dr. Bhattacharjee earned his PhD in Animal Biotechnology from DRDO-BU CLS, Bharathiar University, Tamil Nadu, India. His doctoral work, supported by a DRDO Junior Research Fellowship, focused on the neurobehavioral effects of hypobaric hypoxia and its modulation by *Glycyrrhiza glabra* root extract and glycyrrhizin through catecholamine activity enhancement in rats. He previously completed an MSc in Biotechnology and a BSc with a triple major in Botany, Chemistry, and Biotechnology from Jiwaji University, Madhya Pradesh, India.

In addition to his research, Dr. Bhattacharjee is deeply committed to teaching and academic service. He currently serves as the International Chair of the University of Pittsburgh Postdoctoral Association (UPPDA), where he is dedicated to increasing the visibility, support, and integration of international postdocs through networking and collaborative initiatives.

A lifelong learner and passionate educator, he actively seeks opportunities for hands-on research, mentoring, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Adaptability, scientific curiosity, and genuine enthusiasm for supporting others define his approach to both science and community building. Dr. Bhattacharjee is particularly interested in promoting diversity in science and addressing global health challenges relevant to developing nations and underprivileged communities worldwide.

Azia Evans, PhD, is Director of Medical Affairs at HealthTrackRx, an infectious disease clinical diagnostic laboratory. In this role, she oversees healthcare provider education, clinical research aimed at assessing the clinical impact of molecular infectious disease diagnostics, key opinion leader engagement, and educational content development. However, most importantly, she supports the team of Medical Science Liaisons in training healthcare providers on the effective and appropriate utilization of molecular diagnostics for outpatient infectious diseases. Dr. Azia Evans holds a Ph.D. in Microbiology and Immunology from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, a M.S. degree in Molecular Biology and Microbiology from San Jose State University, and a B.S. in Cell and Molecular Biology from San Diego State University. Her scientific research background has spanned several focus areas, including understanding the cellular requirements for RNA virus replication, innate immune signaling in response to viral infections, and mechanisms of human gene regulation through control of transcription factor availability.

Janie French, PhD, is a medical science liaison on the COVID-19 team with Shionogi, Inc. Janie earned her BS in Biochemistry and Spanish from the University of Wisconsin before completing her PhD in Microbiology and Immunology at the University of Pittsburgh. Her doctoral work examined factors influencing transmission of influenza A virus. After graduating, she worked as an MSL for two years at HealthTrackRx, an infection testing laboratory company leveraging PCR technology. In this position she was able to build experience as an MSL, educating healthcare providers on techniques to effectively leverage PCR for common outpatient infections. She then accepted her current position as a member of the new COVID-19 team at Shionogi.

Krista Kutina, DPT, PhD, is the Founder and President of Movement Mastery LLC. Krista holds an MS in Anatomy from CWRU, a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from Duke University, and a PhD in Rehab Science and Technology from the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Kutina has been a physical therapist for over 20 years and holds additional specialty certifications in sports medicine and orthopedic manual therapy. Dr. Kutina developed an innovative system through her PhD work that was granted one of Pitt's highest innovation honors, the PInCh Award (Pitt Innovation Institute Challenge with the Center for Translational Sciences). The system provides real time visual feedback via smart glasses derived from a kinetic sensor within the prosthetic limb itself. The goal of such a system is to allow patients to learn movements in a real-world environment and be mobile. The system went on to be awarded five additional grants for development and commercialization. Dr. Kutina is now taking the skills she learned guiding teams in research and development to start her own business providing visual feedback in this mobile fashion to orthopedic patients with a special focus on runners of all ages and abilities. Her goal is to provide patients with flexibility, mobility, and real time feedback with remote support, whether it be an orthopedic concern, a couch to 5k runner, or an elite athlete.

Dulce Mariscal, PhD, is a Clinical and Regulatory Affairs Project Lead at Clinical Research Strategies (CRS), LLC. She manages clinical trials for multiple clients, overseeing a wide range of medical devices—from Class III implantable devices to non-significant risk devices. Additionally, Dr. Mariscal has collaborated with CRS's medical writing team on the development of clinical protocols and human factors reports that clients have utilized for grant applications and FDA submissions. Dr. Mariscal earned her PhD in Bioengineering from the University of Pittsburgh. She then completed a postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Bioengineering under the guidance of Dr. Gelsy Torres-Oviedo. Following that, she was a postdoctoral scholar in the Rehab Neural Engineering Lab (RNEL) within the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, supported by a National Institutes of Health T32 fellowship in Pain Research. At RNEL, Dr. Mariscal assisted her advisor, Dr. Lee Fisher, with an Investigational Device Exemption (IDE) application to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Chelsea Merkel, PhD, is a Product Manager within the Preclinical Services team at Revvity, a global biotech company specializing in reagents, instruments, diagnostics, and services. She oversees three portfolios: custom cell line engineering, off-the-shelf cell line models, and high content imaging services. Chelsea graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine in 2019 with a PhD in Cell Biology and Molecular Physiology where she trained under Dr. Adam Kwiatkowski, studying cell-cell adhesion in cardiac muscle cells. During her PhD, she was heavily involved in Fourth River Solutions, where she served as the Chief Human Resources Officer, followed by the Chief Executive Officer. After graduating, Chelsea has held several roles within the health care and life sciences industries, including at Highmark Health and Highmark Inc, Synthego, and now Revvity. In her current role, she is responsible to managing, shaping, and growing service offerings within cell line engineering and high content imaging, as well as managing and growing an off-the-shelf cell line portfolio.

Jess Nuwer, PhD, is a neurodivergent Postdoctoral Associate in the Department of Pharmacology & Chemical Biology working under the guidance of Dr. Tija Jacob. Dr. Nuwer earned her BS in Biomolecular Science from Clarkson University in December 2011. Her undergraduate research aimed to develop a biocatalytic microreactor for energy-efficient fuel-ethanol production. After taking time off for her mental health, Dr. Nuwer returned to school in 2014, received her PhD in Neuroscience from Albany Medical College in January 2020, and moved to Pittsburgh two weeks later. Her pre-doctoral research explored the biophysical properties of GABAA receptors, the major mediators of neuronal inhibition, and her postdoctoral research explores the signaling and regulatory mechanisms of $\alpha 5$ -GABAA receptors, a promising drug target for psychiatric and cognitive disorders. Beyond her research endeavors, Dr. Nuwer has a wide range of experiences in leadership, teaching, mentoring, and community outreach. She earned the "Leading People in Organizations" professional credential from the Katz Graduate School of Business in April 2023 and the "Associate Level Certification in STEM Teaching" from Pitt's Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching, & Learning in December 2024. Currently, she serves as the University of Pittsburgh Postdoctoral Association President, a Postdoctoral Reviewer on the Journal of Life Sciences (JoLS) Editorial Board, and a STEM Pen Pal with Letters to a Pre-Scientist. Through these activities, Dr. Nuwer has learned many valuable lessons about research and life inside and outside of academia. She looks forward to sharing her perspective with young scientists considering the next step in their career journey.

Kate Perepezko, PhD, MSPH, is an Assistant Research Scientist at the Scripps Gerontology Center at Miami University. Her research centers on developing, adapting, and implementing interventions that enhance the quality of life and daily functioning of older adults and their care partners. She currently leads projects focused on designing and evaluating community-based programs for people living with dementia and their caregivers, and she conducts secondary analyses of large national datasets, including the National Health and Aging Trends Study, the National Study of Caregiving, and the Health Information National Trends Survey. Dr. Perepezko completed her postdoctoral training at the National Rehabilitation Research & Training Center on Family Support at the University of Pittsburgh. She earned her PhD in Mental Health and her MSPH in Social and Behavioral Interventions at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

Dana Previte, PhD, is a Senior Scientist in Preclinical Development at Krystal Biotech, a gene therapy company focused on medicines for high unmet medical needs. She earned her BS in Biology at Juniata College (Huntingdon, PA) and her PhD in Immunology at the University of Pittsburgh. Her graduate research was focused on the role of T cell metabolism in the context of autoimmunity. Following graduate school, she completed a 3-year postdoc at the University of Pittsburgh in the Department of Ophthalmology studying mucosal immunology at the ocular surface. In 2021, she joined Krystal Biotech (Pittsburgh, PA) in the Preclinical Development group. Here, she has worked to help build Krystal's first oncology gene therapy candidate, KB707, and develop the nonclinical data package to support its Investigational New Drug designation. KB707 is currently in clinical trials as an injected therapy for solid tumors and an inhaled therapy for malignancies like non-small cell lung cancer.

Priya Raja, PhD, is a scientific sales representative for Proteintech, a life-science reagent company that supplies antibodies, proteins, and nano-body based reagents. She supports researchers across Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Washington, D.C.. Priya earned her PhD in Molecular Pharmacology from the University of Pittsburgh, School of Medicine, and a BS in Biochemistry and Genetics from Clemson University. During graduate school, Priya was passionate about science communications and was she was active in the Biomedical Graduate Student Association, the Pittsburgh Chapter of Women in Bio, participated in the UPMC Science Writing internship, and served as a Proteintech Brand Ambassador to develop science communication skills. Before joining Proteintech, she worked as an Academic Advisor in Pitt's Department of Biological Sciences, which honed her relationship building skills, strengths she uses now in her current role

Cecile Verbaarschot, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Neurological Surgery at the University of Texas-Southwestern in Dallas, with secondary appointments at the Biomedical Engineering Department and the Peter O'Donnell Jr. Brain Institute. Being from the Netherlands, she completed her Bachelors in Artificial Intelligence, Masters in Cognitive Science and PhD in Brain-Computer Interfacing at the Radboud University in Nijmegen (the Netherlands). With her interdisciplinary background and a fascination for understanding the neural mechanisms of movement and consciousness, she translates her scientific findings into brain-computer interfaces (BCIs) that can assist, restore, or enhance the sensory and movement capabilities of people living with paralysis in their upper limbs. To do so, she makes use of implanted microelectrode arrays that can both record from and stimulate the brain, creating a BCI that feels and moves as an intuitive part of one's own body. Her scientific contributions have won third place win in the Annual BCI Award competition (2023) and first place in the BCI Race of the international Cybathlon competition (2024) – the Olympics for assistive technology in Switzerland. Both her previous supervisor Prof. Robert Gaunt and the Rehab Neural Engineering Labs of the University of Pittsburgh have been instrumental in advancing her scientific career after completing her postdoc.

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