

Winter 2025-26

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICAL MEDICINE AND REHABILITATION

Improving health, function, and well-being.

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*Our mission is to improve the health, function,
and well-being of people across North Carolina
and beyond through excellence in patient care,
education, research, and innovation.*



aapmr#25



Showcasing the outstanding scholarship of our residents and faculty, with multiple posters presented at AAPM&R 2025.

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Characterization of Lower Extremity Pain in Ambulatory Individuals After Stroke

John M. Baratta, MBA, MD, and Michael Lewek, PhD, PT (Aditya Senthil, and Akash N. Patel, DO)

Devastating ALS Variant Found Mid-Pregnancy: A Case Report

Polly Creveling, MD (Mina Gayed, DO)

Following Schwannoma Resection, Contralateral Swelling Leads to Brachial Plexopathy: A Case Report

Elyse N. Swope, DO (Anthony Reeding, MD)

Improving Safety of Botulinum Toxin Injections in a Pediatric Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Clinic

Elizabeth Barton, MD (Ruth Fletcher)

Innovative Use of Sclerotherapy for Management of Refractory Thoracic Costovertebral Instability and Pain: A Case Report

Colette Piasecki-Masters, MD (**Kaitlyn DeHority, MD**, Jennifer Su, MD, James Kelley, MD)

Thiamine Supplementation as a Treatment Approach for Post-stroke Aphasia: A Case Report

Camille Beaton, DO (John M. Baratta, MBA, MD)



UNC PM&R Pediatric Rehab Summit

The UNC Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation hosted the Pediatric Rehabilitation Summit on November 10–11, 2025, at the Rizzo Center in Chapel Hill. The event brought together leading experts and institutions from across the country for two days of meaningful collaboration, innovation, and strategic planning.

Summit Goals

- Strengthen collaboration among top pediatric rehabilitation programs nationwide
- Identify opportunities for innovation and advocacy
- Develop a shared roadmap for advancing pediatric inpatient rehabilitation

We partnered with Whitecap Health Advisors, a nationally recognized consulting firm specializing in strategic planning for academic and community health

systems. Their guidance in summit design, survey development and analysis, and on-site facilitation helped create a highly productive and seamless experience for all participants.

This summit represents an important step toward shaping the future of pediatric inpatient rehabilitation. By bringing together key thought leaders and fostering nationwide collaboration, we are laying the groundwork for a stronger, more innovative future for children and families.

We are deeply grateful for the support from the Fitch Family Comprehensive Pediatric Rehabilitation Program, which helped make this summit possible. Your generosity and commitment to advancing pediatric rehabilitation are truly appreciated.





International Society for Contemplative Research (ISCR) Conference

The UNC Program on Integrative Medicine (PIM) co-sponsored the International Society for Contemplative Research (ISCR) Annual Conference, held November 3-6, 2025 at the Friday Center in Chapel Hill, NC.

The International Society for Contemplative Research (ISCR) is a multidisciplinary academic society dedicated to advancing rigorous scientific and scholarly investigation of contemplative practices across diverse fields. ISCR supports the collaborative work of scholars, scientists, clinicians, and practitioners who study traditional and modern contemplative approaches. The organization envisions a world where these practices are understood in their cultural contexts, robustly researched, and made accessible to support health and well-being for all.

This year's conference featured breakthrough and innovative research on the mechanisms, methodologies, and outcomes of mindfulness, self-compassion, and a wide range of other contemplative practices. Highlights included presentations on after-death consciousness phenomena in long-time Tibetan meditators; promising early findings on psychedelics combined with mindfulness for anxiety and depression; and evidence supporting mindfulness interventions for migraines, low-back pain, and other conditions.

In addition to hosting a conference coffee hour and staffing an expo booth, PIM faculty, fellows, and alumni contributed significantly to the program:

Keynote Address:

Cheryl Woods Giscombé, PhD, PIM's T32 Co-Director, delivered the keynote talk, "The Arc of Life and Death: Courageous, Contemplative Reflection on Family, Foundation, and Future to Foster Harmony and Well-Being."

Main Stage Presentation:

PIM faculty **Jessica Barnhill, MD, MPH, and Kim Faurot, PhD**, along with Isabel Roth, DrPH, MSW; Gabriela Castro, MD, and Holly Thomas, MD, presented "Bringing Evidence-Based Contemplative Practices into Clinical Settings: Lessons from the OPTIMUM Trial."

Oral Presentation:

Raven Wright-Smith (T32 Fellow) presented "Evaluating Complementary and Integrative Health Interventions to Reduce Stress-Related Illnesses in African American and Hispanic Populations: A Systematic Review."

Poster Presentations:

Becky Molinini (T32 Fellow): "Exploring Evidence for Mindfulness-Based Interventions for Caregivers and Infants With or at High Risk for Developmental Delay or Disability Aged Birth to Three Years: A Scoping Review Protocol."

Amnazo Muhirwa (T32 Fellow), **Susan Gaylord, PhD**, and **Alina Shcherbakova**: "It Felt Humanizing": Experiences of Digital Mindfulness Interventions Among Black and Latino Adults With Anxiety."

Workshop:

Former fellow **Karen Bluth, PhD**, led a contemplative workshop titled "Compassion for Self and Others."

PIM is grateful to be able to participate in this year's ISCR conference and was delighted to reconnect with former fellows and colleagues.



We're Growing!

Whether you're seeking your next career opportunity or know someone who is, now's the time to connect with us.

Explore exciting opportunities with us.

- Adult Neuropsychologist
- Cancer Rehab Physiatrist
- Interventional Spine Physiatrist
- Pediatric Neuropsychologist
- Pediatric Physiatrist (coming soon)

To learn more and apply, visit:

go.unc.edu/UNCPMRCareers

RESEARCH Highlights

CREST: Coordinating Resources to Enhance Stroke Transitions



Stroke survivors often face major barriers during transitions of care, and unmet social needs significantly affect recovery, readmissions, and long-term independence. National data show that nearly 1 in 3 stroke survivors report at least one unmet social need, and patients with SDOH-related barriers are twice as likely to experience poor functional outcomes after discharge.

CREST aims to develop a sustainable model for identifying unmet social needs among stroke survivors and connecting them with timely, appropriate resources. Researchers are testing improved workflows, referral pathways, and data-tracking processes across multiple clinical sites. Ultimately, the hope is to demonstrate that coordinated discharge transitions lead to better function, fewer gaps in care, and improved patient and caregiver experience.

This project is funded by the Paul Coverdell National Acute Stroke Program through NC DHHS.

Associate Professor, John M. Baratta, MD, MBA is collaborating with the UNC Department of Neurology and the UNC Comprehensive Stroke Center to reduce gaps in care during hospital discharge transitions for stroke patients.

Anterior Cruciate Ligaments: Studying Updates in neuroCognition After Knee Manipulation (ACLs SUCK)



A growing body of evidence shows that ACL injuries can affect how the brain and body work together during movement. These changes can make it harder to react quickly and move safely in fast-paced sports. Even after ACL reconstruction (ACLR), some people continue to have delays in reaction time and less-than-ideal movement patterns because the

communication between the nerves, brain, and muscles doesn't fully return to normal.

MS, is partnering with Shelby Baez, PhD, ATC, Assistant Professor in UNC Exercise and Sport Science, to explore whether knee joint manipulation can help improve **neurocognitive** performance in people who have had ACLR.

This study will examine whether knee joint manipulation can enhance both thinking-related reaction time and physical performance in individuals with a history of ACLR. The team will look for improvements in simple reaction time and single-leg hop distance, including under situations that add mental or decision-making stress.

UNC PIM T32 Research Fellow Gannon Brochin, DC,

This project is currently **registering for the Clinical Trial.**

Feasibility of symptom management for patients with metastatic breast cancer to increase exercise



All patients with cancer are encouraged to exercise, and with the right guidance, exercise for patients with metastatic breast cancer (MBC) is safe, feasible, and can improve strength and fitness. Prior investigation at UNC showed that only 4% of patients with MBC had been referred to a free exercise program called Get Real and Heel.

Sasha Knowlton, MD, Director of UNC PM&R Cancer Rehab, and Co-PI Emily Ray, MD, Assistant Professor of Medical Oncology, are collaborating with Carly Bailey (Director of Get Real and Heel), Gabby Brennan (exercise physiologist), Ally Wardell (statistician), and Kristen

Jarman (program manager) to investigate the feasibility of referral to and engagement with a 16-week exercise program at Get Real and Heel for patients with MBC.

This research is significant because it aims to reduce barriers related to accessibility, awareness, and appropriateness of exercise interventions for this underserved patient population by leveraging existing but underutilized UNC resources. The findings have the potential to improve care for patients with MBC by closing the gap between exercise need, interest, and participation, and may ultimately reduce negative symptoms while improving function and quality of life.

Support for this initiative is provided by the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Piloting Self-Compassion-Based Facilitation of Attuned Interaction (SC-FAN) Training to Improve Medical Student Well-Being and Empathy



Medical professionals face high rates of anxiety, depression, and burnout-affecting over one-third of medical trainees and nearly half of practicing providers-which undermines both quality of care and long-term workforce retention. Introducing self-compassion and attuned communication training early in their careers equips providers

with essential tools to safeguard their emotional well-being and to extend compassion to others, both personally and professionally.

Assistant Research Professor, Christine Lathren and collaborators Valerie Glassman, EdD, Linda Gilkerson, PhD (Erikson Institute), Ashmita Chatterjee, MD, Jessica Kahn, MD, Tiarra Wade, MSW, and Jessica Barnhill, MD,

MPH, are adapting and merging existing curricula in self-compassion and attuned communication to meet medical student trainee's needs, training UNC faculty and mental health providers as co-facilitators, and then piloting the curriculum in an in-person training for first year medical students in Spring 2026. They will also collect data on self-compassion, well-being, resilience, burnout, and communication self-efficacy to examine changes over time.

The goal of this project is to develop and test the feasibility, acceptability and preliminary outcomes of a mindful self-compassion and attuned communication training for medical students at UNC.

This project is funded by the UNC School of Medicine Accelerate Forward Together Education Pillar.

Grand Rounds



January

Tiffany Bailey

Director of Equal Opportunity/Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Coordinator
UNC Compliance Office
Employee Accommodations: Request to Formal Notice

February

Laura C. Hanson, MD, MPH

Medical Director, UNC Palliative Care Program
Professor of Medicine
UNC Division of Geriatric Medicine
Supporting People with Dementia

March

Yasmeen Rauf, MD

Assistant Professor
Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery
University of North Carolina School of Medicine
Glioblastoma: Current Treatments and Vision for the Future

April

Samuel McLean, MD, MPH

Assistant Professor
UNC Department of Psychiatry and Emergency Medicine
Understanding, Preventing, and Treating Posttraumatic Neuropsychiatric Sequelae

May

Katharine McGinigle, MD, MPH

Associate Professor
UNC Division of Vascular Surgery
It Takes a Village: Enhancing Recovery after Major Limb Amputation

June

Sasha Knowlton, MD

Associate Professor
Cancer Rehabilitation Medical Director
UNC Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Cancer Rehabilitation for Physiatrists

July

Paul Chelminski, MD, MPH, FACP

Professor of Medicine
Adjunct Professor of Pharmacy
UNC Division of General Medicine and Clinical Epidemiology
Patients as Partners in Physician Wellbeing

August

Dana Riger, Ph.D.

Associate Professor
University of North Carolina School of Education
Using AI in Medical and Clinical Education

September

Andrea D. Coviello, MD, FACE, MMCI, MSc

Professor of Medicine
Medical Director, UNC Medical Weight Program
Department of Endocrinology and Metabolism
University of North Carolina School of Medicine
Striking a Balance in the Era of Incretin Anti-Obesity Therapy: How Low to Go?

October

Dorothy Tolchin, MD

Instructor
Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital
Disability Education: Current Landscape, Innovations, and Opportunities

November

Paul Howell, MD

Chief of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Service
Durham VA Healthcare System
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in the Veterans Health Administration

December

Amol P. Yadav, PhD

Assistant Professor
UNC-NCSU Joint Department of Biomedical Engineering at UNC-Chapel Hill
Brain-Spine-Machine Interfaces for Sensorimotor Restoration

The Power of Mindfulness and Meditation for Self Care

Integrative Medicine combines conventional medicine with complementary and alternative medicine, including mind-body-spirit approaches to health and healing.

The UNC Program on Integrative Medicine offers: *Virtual and In-Person Mindfulness and Yoga Programs*

- 8 Week Mindfulness Based Stress Management Courses
- Midday Mindful Meditation Resets
- Mindfulness Workshops
- Day of Mindfulness Retreats
- Lunch and Learns
- Individualized Group Programs
- Yoga Courses and Workshops





Make a Gift

For more information on how to support the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, please contact **Matt Cain**, (919) 445-6696 or email matt_cain@med.unc.edu.

You may also make a gift online here: go.unc.edu/dpmr

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