

Press Release



For Immediate Release

Contact: Jason Leppin, CFRE

jleppin@nref.org

847.378.0500

NREF Announces Recipients of 2024-25 Research Fellowship Grants and Young Clinician Investigator Awards

July 1, 2024 (Rolling Meadows, Ill.) – The [Neurosurgery Research & Education Foundation](#) (NREF) is pleased to announce this year’s recipients of the Foundation’s Research Fellowship Grants and Young Clinician Investigator Awards.

“Year after year, the NREF receives applications from some of the most promising researchers in the country. The decisions were extraordinarily difficult this year. The exceptional quality of the proposals submitted by the awardees makes us optimistic for the future of neurosurgery. We are grateful for the generosity of the donors, sections, and affiliated organizations who make these awards possible.” stated Gregory J. Zipfel, MD, FAANS, NREF Research Committee Chair.

As the premier funder of neurosurgical studies, the NREF provides funding for studies in basic, translational and patient-oriented clinical research for investigators in North America.

Open to residents only, the **NREF Research Fellowship Grant** provides training for neurosurgeons who are preparing for academic careers as clinician investigators. Applicants must be physicians who have been accepted into, or who are currently in approved residency training programs in neurological surgery in North America.

The **NREF Young Clinician Investigator Award** supports junior faculty who are pursuing careers as clinical investigators. Applicants must be neurosurgeons, no more than two years from the end of their clinical training, who are full-time faculty in North American teaching institutions.

The 2024-25 Research Fellowship Grant and Young Clinician Investigator Award recipients are:

Kathryn Kearns, MD, University of Virginia

- **Award:** 2024-25 NREF & AANS/CNS Cerebrovascular Section Research Fellowship Grant
- **Sponsor:** Petr Tvrdik, PhD
- **Project Title:** The Effect of Long-Term Exogeneous VEGF Administration on Angiogenesis in a Murine Model of Moyamoya

Brandon Lucke-Wold, MD, PhD, University of Florida

- **Award:** 2024-25 NREF & AANS/CNS Cerebrovascular Section Research Fellowship Grant
- **Sponsor:** Brian Hoh, MD, FAANS
- **Project Title:** Satralizumab as a Treatment for Aneurysmal Subarachnoid Hemorrhage (the STASH Trial)

Chloe Gui, MD, University Health Network

- **Award:** 2024-25 NREF & AANS/CNS Section on Disorders of the Spine and Peripheral Nerves Sanford J. Larson Research Fellowship Grant
- **Sponsor:** Gelareh Zadeh, MD, PhD, FAANS
- **Project Title:** Lineage tracing in malignant peripheral nerve sheath tumors and plexiform neurofibromas to assess tumoral heterogeneity and mechanisms of MEK inhibitor resistance

Riccardo Serra, MD, University of Maryland - Baltimore

- **Award:** 2024-25 NREF & AANS/CNS Section on Pediatric Neurological Surgery Research Fellowship Grant
- **Sponsor:** J. Marc Simard, MD, PhD, FAANS
- **Project Title:** Intercellular Junctions Modulate Paracellular Flow after Intraventricular Hemorrhage

Adip G. Bhargav, MD, University of Kansas Medical Center

- **Award:** 2024-25 NREF & AANS/CNS Section on Tumors Research Fellowship Grant
- **Sponsor:** David Akhavan, MD, PhD
- **Project Title:** Enhancing CAR-T Cell Therapy by Reprogramming Tumor-associated Macrophages using a Novel Nanosponge against GBM

Malia McAvoy, MD, University of Washington

- **Award:** 2024-25 Academy of Neurological Surgeons Research Fellowship Grant
- **Sponsor:** Michael R. Levitt, MD, FAANS
- **Project Title:** A Novel Tyrosine Kinase Inhibitor Coated Flow Diverting Stent as a Drug Delivery System for Intracranial Aneurysms

Panagiotis Mastorakos, MD, PhD, UT Southwestern Medical Center

- **Award:** 2024-25 NREF & Academy of Neurological Surgeons Young Clinician Investigator Award
- **Sponsor:** Bradley Lega, MD, FAANS
- **Project Title:** IL6/JAK/STAT pathway activation drives microglia-mediated angiogenesis after stroke

Andrew T. Hale, MD, PhD, University of Alabama at Birmingham

- **Award:** 2024-25 NREF & Academy of Neurological Surgeons Research Fellowship Grant
- **Sponsors:** Graham Fieggen, MD, IFAANS and Mubeen Goolam
- **Project Title:** Cerebral organoids as a model of genetic and acquired hydrocephalus

Arushi Tripathy, MD, University of Michigan

- **Award:** 2024-25 NREF & Andrew T. Parsa Research Fellowship Grant
- **Sponsor:** Daniel Wahl, MD
- **Project Title:** Defining spatial transcriptional mediators of DNA repair in glioblastoma as a mechanism of treatment resistance

Shehryar R. Sheikh, MD, MPH, Cleveland Clinic

- **Award:** 2024-25 NREF & Bagan Family Foundation Research Fellowship Grant
- **Sponsor:** Carl Saab, PhD
- **Project Title:** An EEG-based Predictive Biomarker of Seizure Outcome after Epilepsy Surgery

Benjamin T. Himes, MD, Montefiore Medical Center/Albert Einstein College of Medicine

- **Award:** 2024-25 B*CURED & NREF Young Clinician Investigator Award
- **Sponsor:** XingXing Zang, PhD
- **Project Title:** The role of B7-H3 in glioblastoma extracellular vesicles in tumor-mediated immune suppression

The application for the 2025-26 NREF Research Fellowship Grants and Young Clinician Investigator Awards will open September 1, 2024 through the [NREF Online Grant Portal](#).

For more information about the [NREF Research Fellowship Grants and Young Clinician Investigator Awards](#) or other grant and fellowship programs, please contact NREF at (847) 378-0500 or info@nref.org.

###

About the NREF

The Neurosurgery Research & Education Foundation (NREF) is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization created in 1980 by the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) to support research and education efforts that enhance and confirm the critical role neurosurgeons play in improving lives.

The NREF is dedicated to providing education to neurosurgeons at all stages of their careers, as well as funding research into new and existing neurosurgical treatments, in order to identify links between best practices and improved outcomes in patient care. Through voluntary public donations, corporate support, and donations from allied groups, the NREF supports endeavors that impact the lives of those suffering from epilepsy, stroke, brain tumors, spinal disorders, sports-related head injuries, lower back pain and Parkinson's disease.

For more information about NREF, please visit www.nref.org.