

# Press Release



## For Immediate Release

**Contact:** Courtney Shupryt

[cshupryt@nref.org](mailto:cshupryt@nref.org)

847.378.0500

## NREF Announces Recipients of 2026-27 Research Fellowship Grants and Young Clinician Investigator Awards

June 10, 2026 (Rolling Meadows, Ill.) – The [Neurosurgery Research & Education Foundation](https://www.nref.org) (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 NREF Vice Chair, Gregory J. Zipfel, MD, FAANS.

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 2026-27 Research Fellowship Grant and Young Clinician Investigator Award recipients are:

### **Alexander Perdomo-Pantoja, MD**, Washington University in Saint Louis

- **Award:** 2026-27 NREF & AANS/CNS Section on Disorders of the Spine and Peripheral Nerves Sanford J. Larson Research Fellowship Grant
- **Project Title:** Engineering Transient, Lesion-Targeted CAR-T Cell Therapy to Modulate Inflammation and Improve Recovery after Acute Spinal Cord Injury

### **Adriel Barrios-Anderson, MD**, University of Washington

- **Award:** 2026-27 NREF & AANS/CNS Section on Pediatric Neurological Surgery Research Fellowship Grant
- **Project Title:** Genomic analysis of mosaic variants and epigenetic features in drug-resistant focal epilepsy using tissue from stereo-EEG electrodes

### **Spyridon Karadimas, MD, FAANS**, Stanford University

- **Award:** 2026-27 Academy of Neurological Surgeons Young Clinician Investigator Award
- **Project Title:** Brain Arteriovenous Malformations (AVMs) and Developmental Neuroplasticity

**Zachary T. Olmsted, MD, PhD**, University of California, Los Angeles

- **Award:** 2026-27 NREF & Academy of Neurological Surgeons Research Fellowship Grant
- **Project Title:** Multicellular signaling networks regulating spinal cord-matched graft integration after chronic spinal cord injury

**Jawad Fares, MD**, Northwestern University

- **Award:** 2026-27 NREF & Academy of Neurological Surgeons Research Fellowship Grant
- **Project Title:** Mechanistic dissection of nucleocytoplasmic transport as a biomarker axis for oncolytic virotherapy in high grade gliomas

**Edwin Nieblas-Bedolla, MD, MPH**, University of Michigan

- **Award:** 2026-27 NREF & Andrew T. Parsa Research Fellowship Grant
- **Project Title:** Exploring Astrocyte-Glioblastoma Cell Communication Following Surgical Resection

**Connor Liu, MD**, Johns Hopkins University

- **Award:** 2026-27 NREF & Bagan Family Foundation Research Fellowship Grant
- **Project Title:** Targeting Monocarboxylate Transporter-1 with an Antibody-Drug Conjugate for the Treatment of Glioblastoma

The application for the 2027-28 NREF Research Fellowship Grants and Young Clinician Investigator Awards will open September 1, 2026 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](mailto:info@nref.org).

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#### ***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](http://www.nref.org).