

# NeuroUpdate

January 2012

## Message from the Chair

Dear Faculty and Staff,

I would like to share with all of you my gratitude for your hard work towards achieving our strategic goals last year. We have made significant progress in our clinical and educational endeavors. Likewise, we have made strong strides towards advancing our scientific mission as evidenced by our inclusion in NeuroNEXT (a 25 center network established to conduct NINDS-sponsored clinical trials) and receiving several funding awards to continue our groundbreaking research work. Our faculty's research projects have produced important discoveries and we continue to collaborate with colleagues worldwide in the prevention and treatment of neurological and other non-communicable diseases.

Thank you once again for your steadfast commitment to make our Neurology department the best for our patients, trainees, and the community. Happy New Year to you and your families!

Sincerely,



Ralph L. Sacco, MD  
Chairman, Department of Neurology



Ralph L. Sacco, MD  
Chairman  
Department of Neurology



## Save the Date

*Neurology Update and Stroke Intensive 2012*

**January 26th - 28th, 2012**

Location: Mayfair Hotel in Coconut Grove

*Solving the Neurological Puzzle Gala*

**February 25th, 2012**

Location: Breakers Hotel Palm Beach, Florida

[<http://www.umgala.org>]

## Faculty inMedia

**Ralph Sacco, MD**

*US News & World Report (July 28, 2010)*

Brain Injury Appears to Boost Stroke Risk | **more** [<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/heart/articles/2011/07/28/brain-injury-appears-to-boost-stroke-risk>]

**Richard Isaacson, M.D.**

*The Denver Channel (August 1, 2011)*

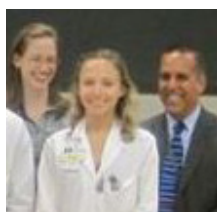
Treating Alzheimer's With A Shake | **more** [<http://www.thedenverchannel.com/health/28725462/detail.html>]

**Michael Katsnelson, M.D.**

*My Health Daily News (August 2, 2011)*

Older Antidepressants May Be Safer For Elderly | **more** [<http://www.myhealthnewsdaily.com/antidepressant-risks-for-elderly-1757/>]

**Faculty inMedia**  
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Resident & Fellows Welcome Reception  
July 21, 2011 **Page 2**



2011 Heart Walk  
Miami Dade Heart Walk for AHA **Page 2**



Dr. Kristine O'Phelan receives Awards  
2010 Donation Champion of the Year Award **Page 4**

# Recent Events

## Neurology New Residents and Fellows Welcome Reception



The Neurology Department hosted a reception on July 21st at University of Miami Hospital to welcome the incoming class of residents and fellows who joined our group earlier this month. Our newest trainees enjoyed some delicious hors d'oeuvres and had the opportunity to mingle with the department faculty as well as their other colleagues already in our training program. **Dr. Ralph Sacco** delivered the welcome address and gave a brief introduction on each of the new PGY-1's, PGY-2's and fellows to the group. We'd also like to congratulate the education program on a successful match for this year's class of PGY-1 Neurology Residents. The new class of 10 residents includes graduates from the top 50 medical schools in the nation and Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society members. We hope they have an excellent educational experience in our program!

## 2011 American Heart Association Heart Walk

We'd like to extend our thanks to all the Neurology faculty and staff that made this year's 2011 Start! Miami-Dade Heart Walk for the American Heart Association was a resounding success. More than 10K walkers converged on the Florida International University campus on Saturday, October 29th, 2011, for the annual



Recent Events continued on next page>>

Faculty inMedia Continued >>

**Cenk Sengun, M.D.**

*Sun-Sentinel (August 8, 2011)*

Parkinson's did not define dead diver, family says

| **more** [<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/local/breakingnews/fl-fatal-dive-folo-20110808,0,1108470.story>]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**

*Web MD (August 11, 2011)*

Depression Raises Women's

Stroke Risk | **more** [<http://www.webmd.com/depression/news/20110811/depression-raises-womens-stroke-risk>]

**Kester Nedd, MD**

*The Miami Herald (August 14, 2011)*

Schools implement new rules to protect student-athletes from brain injuries

| **more** [<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/08/14/2356508/schools-implement-new-rules-to.html>]

**Tatjana Rundek, M.D., Ph.D.**

*Web MD (August 17, 2011)*

Ultrasound of Neck Predicts Who Will Have a Stroke

| **more** [<http://www.webmd.com/stroke/news/20110817/ultrasound-predicts-stroke-due-to-narrowed-neck-arteries>]

**Deborah C. Mash, Ph.D.**

*Great Falls Tribune (August 24, 2011)*

Some doubt 'excited delirium' condition cited in Taser-related deaths

| **more** [<http://www.greatfallstribune.com/article/20110824/NEWS01/108240301/Some-doubt-excited-delirium-condition-cited-Taser-related-deaths>]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**

*U.S. News & World Report (August 25, 2011)*

Specialized Stroke Centers Deliver on the Weekends

| **more** [<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/heart/articles/2011/08/25/specialized-stroke-centers-deliver-on-the-weekends>]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**

*Web MD (August 25, 2011)*

No 'Weekend Effect' at Specialized Stroke Centers

| **more** [<http://www.webmd.com/stroke/news/20110825/no-weekend-effect-at-specialized-stroke-centers>]

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Start Heart Walk to raise money for the American Heart Association. The event raised about \$700K and is the largest AHA event in South Florida. **Dean Pascal Goldschmidt** as Ambassador for the American Heart Association and **Dr Ralph Sacco**, Chairman of the Department of Neurology and AHA Immediate Past President, led the team of walkers from the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine. The University also sponsored a CPR tent and conducted on-site demonstrations of resuscitation techniques for the walk participants.

## Dr. Ralph Sacco Advocates for Healthier Lifestyles with World Leaders

**D**r. **Ralph Sacco**, Chairman of Neurology and immediate past president of the American Heart Association, recently attended the United Nations High Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases along with current AHA President **Dr. Gordon F. Tomaselli**, and AHA CEO **Nancy Brown**. The event was held on September 19th, 2011, in New York City. That same day, The Lancet also featured a commentary titled "Accelerating progress on non-communicable diseases," written by a dozen of the world's leading health experts including Dr. Sacco, who was the lead author. The commentary noted that a reduction of unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking, lack of exercise, unhealthy diets and harmful use of alcohol are

crucial to reducing the epidemic of non-communicable diseases.

**A**t a summit held the next day, September 20th, world health leaders adopted the Political Declaration on Non-Communicable Diseases which recognizes non-communicable diseases as "one of the major challenges for development in the 21st century, which undermines social and economic development throughout the world." Political leaders were encouraged to focus on four main areas of strategy including leadership and international cooperation; prevention; treatment and monitoring, reporting and accountability.

## UM Neurology Researchers Help Discover Genetic Link in Lou Gehrig's Disease

**D**r. **Michael Benatar**, Associate Professor of Neurology and chief of Neuromuscular Division, and Joanne Wu, Research Assistant Professor of Neurology in the Clinical Translational Research Division, were among a group of international scientists who've recently made a significant discovery in the cause of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. In this study, scientists examined a large number of ALS patients from Finland, as well as smaller numbers from Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. Their stunning findings, published in the September 22 issue of the journal *Neuron*, identified a mutation in the C9ORF72 gene on chromosome 9 as the most common known cause of familial ALS and

potentially an important cause of sporadic ALS. The mutation is a "hexanucleotide repeat" (i.e. six "letters" of the genetic code – GGGGCC – are repeated over and over). Under normal circumstances, this sequence of letters may be repeated up to 20 times; however, in ALS patients with this mutation, the sequence is repeated at least 30 times, and sometimes as high as 250 times or more. "Studying the genetics of familial ALS offers a unique opportunity to better understand the biology of both the familial and sporadic forms of the disease," says Benatar. "The discovery of mutations in C9ORF72 in both familial and sporadic ALS exemplifies this point. Such insights should greatly facilitate our efforts to develop effective therapies for patients with ALS." ■

**Alberto R. Ramos, M.D.**  
*U.S. News & World Report (August 29, 2011)*

Poor Sleep, High Blood Pressure? | **more** [<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/heart/articles/2011/08/29/poor-sleep-high-blood-pressure>]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**  
*My Health News Daily (September 7, 2011)*

Can Herbs and Supplements Treat Hypertension? | **more** [<http://www.myhealthnewsdaily.com/supplements-treat-high-blood-pressure-1871/>]

**Clinton Wright, M.D.**  
*The Miami Herald (September 10, 2011)*

When memory loss becomes a concern | **more** [<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/09/10/2399935/when-memory-loss-becomes-a-concern.html>]

**Enrique Serrano, M.D.**  
*MSNBC (September 14, 2011)*

Dr. Phil: Cindy Anthony has 'denial of highest order' | **more** [[http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/44517028/ns/today-today\\_people/t/dr-phil-cindy-anthony-has-denial-highest-order/](http://today.msnbc.msn.com/id/44517028/ns/today-today_people/t/dr-phil-cindy-anthony-has-denial-highest-order/)]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**  
*Web MD (September 20, 2011)*

Depression May Increase Risk of Stroke | **more** [<http://www.webmd.com/depression/news/20110920/depression-may-increase-risk-of-stroke>]

**Michael Katsnelson, M.D.**  
*U.S. News & World Report (September 22, 2011)*

Cardiac Rehab May Cut Risk Factors After Mini-Stroke | **more** [<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/heart/articles/2011/09/22/cardiac-rehab-may-cut-risk-factors-after-mini-stroke>]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**  
*CBS News (September 21, 2011)*

Depression tied to stroke risk: What explains link? | **more** [[http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504763\\_162-20109416-10391704.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504763_162-20109416-10391704.html)]

Faculty inMedia  
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# Awards

## Dr. Kristine O'Phelan receives 2010 Donation Champion of the Year Award



We are proud to announce that **Dr. Kristine O'Phelan**, Associate Professor of Clinical Neurology and Chief, Neurocritical Care Division and Co-Director of the Neurosciences Critical Care Unit is this year's recipient of the Life Alliance Recovery Agency's 2010 Donation Champion of the Year Award. This award honors physicians in South Florida for their support and dedication to saving lives through organ and tissue donation. Dr. O'Phelan received her award at the 9th Annual Luminaire Awards Gala held on Saturday, October 8, 2011, at the Fontainebleau Miami Beach Hotel. This annual gala raised funds to support organ education efforts and donor family services. *Congratulations to Dr. O'Phelan on winning this well deserved award!*

## UM Neurology Selected as a NeuroNEXT Site by NINDS

The Department of Neurology is proud to announce that we have been selected to be one of the new NeuroNEXT (*Network for Excellence in Neuroscience Clinical Trials*) - [Web address: [http://www.ninds.nih.gov/news\\_and\\_events/proceedings/20101217-NEXT.htm#contentColumn](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/news_and_events/proceedings/20101217-NEXT.htm#contentColumn)] clinical trial sites by the National Institute of Neurological Disorder and Stroke (NINDS). This is a very competitive application to be among the first to join this 25 center network established to conduct NINDS-sponsored clinical trials. NeuroNEXT will provide a robust, standardized, and accessible infrastructure to facilitate rapid development and implementation of protocols in neurological disorders affecting adult and/or pediatric populations. We would like to recognize **Dr. Michael Benatar**, Associate Professor of Neurology, **Dr. Tatjana Rundek**,

Awards continued on next page>>

Faculty inMedia Continued >>

**Ralph Sacco, MD**  
*International Business Times*  
(September 22, 2011)

Do Depressed People Really Have More Strokes? Docs Say Yes | **more** [<http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/218485/20110922/depressed-people-have-strokes-risk-antidepressants.htm>]

**Kottil Rammohan, M.D.**  
*U.S. News & World Report* (October 5, 2011)

Experimental MS Drug Shows Promise | **more** [<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/managing-your-healthcare/research/articles/2011/10/05/experimental-ms-drug-shows-promise>]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**  
*ABC News* (October 10, 2011)

South Pole: Woman Pushes for Rescue After Stroke at Amundsen-Scott Station | **more** [<http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/technology/2011/10/south-pole-woman-pushes-for-rescue-after-stroke-at-amundsen-scott-station/>]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**  
*CNN* (October 10, 2011)

Leg crossing may signal better recovery for stroke patients | **more** [<http://thechart.blogs.cnn.com/2011/10/10/leg-crossing-may-signal-better-recovery-for-stroke-patients/>]

**Richard Isaacson, M.D.**  
*USA Today* (October 18, 2011)

Study: More Facebook friends linked to larger brain areas | **more** [<http://yourlife.usatoday.com/health/story/2011-10-19/Study-More-Facebook-friends-linked-to-larger-brain-areas/50825000/1>]

**Melissa Ortega, M.D.**  
*ABC 7 Chicago* (October 24, 2011)

FDA approves oral treatment for MS | **more** [<http://abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=news/health&id=8403510>]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**  
*MedPage Today* (October 27, 2011)

CDC Talks ABCs for World Stroke Day | **more** [<http://www.medpagetoday.com/Cardiology/Stroke/29316>]

Faculty inMedia  
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Awards continued>>

Professor of Neurology, **Julie Steele**, Nurse and Headache Program Administrator, Joanne Wu, Research Assistant Professor, **Edison Sabala**, Director of Research Administration and **Ruta Sawant**, Research Support Specialist, for their efforts towards getting our application funded and helping us achieve this important designation. We also want to thank all of our extra-departmental collaborators for helping propel UM forward in its academic research mission.

**D**r. **Cornelii Luca**, Instructor, has been awarded an investigator initiated grant from Acorda Therapeutics Inc. in the amount of \$150,000 to study the effect of 4-aminopyridine (AMPYRA) in patients with Parkinson's disease and gait dysfunction. The study, entitled "A randomized trial to evaluate Ampyra for gait impairment in Parkinson's Disease", will take place at the UM Center for Parkinson disease and Movement Disorders (NPF Building) and will start enrolling patients in January 2012. Gait dysfunction and imbalance represent major challenges in neurodegenerative disorders, especially in advanced Parkinson's disease, and current therapies have limited efficacy. This study will help researchers understand the mechanisms of gait dysfunction in Parkinson's disease and provide the basis for future clinical trials to establish the efficacy of 4-aminopyridine in treating this neurological disorder. **Dr. Carlos Singer**, Professor of Neurology, will join **Dr. Luca** as a principal investigator for the study.

**D**r. **Dileep R. Yavagal**, Assistant Professor of Clinical Neurology and Neurosurgery, has been awarded the New Investigator Research James and King Esther Biomedical Research Grant for 2011-2014 for his study titled "**Intra-arterial Mesenchymal Stem Cell Delivery in a Canine Model of Acute Ischemic Stroke**". **Dr. Joshua Hare**, Director of ISCI is mentoring **Dr. Yavagal** on this grant and **Dr. Ami Raval** is the Co-Investigator. The Grant will provide funding in the amount of \$360K for three years to enable Dr. Yavagal to study this exciting area of novel therapy for acute stroke in a large animal stroke model. Over the last three years, Dr. Yavagal's laboratory has been studying the safety and correct dosing in intra-arterial delivery of bone marrow derived mesenchymal stem cells in small and large animal with promising results. Results from the current grant funded project have tremendous potential in facilitating translation of this therapy for human clinical trials and stroke models.

**C**ongratulations to the following physicians who were named in U.S. News and World Report's list of the top neurologists in the United States: **Dr. Ralph Sacco**, Professor and Chairman of Neurology, **Dr. Carlos Singer**, Professor of Neurology, **Dr. David Adams**, Professor of Clinical Neurology, **Dr. Richard Bailyn**, Assistant Professor of Clinical Neurology and **Dr. Alberto Martinez-Arizala**, Associate Professor of Clinical Neurology

**D**r. **Robert Martinez**, Assistant Professor of Clinical Neurology and **Dr. Enrique Serrano**, Assistant Professor of Clinical Neurology, were recently awarded their American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN) certification in Clinical Neurophysiology. Congratulations to both of you!

**D**r. **Royya Modir**, Neurology PGY-4 resident recently traveled to Mindo, Ecuador with Misioneros del Camino, a charitable non-profit organization that treats countless underprivileged children, women and men with medical attention. Dr. Modir, one of the 80 volunteers and only Neurologist on the trip saw at least 100 patients with neurological disorders. These patients come from all parts of Ecuador. Most walk hours to get to the clinic and sometimes wait more than 10 hours to see one of the volunteer physicians. Through Emmaus Medical Mission and the organization

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Faculty inMedia Continued >>

**Melissa Ortega, M.D.**

*WCTV (October 31, 2011)*

Medical Minute 10-31: The First Oral Treatment for MS | **more** [[http://www.wctv.tv/medicalminute/headlines/Medical\\_Minute\\_10-31\\_132946258.html](http://www.wctv.tv/medicalminute/headlines/Medical_Minute_10-31_132946258.html)]

**Hannah Gardener, PhD**

*Arizona Daily Sun (November 7, 2011)*

EarthTalk: Diet soda may not be worse than regular | **more** [[http://azdailysun.com/news/local/earthtalk-diet-soda-may-not-be-worse-than-regular/article\\_5b0ee72c-0e6c-5fde-889a-835123f5306e.html](http://azdailysun.com/news/local/earthtalk-diet-soda-may-not-be-worse-than-regular/article_5b0ee72c-0e6c-5fde-889a-835123f5306e.html)]

**Walter G. Bradley, DM, FCRP**

*The Miami Herald (November 5, 2011)*

The end of 'Bookville' homeless camp under the Tuttle? | **more** [<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/11/05/2487554/the-end-of-bookville-homeless.html>]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**

*U.S. News & World Report (November 8, 2011)*

New Bypass Surgery for Stroke Riskier Than Drug Treatment | **more** [<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/family-health/heart/articles/2011/11/08/new-bypass-surgery-for-stroke-riskier-than-drug-treatment>]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**

*American Council on Science and Health (November 10, 2011)*

Unexpected finding: Carotid bypass surgery for stroke not effective | **more** [[http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsID.3157/news\\_detail.asp](http://www.acsh.org/factsfears/newsID.3157/news_detail.asp)]

**Melissa Ortega, M.D.**

*The Palm Beach Post (November 14, 2011)*

MS: Leading cause of disability | **more** [<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/health/ms-leading-cause-of-disability-1968328.html>]

**Ralph Sacco, MD**

*Good Morning America (November 15, 2011)*

Shot Might One Day Help Lower Cholesterol | **more** [<http://gma.yahoo.com/shot-might-one-day-help-lower-cholesterol-170211092.html>] ■

Misioneros del Camino, thousands of patients in Ecuador, Guatemala and Haiti are treated. Dr. Modir has now been on 4 medical missions during her residency training and every trip reaffirms her decision to become a physician. If you are interested in donating or participating in the next Emmaus Medical Mission trip, please refer to the organization website or email Dr. Modir at [rmodir@med.miami.edu](mailto:rmodir@med.miami.edu).

<http://www.misionerosdelcamino.org/eng/medical-mission.htm>

**D**r. *Cynthia Gonzalez*, Neurology PGY-4 resident was invited to the University of Miami Anesthesiology Morbidity & Mortality Grand Rounds to discuss the neurological complications of two patients treated in the Surgical ICU at the Miami VA Hospital. The VA Neurology consult service was assisting in the management of these patients. Dr. Gonzalez along with the Anesthesiology Attending Physicians and Residents discussed the management of seizures before and after surgery, specifically refractory nonconvulsive status.

**D**r. *Ami Raval*, Research Assistant Professor of Neurology, was awarded the American Heart Association Grant-in-aid award for her proposal titled *“Nicotine inhibits estrogen-mediated synaptic plasticity after cerebral ischemia in female rat”*. Cigarette smoking is an important risk factor for cerebral ischemia in women. However, the extent to which nicotine itself is involved in the pathogenesis of smoking-related cerebral ischemia is not known. In lab studies, we demonstrated that chronic nicotine exposure makes female rats more susceptible to ischemic brain damage. Additionally, nicotine directly inhibited estrogen receptor subtype beta-mediated intracellular signaling in the hippocampus. The current grant builds logically on our prior work and continues to investigate effects of nicotine-induced lack of estrogen signaling on hippocampal synaptic plasticity. Overall, we expect that at the end of these studies we will have a mechanism of how nicotine abrogates estrogen-conferred neuroprotection in hippocampus in female rats. *Drs. Thomas J. Sick*, Professor of Neurology and *Helen Bramlett*, Associate Professor of Neurosurgery, are collaborator and consultant, respectively, on this application. *Dr. Raval* acknowledges *Dr. Miguel A. Perez-Pinzon’s* (Professor of

Neurology & Neuroscience) grantsmanship training and *Dr. Brant Watson’s* (Professor of Neurology) editorial assistance during submission of this application. Dr. Raval’s proposal was also awarded additional funding in the amount of \$20,000 from the University of Miami Specialized Center Of Research on Addiction & Health in Women, Children & Adolescents (UM-SCOR). This developmental grant through the University of Miami SCOR is awarded for the purpose of developing pilot data in anticipation of a future NIH grant proposals.

**D**r. *Steve Olvey*, Associate Professor of Clinical Neurology recently elected as an Honorary Member to the Road Racing Drivers Club for 2011. This organization was formed to give drivers a vote in their sport, specifically in the areas of safety, and has mentored new drivers on amateur and professional levels. Their members include leading industry professional such as officials, journalists, physicians and prominent drivers in racing world. ■

## Faculty

### New Faculty

Faculty Name	Position
Dr. Teshamae Monteith	Assistant Professor of Clinical Neurology, General Neurology Division
Dr. Ciro Ramos-Estabanez	Instructor, Neurocritical Care Division

# Staff

## New Staff

StaffName	Position
Robert Barnes	IOM Technician, Interoperative Monitoring Team
Raquel Borgas-Garcia	Lab Staff, CVDRC Lab
Madiley Broz	Research Associate, Neuropsychology
Maria Catalina Fernandez	Clinical Research Coordinator, Neuromuscular Division
Pedro Figueredo	Clinical Research Coordinator, Epilepsy Division
Luis Jarquin	Patient Access Representative, PAC Clinic
Mathew Hartley	Accounting Assistant, Neurology Accounting Division
Natasha Garcia	Research Assistant, Neuromuscular Division
Nicolas Leon	Patient Access Supervisor, NPF Clinic
Maria C. Mendoza-Puccini	Clinical Research Coordinator, Cognitive Disorders Division
Kenya Moreno	Patient Access Representative, NPF Clinic
Farida Morris	Executive Assistant to Neurology Chairman, Neurology Administration
Pedro Roman	Polysomnographic Technician, NPF Sleep Lab
Alexandre Waltz	Senior Clinical Research Coordinator, Neuromuscular Division

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Please visit our website at:  
<http://Neurology.med.miami.edu/>

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# Neuro pdate

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