On behalf of the Department of Neurology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine we would like to introduce you to our Residency program. As one of the largest Residency programs in the country, and one of the most respected clinical Neurology and Neuroscience departments in the nation, we are committed to excellence in the areas of clinical teaching, research and education. Our program trains 42 residents and 20 fellows. We are seeking highly qualified applicants that demonstrate a passion for Neurology. 

The mission of the Department is threefold—to provide unparalleled care to patients; to expand knowledge of the causes, treatments and cures for neurological disease; and to train the next generation of clinicians and neuroscientists. Widely recognized as an international referral center, Neurologists from Latin America, Florida, and the rest of the United States, consistently turn to our 85 faculty members (67 clinical, 18 research) for expertise in solving complex neurological problems.

The department is comprised of clinical divisions, research laboratories, clinical laboratories, and research centers including:

- National Parkinson’s Foundation Center of Excellence
- McKnight Brain Institute for Memory Disorders
- Brain Endowment Bank for Pathology
- Sleep Disorders Center
- International Center of Excellence for Epilepsy
- Kessenich Family MDA ALS Center
- Stroke and Cerebrovascular Disease Division (Award winning—American Stroke Association)
- Multiple Sclerosis Center of Excellence
- Patrick Cesarano Neurovascular Laboratory

The depth and breadth of clinical exposure make University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital an ideal place to train. We invite you to learn more about our program by reading this newsletter and visiting our website: http://neurology.med.miami.edu

Greetings Neurology Applicants!

Sincerely,

Ralph L. Sacco, MD, MS, FAHA, FAAN
Chair, Department of Neurology
Past-President, American Academy of Neurology

Leticia Tornes, MD, FAAN
Director, Neurology Residency Program
Associate Professor, Clinical Neurology
Faculty Spotlight: Ralph L. Sacco, MD, FAAN

Ralph L. Sacco, MD, MS, is the Olemberg Family Chair in Neurological Disorders, Miller Professor of Neurology, Public Health Sciences, Human Genetics and Neurosurgery, Senior Associate Dean and Director of the Clinical and Translational Science Institute, Executive Director of the Evelyn McKnight Brain Institute at the Miller School of Medicine, University of Miami, and Chief of the Neurology Service at Jackson Memorial Hospital. He was President of the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) from 2017-19, and now has an active role as past president (a 2 year term). He was also the first neurologist to serve as president of the American Heart Association (AHA). Prior to joining UM he was Professor of Neurology, Chief of Stroke and Critical Care Division, and Associate Chairman at Columbia University.

Dr. Sacco is the founding PI of the NINDS-funded Northern Manhattan Study, the FL-Puerto Rico Collaboration to Reduce Stroke Disparities, and the Family Study of Stroke Risk and Carotid Atherosclerosis, as well as co-investigator of multiple other NIH grants. He has also been the Co-Chair of international stroke treatment and prevention trials. Dr. Sacco has published extensively with over 600 peer-reviewed articles and 102 invited articles. His research has also addressed stroke and vascular disparities. He has been the recipient of numerous awards and has lectured extensively at national and international areas of stroke prevention, treatment, epidemiology, risk factors, vascular cognitive impairment, human genetics and stroke recurrence. Dr. Sacco was recently named editor of the journal Stroke.

Faculty Spotlight: Leticia Tornes, MD, FAAN

Dr. Leticia Tornes is the Associate Vice-Chair of Graduate Education, Director of the Residency Program and Associate Professor of Clinical Neurology. She is in the Multiple Sclerosis and Epilepsy Divisions. Dr. Tornes was born and raised in Miami and attending the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine for all of her medical training. She completed medical school, Neurology Residency (where she was chief resident), Clinical Neurophysiology Fellowship and Multiple Sclerosis/Neuroimmunology Fellowship. She joined our Faculty as the Associate Program Director for one year, before taking over as the Program Director in 2013. She is involved with the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) and serves as the Vice-Chair of the Graduate Education Subcommittee. The GES helps address issues and concerns of Neurology Residency programs at the national level. Clinically, she evaluates and treats patients with epilepsy and multiple sclerosis (MS). Her clinical and research interests include women with epilepsy/MS and treatment of Neuromyelitis Optica Spectrum Disorders. Her research interests focus on MS and she is involved in over 20 clinical trials with the MS division, including 4 where she is the principal investigator. Having trained at the University of Miami in “recent” years, Dr. Tornes has firsthand experience with our residency program. This provides the residents with the unique opportunity to work with a true resident advocate that strives to make our program the very best!

Faculty Spotlight: Walter G. Bradley, DM, FRCP

Dr. Bradley, Professor and Chair Emeritus. As past Director of the Neuromuscular division and former medical director of the Kesseneich Family MDA ALS clinic, he continues to play an active role at muscle pathology conference.

He is a world-renowned clinician, and master educator.

He is most recognized by Neurology Residents and Neurologists around the world for his seminal textbook, Neurology in Clinical Practice.

With over 400 publications and multiple millions of dollars in research funding over his illustrious career, Dr. Bradley is a true pioneer and leader in the field.
Faculty Spotlight: Associate Program Director, Jason Margolesky, MD

Dr. Jason Margolesky is an Assistant Professor of Clinical Neurology in the Movement Disorder and Neurohospitalist divisions. He is also our Associate Program Director for the Neurology Residency. Born in Miami, he left for college to Emory University in Atlanta, followed by one year at Georgetown where he earned a Masters before returning home. He completed all of his medical training (Medical School, Residency, and Fellowship in Movement) at UM/JMH.

He remained on faculty (received teaching awards from residents and medical students his first year). In the clinic, he evaluates and manages patients with abnormal and involuntary movements, predominantly Parkinson’s disease (PD). The other part of his clinical life is spent in the hospital seeing all neurological conditions, with the relished opportunity of working closely with the resident team.

Research interests involve clinical biomarkers for prodromal PD or PD progression, as well as integrating the inpatient and outpatient worlds to better evaluate and manage movement disorders seen in hospitalized patients.

As Associate PD his goal is to foster resident’s education and experience during their time spent in Miami, utilizing his experiences in the department at all levels of service.

He has twin 2 year old girls, a wife and neurotic dog at home that he is happy to have occupy most of his free time. He is also an avid reader, loves Stephen King.

Class Representatives

Matt Feldman, MD
University of Miami
Class of 2022

Whitney Mayberry, MD
University of SC
Greenville
Class of 2022

Stephanie Picon, MD
Tulane University
Class of 2022

Melissa Bailey, MD
Georgetown
University
Class of 2021

Andres De Leon, MD
Pontificia Universidad
Javeriana,
Colombia
Class of 2021

Joshua Lukas, MD
Indiana University
Class of 2021

Resident Spotlight: Daniel Garbin Di Luca, MD

Welcome to the University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital Neurology Program! I was born and raised in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil where I also attended medical school. During my last year, I performed several clinical rotations in Boston, New York and even Germany, followed by a brief research fellowship at Harvard/MassGeneral Institute for Neurodegenerative Disease.

After my global experiences, my plan was to pursue residency in a large hospital that would provide me the best clinical training while allowing me to start my own path in research and academic Neurology. Choosing UM was the obvious option, especially considering the friendly atmosphere and supportive envi-

Now as a resident, I can confidently say I couldn’t have made a better choice. The ordinary, day-to-day professional activities of our residency training are never boring and constantly filled with challenging cases. A major strength of our program is the breadth and depth of diagnosis, often consisting of patients from underserved regions with complex pathologies. Training in such an environment provides a robust clinical experience thus helping residents to face the challenge of mastering modern Neurology with all of its social and cultural implications.

Additionally, there are innumerable research opportunities for residents. As part of the clinical research track, I have found a space for academic growth and close mentorship.

In the last 3 years, I was able to publish over 8 manuscripts, 9 abstracts and I currently serve as an active reviewer for 4 journals, including Neurology®. Following residency, I will pursue a 2-year movement disorders fellowship at the University of Toronto, my first choice. Ultimately, my goal is to become a clinician-investigator and UM has prepared me well for this task. I wish you best of luck in the application process and I look forward to seeing you here!
Faculty Spotlight: Michael Benatar, MBChB, DPhil

Dr. Michael Benatar was born and raised in South Africa, where he also attended medical school. He was a Rhodes Scholar and completed a PhD in neuroscience at Oxford University. This training abroad explains the unusual letters behind his name: MBChB (MD) and DPhil (PhD). He then completed a Neurology residency and Neuromuscular fellowship at Harvard. He then earned a Masters in the Science of Clinical Research at Emory University, where he stayed on as faculty for 8 years. Dr. Benatar joined the University of Miami in 2010 as Walter Bradley Chair in ALS Research and the Chief of the Neuromuscular Division. The NM division comprises of faculty members with specialized clinical programs in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), myasthenia gravis, muscular dystrophy and inherited neuropathies, as well as electromyography (EMG) and neuromuscular pathology. In addition to these clinical services, the neuromuscular division is home to very active investigator-initiated, clinical and translational research programs focused on ALS, myasthenia gravis and inherited neuropathies. The Neuromuscular faculty is well known for their commitment to resident education, with most faculty having received teaching awards in recent years. All Neurology residents participate in the aforementioned programs and acquire hands-on experience performing electrodagnostic studies through a formal month-long Neuromuscular rotation. The Neuromuscular Division also offers clinical and research fellowships, and there is opportunity for residents to get involved in ongoing research projects.

Faculty Spotlight: Kristine O’Phelan, MD

Dr. Kristine O’Phelan received her medical degree from Boston University School of Medicine. She completed a residency in Neurology at University of Miami/Jackson Memorial Hospital and her fellowship training in Neurotrauma and Neurocritical Care at UCLA. Her major subspecialty interest is in critical care of neurotrauma, subarachnoid hemorrhage and multimodality monitoring.

She currently directs the Neuroscience Intensive Care Unit at Jackson Memorial Hospital, one of the largest neuro-ICUs in the country and has a busy, high-acuity service. Dr. O’Phelan has been honored to receive the Chairman’s Award for Teaching Excellence, as voted by the Neurology Residents at UM/JMH, and is a Professor of Clinical Neurology. She balances the rigors of academics, including clinical care, teaching, research, and family, including a 13-year-old daughter Conner, and an 9-year-old son, Aidan. Her family shares a love for animals, and they now have 3 dogs, a bearded dragon, a hedgehog and two parakeets. She has been thrilled to return to Miami to help develop the neurocritical care division here and finds working with the team of nurses, a clinical pharmacist, neurology and neurosurgery residents and fellows enormously gratifying.
I think I always knew I would end up choosing Neurology as a career! I knew from a young age that I was interested in medicine, and fell in love with Neuroscience during my first semester of college at Johns Hopkins University. When applying for residency programs, I knew I wanted a large program that was strong across the board in the Neurology subspecialties because I wanted a broad exposure to all the field had to offer. When I came to interview at the University of Miami, I knew that it had everything I was looking for in terms of exposure to a diverse patient population and a wide range of neurological diagnoses, which would prepare me well for my career no matter what I decided to pursue after residency. I also loved how effortlessly I fit in with the residents and faculty I met here, which made the transition from medical student to resident surprisingly easy. During my residency, I had the chance to learn Neurology from incredible patients and faculty, and further my interest in research under the mentorship of Drs. Luca and Rundek, as part of the Resident Clinician Researcher Program. As a chief resident during my 4th year, I was able to share my knowledge and serve as a mentor to the next generation of Neurology residents and students. After residency, I elected to stay at UM where I completed fellowship in Movement Disorders. As a fellow, I had the opportunity to continue my research and present my work at both the national and international level, including at the American Academy of Neurology meetings in Los Angeles and Philadelphia, and the International Congress of Parkinson’s Disease and Movement Disorders in Hong Kong. I am very excited to be joining the faculty this year and continuing my work in research and education. Best of luck in the application and Match process—I am confident you will be as happy as I am that you chose a career in Neurology!
Dr. Dileep R. Yavagal, MD is the Director of Interventional Neurology and Co-Director of Neuroendovascular Surgery and Professor of Neurology and Neurosurgery at the University of Miami & Jackson Memorial Hospitals. He is also the Director of the Neurological Platform of the Interdisciplinary Stem Cell Institute at the University. He is the Founder and Past-President of the Society for Vascular and Interventional Neurology (SVIN) and a international leader in endovascular therapy for ischemic and hemorrhagic stroke. He was a steering committee member of the of the landmark MR RESCUE trial and co-author of the DAWN clinical trials both published in the NEJM that have changed clinical practice for the treatment of acute ischemic stroke. His pioneering translational basic research the field of intra-arterial (IA) delivery of stem cells in stroke therapy has been supported by several state and federal research grants. He is studying endovascular stem cell therapies for ischemic stroke using small and large animal models of stroke in his research laboratory. He co-lead the first multicenter clinical trial of IA delivery of autologous bone marrow stem cells for ischemic stroke: RECOVER Stroke.

Cerebral phaeohyphomycosis due to Curvularia species
1 of <10 reported cases

Giant Cell Arteritis presenting as hemi-tongue infarction

JMH Case Files

Dr. Andres Kanner, MD, FANA, FAAN, FAES is Professor of Clinical Neurology, Chief of the Epilepsy Division and Director of our Comprehensive Epilepsy Center. Dr. Kanner was born and raised in Mexico. He came to the United States to complete Residency trainings in Psychiatry and Neurology, followed by a fellowship in Epilepsy and Clinical Neurophysiology at the Cleveland Clinic. Dr. Kanner is boarded in Neurology, Psychiatry and Epilepsy. He joined our Faculty in 2013. The Epilepsy Division has faculty members that provide comprehensive evaluation and management of patients in both the outpatient and inpatient settings. There are 6 (2 pediatric) video-EEG monitoring beds at JMH (level IV), 6 at the University of Miami Hospital (level IV) and 2 beds at Miami Veterans Administration Hospital (Epilepsy Center of Excellence). The Epilepsy team provides continuous video-EEG monitoring coverage for all cases of status epilepticus (24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week). In addition, patients undergo comprehensive evaluation to establish their epilepsy syndrome and formulate a treatment plan that may include surgery with resection, laser ablation or neuro-modulation therapies including Responsive Neurostimulation, Deep Brain Stimulation of Anterior Thalamic Nuclei and Vagus Nerve Stimulation, as needed. All residents enjoy rotating through our services in the course of their training. During the rotations, residents participate in weekly didactic conferences in addition to direct patient care.

Dileep Yavagal, MD

Dr. Dileep Yavagal, MD

Giant Cell Arteritis presenting as hemi-tongue infarction

JMH Case Files

June 2019

Susac syndrome: branched retinal artery occlusions, white matter lesions, and hearing loss.

...another random day at JMH
Questions?

For more information and application information, visit our website: www.neurology.med.miami.edu

Our main Residency page and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section cover a variety of topics. The Campus Tour, Photos and Life in Miami sections will provide details about living in South Florida.

If you have additional questions, our program managers Terry and Andy, our 2019-2020 Administrative Chief Residents, our Program Director, Dr. Tornes and our Associate Program Director, Dr. Margolesky are all happy to help. Good luck!

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Annual Resident Research Day

Graduation
University of Miami
Jackson Memorial Medical Center
Department of Neurology
Class of 2020

Ramon Flores-Gonzalez, MD
Med School: University of Puerto Rico
Fellowship: Multiple Sclerosis

Lixandra Gonzalez, MD
Med School: Ross University
Fellowship: Clinical Neurophysiology

Andrew Kim, MD
Med School: SUNY Upstate University
Fellowship: Epilepsy

Lee Lau, MD
Med School: St. George’s University
Fellowship: Movement Disorders

Carlos Oliu, MD
Med School: University of Miami
Fellowship: Epilepsy

Daniel Garbin Di Luca, MD
Med School: Universidade Federal Fluminense, Brazil
Fellowship: Movement Disorders

Abdullah Ibish, MD
Med School: Georgetown University
Fellowship: Vascular Neurology

Nastajjia Krementz, MD
Med School: Thomas Jefferson University
Fellowship: Vascular Neurology

Sishir Mannava, MD
Med School: University of Oklahoma
Fellowship: Vascular Neurology

Tamara Stiep, MD
Med School: New York Medical College
Fellowship: Movement Disorders

Stacey Williamson, MD
Med School: University of Cincinnati
Fellowship: Neurocritical Care

Jessica Yen, MD
Med School: Indiana University
Fellowship: Epilepsy
Resident Clinician Researcher Track

The Neurology Resident Clinician Researcher Program is aimed to provide residents with necessary faculty mentorship, administrative guidance, infrastructure and research facilities in order to pursue rewarding clinical and basic neuroscience research during residency. It is expected that a research track resident will become conversant in research techniques and will accumulate enough data to submit a career development grant. While some of our residents already hold graduate degrees, the program also provides flexibility for residents without a Ph.D. or M.S. to pursue advanced research training. Once accepted, residents are given a stipend for grant seminars, conference travel etc., and are provided extra educational opportunities to succeed in basic and clinical research.

Over the last 4 years, our residents have published more than 50 peer-reviewed publications, and several have recently been involved in the Northern Manhattan Study (NOMAS); the first prospective cohort study among Whites, African Americans, and Caribbean Hispanics to investigate the risks and determinants of stroke and help fill gaps in our knowledge of the epidemiology of stroke and vascular disease in minority populations. This NIH study was founded at Columbia University by Dr. Sacco and is one of a myriad of projects at UM.

Residents have the opportunity to present their research at our annual UM Resident Research Day for a potential cash prize. A tradition supported by an alumni and former search chief resident Dr. Gillian Gordon Perue.

Tanja Rundek, MD, PhD, FANA,

Dr. Tatjana Rundek joined the University of Miami in May of 2007 and is currently Professor of Neurology at the University of Miami Miller School of Medicine. She also maintains an adjunct research faculty position in Neurology at the Neurological Institute at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons. She serves as a Executive Vice Chair of Clinical Translational Research in Neurology and Director of our Clinical Translational Research Division. Her research is directed towards the use of ultrasound for early detection, intervention and prevention of functional and structural changes of arterial wall inflammation. She is PI and co-investigator on multiple NIH grants, and has received foundation support to study the relationship between vascular risk factors, subclinical atherosclerosis, genetics and stroke. She also investigates sex-specific disparities in stroke.

She is President of the Neurology Communities of Practice of the American Institute in Ultrasound in Medicine, the largest professional medical ultrasound organization in the US. Dr. Rundek serves on the Intersocietal Accreditation Commission (IAC) Vascular Testing Board of Directors, a national organization that accredits clinical ultrasound, echocardiography, nuclear/PET, MRI, CT and carotid stenting programs. Most recently, she was appointed Scientific Director of the Evelyn F. McKnight Brain Institute Foundation.

PGY-4 Spotlight: Stacey Williamson, MD

I was born in Michigan, raised in Las Vegas, but have lived in over 9 cities across the US. I attended undergrad at Oakwood University in Alabama and went on to medical school at the University of Cincinnati. Like most who decide on Neurology as a specialty, I was fascinated by the complexity of the nervous system, how the neurological exam played such an integral role in diagnosis, and the Neurologists ability to put all these subjective and objective findings to arrive at an oftentimes obscure diagnosis. When looking for a residency program, I knew that I wanted to be in a place where I would see it all, serve the underserved, have strong faculty, and make lifelong friends. I did an away rotation at UM as a medical student and was blown away by the breadth of pathology seen in such a short amount of time, how hands on the residents were clinically, and the knowledge exhibited by everyone on the team. I knew this was where I wanted to be and was so excited to match here. Being at this program has been a rewarding experience not only clinically but for my continued professional development. Since medical school I have been heavily involved in diversity initiatives and knew I wanted to continue this as a resident. I have been able to be a part of Diversity efforts within our department and institution. I currently serve as the resident representative on our departments Diversity Committee and the am the founding Co-Chair of the Black Physician Recruitment Committee within our student union. Our departmental diversity committee is actively putting in place programming to highlight diversity and inclusion within Neurology and broadening the diversity curriculum amongst fellows. I have enjoyed my time in Miami more than I could have imagined and hope that you will strongly consider this program has to offer. You won’t regret it!
Top 10 reasons for Ranking UM #1
(as submitted by a PGY-2 Resident…)

10. The weather
9. Outstanding benefits, salary, and educational allowance
8. Great ocean views and no state tax!
7. Did I mention the weather …?
6. Team-oriented approach/comfortable atmosphere
5. Resident Research Track
4. Program commitment to teaching/education
3. Exposure to a diverse array of neurologic disease
2. World-renowned faculty
1. The residents!!!