



## **2019 Medical Symposium Presenters**



**Dr. Prin X Amorapanth** is currently an Assistant Professor at Rusk Rehabilitation, NYU Langone Medical Center. He is also a fellow with the Empire Clinical Research Investigator Program (ECRIP) under the New York State Department of Health and a fellow in the Rehabilitation Medical Scientist Training Program (RMSTP) under the National Institutes of Health (NIH) / Association of Academic Psychiatrists (AAP).

As an undergrad, he worked with noted emotion researcher Joseph LeDoux at NYU characterizing the neural circuits underlying conditioned fear, resulting in several publications, the most notable of which was a double dissociation of reflexive and active responses that was published *Nature Neuroscience*. As a combined MD/PhD student in the lab of cognitive neurologist Anjan Chatterjee at the University of Pennsylvania, he pursued training in the methodology of cognitive neuroscience, including functional imaging, neuropsychological testing, and lesion-symptom mapping, which he brought to bear on the question of how the brain represents visuospatial relationships and concepts.

As a resident in physical medicine and rehabilitation at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago, he was exposed first hand to crucial clinical issues faced by patients with brain injury. This experience prompted him to further develop his expertise in the clinical diagnosis and management of TBI by returning to NYU to pursue a fellowship in brain injury medicine, where he has stayed on as faculty. His current research interests include identifying markers of visuospatial impairment following acquired brain injury as well as the use of non-invasive brain stimulation as both a therapeutic and investigational tool for maximizing rehabilitation and better understanding mechanisms of recovery following brain injury.



**Carla Assenza, LCSW**, is the director of the Marsal Caregiver Center at Burke Rehabilitation Hospital, the first on-site caregiver support center at a rehabilitation hospital in the country. Assenza has over eight years of experience in social work, coming to Burke from Montefiore's main hospital in the Bronx where she was an Assistant Director of Social Work. Assenza began her professional career in business management but made the switch to social work because she wanted to make a more meaningful and positive impact on those around her. Through her work with Montefiore's Arthur D. Emil Caregiver Support Center as well as personal experiences, Assenza saw the need to not only help patients, but to help the families and loved ones who care for them.

Assenza's role as the head of a caregiver center is critical at a rehabilitation hospital. Many of Burke's patients and their families are just learning to cope with a life-changing illness or injury like a stroke, traumatic brain injury or spinal cord injury. In this setting, families and loved ones of patients play a vital role in helping the patient create their "new normal," and often need a place of their own where they can find resources, education and support. Assenza believes that the best-possible patient outcomes

are achieved when a patient has a strong support system that can help them along their rehabilitative journey.

Assenza, a native of the Hudson Valley, attended Fordham University in the Bronx for her undergraduate degree and received her Master's from Adelphi University.



**Steven R. Flanagan, MD** is a nationally and internationally known expert in Traumatic Brain Injury and brain injury rehabilitation. Dr. Flanagan serves as Professor and Chairman of the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, NYU School of Medicine and as Medical Director of the Rusk Rehabilitation at NYU Langone Medical Center. Previously, he served as Vice Chairman of Rehabilitation Medicine at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. While at Mount Sinai, Dr. Flanagan and his colleagues developed a seamless continuum of care for people with brain injury that remains unique in New York State. Dr. Flanagan serves on the Board of Directors of the Brain Injury Association of New York State and has been honored with the BIANYS Champion of Hope Award.



**Joe R. Kaszovitz, BS, CASAC, CBIS**, is an experienced Counselor with a demonstrated history of working with patients with Traumatic Brain Injury, mental health issues and substance dependency. He is skilled in crisis intervention, interventions, group therapy, addiction recovery, motivational interviewing and behavioral health. He has a BS in Community and Human Services from SUNY Empire State Collage.

Mr. Kaszovitz is currently an Addiction Counselor III with the NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, Russell E. Blaisdell Addiction Treatment Center located at Rockland County Psychiatric Center Campus.



**Dr. Kirk Lercher** is dual board certificated in physical medicine and rehabilitation (PMR) and traumatic brain injury (TBI) medicine. He received his medical degree from Rutgers University - New Jersey Medical School, where he then completed his internship in internal medicine. He completed his residency training in PMR at Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation and fellowship training in TBI at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center.

Since joining the faculty of the Department of Rehabilitation and Human Performance at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Hospital in 2013, he has become the Medical Director of the Brain Injury Rehabilitation Program and has since established and directs the program's first ACGME accredited TBI fellowship. He also serves as the Medical Director of the Brain Injury Research Center (BIRC) at Mount Sinai Hospital where he works collaboratively with research faculty on various research projects involving patients recovering from traumatic brain injuries.



**Henry Mendez, MS, RN, NP, PMHNP-BC**, is an American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Certified Nurse Practitioner in Psychiatry. He is an advanced practice nurse who currently serves clients with substance use and comorbid mental illness at the Russell E. Blaisdell Addiction Treatment Center. He earned his Master of Science in Mental Health/Psychiatric Nursing at SUNY Stony Brook. While going to school, Henry continued working at the Rockland Psychiatric Center in Orangeburg, NY initially (2008) as a staff nurse and subsequently managing the facilities' medical equipment from inspection through training. After graduation he accepted a position as a nurse practitioner at the multicultural admission unit at Rockland Psychiatric Center. During this tenure, Henry's interest in substance abuse peaked as portions of admissions, and especially readmissions, presented with a substance use component, often the catalyst resulting in decompensation. Henry has spent the last four years with the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).



**Emma Nally** is the current brain injury fellow at NYU Langone Rusk Rehabilitation. She went to medical school at St. George's University in Grenada, West Indies, and completed her residency in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital, National Rehabilitation Hospital in Washington, DC, where she also served as chief resident. She is board eligible in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation and plans on working as a Brain Injury Psychiatrist after she completes her fellowship.



**Jonathan M. Silver, MD** is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at New York University School of Medicine, a Fellow and past- President of the American Neuropsychiatric Association and a Diplomate in Behavioral Neurology & Neuropsychiatry by the United Council for Neurologic Subspecialties (UCNS).

He has authored over 45 papers and 60 chapters, focusing on the neuropsychiatric problems subsequent to Traumatic Brain Injury. He is senior editor of the "Textbook of Traumatic Brain Injury," which is now in the third edition. He has been listed in "Best Doctors in America" since 1992 for the area of neuropsychiatry and received the award for Innovative Clinical Treatment from the North American Brain Injury Society.



**Erika L. Trovato, DO, MS** is Board-Certified in Brain Injury Medicine and Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Dr Trovato completed her residency in PM&R and her fellowship in Brain Injury Medicine at Rusk Rehabilitation at NYU Langone Health. She is now Co-Director of the brain injury unit and inpatient rehabilitation program at Burke Rehabilitation Hospital in White Plains, NY.

Dr. Trovato leads a multidisciplinary rehabilitation team of physical, occupational and speech therapists, as well as nurses, neuropsychologists and other rehabilitation specialists in the management of diagnoses such as traumatic brain injury, brain tumor, skull fracture, poly-trauma, intra-cerebral and subarachnoid hemorrhage, as well as ischemic stroke.



Tamara L. Wexler, MD, PhD, is a neuroendocrinologist in the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine at NYU, whose research interests center on post-TBI pituitary changes. She has served as an Attending Physician in Internal Medicine at the Massachusetts General Hospital, and as the Director of the NYULMC Pituitary Center. Dr. Wexler established the NYU Endocrine Registry to support clinical research, initiating cross-institute collaborations to further investigate the importance of pituitary dysfunction and its treatment, and serves as the principal investigator of NYU's TBI/Pituitary research and lead site investigator for a multi-site neuroendocrine tumor study. She writes and speaks internationally on the topic of post-TBI pituitary dysfunction.

Dr. Wexler received her MD and PhD in Neuroscience from the University of Pennsylvania. She completed her Internal Medicine residency and Endocrinology fellowship at the Massachusetts General Hospital, where she was part of the Neuroendocrine Unit, designed and ran national clinical trials on the impact of growth hormone, and served for 12 years on the Optimum Care Committee.

While on staff at MGH, Dr. Wexler spent four years at McKinsey & Company, where she served as the Global Endocrinology Lead, and continues to consult on research and development projects. She is an elected member of the University of Pennsylvania Institute for Diabetes, Obesity, and Metabolism Leadership Council, the Endocrine Society Scientific and Educational Programs Core Committee, and the Endocrine Society Clinical Guidelines Committee.