



# Winter 2011/2012 BGS Newsletter

## Upenn Research Duo in the News



Professors of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the Perelman School of Medicine, Dr. Virginia M. Y. Lee and her husband of 32 years, Dr. John Trojanowski, have been featured in numerous news stories on the Philadelphia local news as well as prestigious medical journals.

More recently, papers written by the couple on Alzheimer's research have been ranked among the top 10 by Science Watch, as they have both been cited more than 13,000 times.

In a series of interviews recently conducted by Science Watch on Drs. Lee and Trojanowski, the couple discusses their early interests in Alzheimer's research, despite discouraging feedback from some of their colleagues who didn't believe studying the disease would produce much in research findings.

To read the full interview on this dynamic research duo and learn about the discoveries they have made since pursuing careers in Alzheimer's research, please visit:

[Penn Researchers on Alzheimer's Disease](#)

VISIT BGS AT OUR FOLLOWING PAGES



Keep up with old friends & see photos!



## BGS Graduate Group Holiday Parties!

**MINS/Neuroscience**  
**December 12<sup>th</sup>, 4-6pm**  
**BRB II/III Lobby**

Cell & Molecular Biology  
December 13<sup>th</sup>, 4-6pm  
BRB II/III Lobby

**Pharmacological Sciences**  
**December 20<sup>th</sup>, 5-7pm**  
**BRB II/III, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor**



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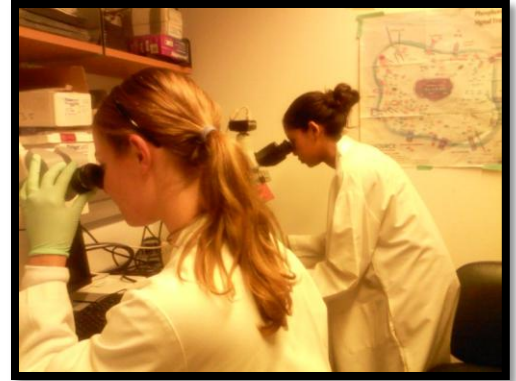
To include information in the next newsletter, please write to Jamie Lipford at [jlipford.upenn@gmail.com](mailto:jlipford.upenn@gmail.com)



## Positive Outlook for Careers in Biomedical Sciences

With a struggling economy and several industries still facing job cuts, the field of biomedical sciences is expected to see as much as a 37% increase in job growth by 2018.

According to [Biomed Scientist Jobs](#), the growth of biotechnology will result in Biochemists and Biophysicists, who do research on disease treatments and understanding cell reproduction, earning as much as \$60,000-\$108,000 a year in these sub-fields of biomedical sciences. For BGS students here at Upenn, this is yet another perk in pursuing degrees in this growing discipline of study.



Alyssa Huegel & Peris Bentley of the Ross Lab

## Professor of Microbiology Studies Affects of Diet and Stomach Viruses



**Frederic D. Bushman, PhD** (CAMB & GCB), Professor of Microbiology at the Upenn Perelman School of Medicine, has been studying the effects of diet and its link to stomach viruses. As he states, “the study provides a new window on the vast viral populations that live in the human gut, which demonstrates that they vary radically between individuals, and shows that dietary changes can affect not just bacterial populations, but also viral populations.”

In the findings of the study, published in *Genome Research*, virus populations in the gut varied depending on the diets followed by six volunteers who participated in the study. The volunteers were assigned diets of either high-fat/low-fiber, low-fat/high-fiber, or an ad-lib diet. The details of how DNA was analyzed is included in a news article that was also written on the study at [Philly.com](#).

## First Annual Tom Kadesch Prize Awarded to Dr. Andrew Edmondson (CAMB – 2011)

Congratulations to **Andrew Edmondson, PhD**, who is the first recipient of the *Tom Kadesch Prize in Genetic Research*. This prize was established by the Department of Genetics this year in honor of the late Dr. Tom Kadesch who passed away last winter.

The Tom Kadesch Prize is awarded to graduate students who demonstrate excellence in research achievement and citizenship. Dr. Edmondson was presented with the prize, in addition to \$1,000 cash, at the Genetics Symposium on November 30, 2011.



Read more about Dr. Edmondson and his thesis work [here](#).



**Assistant Professor Aaron Gitler, PhD** (CAMB, Neuro & BMB) received the ***Instituto Paulo Gontijo 3<sup>rd</sup> International Medicine PG Award*** for the best ALS research by a young investigator. ALS is Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (also known as Lou Gehrig's disease).

Dr. Gitler is also a 2011 finalist in the annual international competition for The Eppendorf & Science Prize for Neurobiology for his essay entitled "A simple yeast model provides new insight into complicated human neurodegenerative disease".



**Jeffrey N. Myers, MD, PhD (BMB - 1991)** was recently awarded with a two-year ***NIH Challenge Grant in the amount of \$2M*** for his research project

"Comprehensive Analysis of Genetic Alterations in Oral Cancer". The goals of the project are to generate a comprehensive database of

nearly all genomic alterations in a single sample set of 50 oral cancer specimens and perform somatic mutation analysis on all expressed genes, and identify structural abnormalities over the whole genome.

Currently, Dr. Myers is Professor and Director of Research in the Department of Head and Neck Surgery at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center where he maintains an active surgical practice, in addition to a productive research laboratory. The major interest of Dr. Myers's laboratory is studying "Progression and Metastasis of Oral Cancer".

**Joshua Gold, PhD**, Associate Professor of Neuroscience, has been elected ***Neuroscience Graduate Group Chair***.

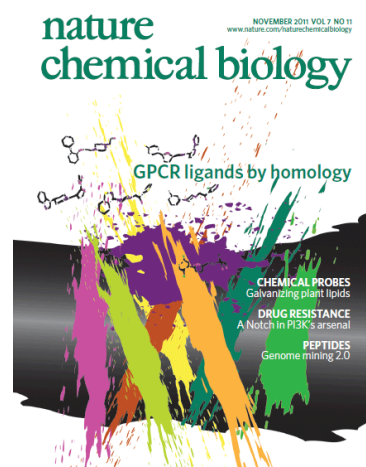


As the current chair, **Rita Balice-Gordon, PhD**, Professor of Neuroscience, will begin a year-long sabbatical on January 1, 2012, to become Vice-President and Head of Integrative Neuroscience in Pfizer's new Neuroscience Research Unit in Boston.



***Congratulations to Josh and Rita, and many, many thanks to Rita for her extraordinary service to the NGG!***

**Ryan G. Coleman, PhD (GCB - 2009)**, designed the cover image for the November 2011 issue of...



**Ryan was also recently awarded a Kirschstein-NRSA fellowship!**

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Additional Awards

Faculty



**Ben E. Black, PhD, Assistant Professor in Biochemistry and Biophysics**, is the recipient of the ***Michael S. Brown New Investigator Research Award***, a 2011 Penn Medicine Award of Excellence.

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Neuroscience (INSC) Student Awards



**Michael Gandal** received the ***2011 Flexner Award*** for best neuroscience dissertation.



**Jing Guo and Katie Kopil** won the ***Fine Science Tools Travel Award***



**Dorothea Jameson & Leo M. Hurvich Travel Award Recipients:**

**Michelle Dumoulin**  
**Laura Felgendreger**  
**Amy Price**  
**Melissa Wang**  
**Matt Wimmer**

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Alumni



**David Calkins, PhD (Neuro - 2004)** was awarded the 2011 Rudin Prize by the New York Academy of Medicine for his work on neurodegeneration in glaucoma. He is currently Vice-Chairman and Professor of Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences at the Vanderbilt School of Medicine.



**Leah Sabin, PhD (CAMB -2 011)** was awarded the Damon Runyon Fellowship



# ALUMNI APPOINTMENTS



*Congratulations* to our BGS alumni who have moved on to promising careers and have been appointed to the following positions:



**Joanna Sax Doran, PhD, JD (CAMB - 2003)** is an **Associate Professor of Law** at the California Western School of Law in San Diego, California. She has combined her scientific background and legal education to focus on issues in biomedical policy. Her research analyzes and proposes policies that incentivize the advancement of science.

**Iris Z. Jaffe, MD, PhD (CAMB - 1997)** was recently promoted to **Associate Professor of Medicine at Tufts Medical Center** where she is a cardiologist in the Division of Cardiology and the Co-Director of the Molecular Cardiology Research Center.

**Jeannie Lee, PhD (CAMB - 1993)** is currently serving as a **Director on the Board of the Genetics Society of America for 2011-2013**. She also received the 2010 Molecular Biology Prize from the National Academy of Sciences and was elected Fellow of the AAAS in 2010.

**Wenny (Shih-Wen) Lin, PhD (CAMB - 2008)** was recently elected to the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Associate Member Council.

**Jason Mill, PhD (CAMB - 1997)** was recently promoted to **Associate Professor of Medicine, Developmental Biology, and Pathology & Immunology** at the Washington University School of Medicine.

**Maureen E. Murphy, PhD (CAMB - 1994)** recently accepted a position as **Professor and co-Leader in Molecular and Cellular Oncogenesis** at the Wistar Institute in Philadelphia.

**Marion Pepper Pew, PhD (IMUN - 2006)** was appointed as an **Assistant Professor in the Immunology Department** at the University of Washington.

**Mauricio J. Reginato, PhD (PHRM - 1998)** was promoted to **Associate Professor in the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology** at the Drexel University College of Medicine.



# UPCOMING & PAST EVENTS

## **BEHAVIORAL & COGNITIVE NEUROSCIENCE TG RETREAT**

**December 16, 2011  
Claudia Cohen Hall, Terrace Room**

Stellar Lecturer: Marvin M. Chun, PhD

Professor of Psychology, Cognitive Science, and Neurobiology  
John B. Madden Master of Berkeley College  
Yale University

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## **2011 BGS CONVOCATION**

The annual BGS Convocation was held on September 6, 2011 and was attended by **116 incoming BGS students**



**To view more photos, please visit BGS [flickr](#)**



# BGS FACULTY APPOINTMENTS

## **Cell and Molecular Biology**

- ***Jose Conejo-Garcia, MD, PhD***, Wistar Institute Associate Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine
- ***Ekaterina Grishchuk, PhD***, Assistant Professor of Physiology, Perelman School of Medicine
- ***Beatrice Hahn, MD***, Professor of Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine
- ***George Shaw, MD, PhD***, Professor of Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine
- ***Kathryn Wellen, PhD***, Assistant Professor of Cancer Biology, Perelman School of Medicine

## **Epidemiology and Biostatistics**

- ***Kimberly Forde, MD***, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine
- ***Meenakshi Bewtra, MD***, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine
- ***Carmen Guerra, MD***, Associate Professor of Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine

## **Genomics and Computational Biology**

- ***Marcella Devoto, PhD***, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at CHOP, Perelman School of Medicine
- ***Benjamin Voight, PhD***, Assistant Professor of Pharmacology, Perelman School of Medicine
- ***Nancy Zhang, PhD***, Associate Professor of Statistics, The Wharton School
- ***Joe Zhou, PhD***, Assistant Professor of Genetics, Perelman School of Medicine

## **Immunology**

- ***Dorian McGavern, PhD***, Adjunct Associate Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine
- ***Jose Conejo-Garcia, MD, PhD***, Wistar Institute Associate Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine

## **Neuroscience**

- ***Samantha Soldan, PhD***, Research Assistant Professor of Neurology, Perelman School of Medicine
- ***Edward Lee, MD, PhD***, Assistant Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, Perelman School of Medicine