

Encephalitis:

My Brain and Medicine

Encephalitis survivors and caregivers day

Friday 26 September 2025 1.30PM - 6.00PM (EDT)

IN PERSON EVENT

Meet the Speakers



Assoc Prof Kiran Thakur

Columbia University Irving Medical Center

Dr Kiran Thakur is the Herbert Irving Associate Professor of Neurology at Columbia University Irving Medical Center – New York Presbyterian Hospital. She leads the Program in Neuroinfectious Diseases at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. After graduating from the Harvard Neurology Residency Training Program, Dr Thakur completed post-doctoral fellowship training in neuroinfectious diseases and neuroimmunology at the Johns Hopkins Hospital. She has a specialised interest in viral encephalitis, and emerging pathogens, and collaborates with scientists globally on the surveillance, diagnosis, and management of neuroinfectious diseases. In addition to her scientific efforts, Dr Thakur serves as a neurology consultant for the World Health Organization and the Center for Disease Control and the Pan American Health Organization.



Assist Prof Sarah Flanagan Wesley

Columbia University Irving Medical Center

Dr Sarah Flanagan Wesley is a neurologist specialising in autoimmune diseases of the nervous system at Columbia University. After finishing her neuroimmunology training at Yale, Dr Wesley built a clinic at Yale with a high volume of rare conditions, in particular various forms of immune-mediated encephalitis. She brought this expertise with her to Columbia University in 2020 when she joined faculty. In addition to managing many patients with encephalitis, she conducts clinical research and trials in autoimmune encephalitis and is working towards improved awareness and treatment outcomes.



Dr Molly Wilson-Murphy

Boston Children's Hospital

Dr. Molly Wilson-Murphy is a pediatric neurologist at Boston Children's Hospital. Her areas of clinical specialty include infectious and inflammatory conditions in children including encephalitis and meningoencephalitis. She has a particular interest in neurological complications of vaccine preventable diseases; arboviral encephalitis including Powassan virus, West Nile, and Eastern Equine Encephalitis; as well as infection triggered encephalopathy syndromes (ITES) such as influenza associated encephalitis and encephalopathy (IAE) and acute necrotizing encephalopathy (ANE); tick-borne infections including Lyme neuroborreliosis; and post-acute sequelae of COVID-19 (PASC). She has experience in medical education and mentorship and is the associate program director of the Boston Children's Hospital Child Neurology training program. She also has significant interest and expertise in wellness and resilience in the workplace holding multiple departmental and hospital-wide positions in wellness at Boston Children's Hospital including Co-director of Wellness for all residents and fellows across the hospital, the faculty lead of a hospital-wide resilience course, and the department of neurology faculty wellness officer.

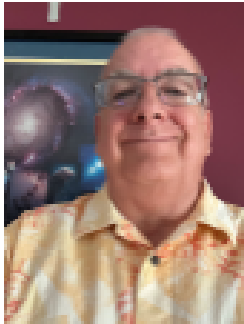
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Our England and Wales Charity No. is 1087843 and our Charitable Company No. is 04189027.
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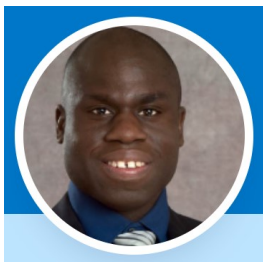
**Encephalitis
International**
The brain inflammation non-profit

Meet the Speakers



Jim Cooper infectious encephalitis lived experience

Jim Coopers' career included 20 plus years with the Port Authority of NY & NJ and as a result of the illness, retired last February. His last ten years with the Agency was to create and operate the cyber security unit - the tip of the spear for cyber security and related investigations for 5 airports, a railroad, several ports, tunnels and bridges and a bus terminal. Jim is married for 30 plus years with 4 children and has enjoyed sailing, rock climbing and camping with the family.



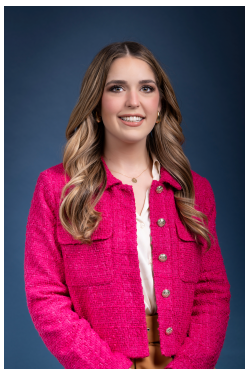
Assist Prof Akin Beckley Columbia University Irving Medical Centre

Akin Beckley, MD is a physiatrist with a specialty in caring for patients with gait impairments with a particular focus on patients living with limb loss. Dr. Beckley grew up in Nigeria and Canada. He completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, Canada then attended medical school at the University of Connecticut. He completed physical medicine and rehabilitation training at Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals where he served as chief resident. Dr. Beckley is the Associate Residency Program Director in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. He is also the medical director of the inpatient rehabilitation unit at New York-Presbyterian Hospital and the director of vascular and amputee rehabilitation for the Department of Rehabilitation and Regenerative Medicine. His clinical practice includes prosthetics and orthotics and neurological gait impairments incorporating spasticity management. Dr. Beckley is currently on faculty of Columbia University Irving Medical Center and New York-Presbyterian Hospital as Assistant Professor of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation.



Dr Claude Steriade NYU Langone's Comprehensive Epilepsy Center

Claude Steriade is an Associate Professor of Neurology at the NYU Comprehensive Epilepsy Center. She has a clinical and research interest in the interface between neuroinflammation and epilepsy. She participates in a multidisciplinary clinic focused on the subacute to chronic management of autoimmune encephalitis with psychiatry and rehab medicine specialists. She conducts research on neuroimaging markers of glial activation and BBB dysfunction in patients with autoimmune causes of seizures and autoimmune encephalitis. She is also involved in multiple multicenter studies of autoimmune encephalitis and neural autoantibodies in the context of seizure disorders, including clinical trials of novel treatments for autoimmune encephalitis.



Rachael Muggleton - Autoimmune encephalitis lived experience

My name is Rachael Muggleton, and I am a 25-year-old third-year encephalitis survivor. I consider myself an insatiable thinker, shaped by the power of compassionate medicine and deeply committed to advocating for those who are underserved, underrepresented, and under researched. In my early twenties, while pursuing my undergraduate education at Penn State University and enjoying a vibrant social life, my world was abruptly transformed by a diagnosis of Anti-NMDAR autoimmune encephalitis. I was placed in a medically induced coma for 4.5 months to allow my brain time to heal while physicians searched for answers. What followed were some of the most challenging years of my life. Despite the immense physical and emotional toll, I remained anchored to my childhood dream of becoming a physician. Through the unpredictable journey of recovery, I discovered a profound sense of purpose. I rebuilt my body and mind from the ground up and became a passionate advocate for the unique needs of individuals facing similar challenges. Today, as a medical student, I carry with me not only pride in how far I have come but also a deep appreciation for the healing power of empathetic, patient-centred care. I am honoured to share my story as a testament to how compassionate medicine transforms lives and to affirm that in life, we are never denied—only redirected."