

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**UP-AND-COMING NEUROSCIENTISTS AND MENTORS HONORED AT  
ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
NEUROSCIENCE NEXT**

**CHICAGO, October 13, 2021** — The Alzheimer's Association® recognized six trailblazers in neuroscience research and mentorship at the second annual Alzheimer's Association International Conference® Neuroscience Next ([AAIC®-NN](#)).

“The Alzheimer's Association is proud to honor these outstanding individuals who represent the next generation of neuroscience,” said Maria C. Carrillo, Ph.D., chief science officer, Alzheimer's Association. “If these individuals and mentors are any indication, neuroscience research has a bright future.”

“I'm inspired to see not only their work covering a wide variety of research topics, but also their role in expanding and diversifying the neuroscience field,” Carrillo added.

Now in its second year, AAIC NN provides students and early career researchers a platform to publish and promote their work in cognitive, computational, behavioral and other areas of neuroscience research.

**Alzheimer's Association Excellence in Neuroscience Mentoring Award**

The Alzheimer's Association Excellence in Neuroscience Mentoring Award honors individuals who have made significant contributions to the mentoring of dementia scientists through either research mentorship, career mentorship or personal mentorship. Two individuals were recognized this year:

**Mélise Edwards** is a Ph.D. student from University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass). With an interest in age-related cognitive decline, she explores areas of the brain susceptible to neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease and the role hormones play in brain aging. In the first year of her Ph.D. program, Mélise created an organization called Mentorship for Underrepresented STEM Enthusiasts (MUSE) to offer mentorship to those underrepresented in STEM fields. Through MUSE and her lab, Mélise has mentored five students: one who successfully gained acceptance to Emory University for the Neuroscience Ph.D. program, two who are currently applying to graduate school and two who have decided to pursue social justice-oriented careers outside of academia.

**Ioannis (John) Sotiropoulos, Ph.D.**, is a group leader at the Institute of Biosciences and Applications at NCSR Demokritos in Athens, Greece, and affiliated researcher at the ICVS Institute, School of Medicine at University of Minho in Portugal. His research work focuses on understanding the role of environmental risk factors in the onset of Alzheimer's disease with a specific focus on the relationship between Alzheimer's and depression. Sotiropoulos has supervised more than five Ph.D. students and 10 master's and post doctoral students. Most students mentored by him have published papers in top-tier journals, continued in academic research or moved to impressive careers in the private sector. Sotiropoulos has built an international network to which he has introduced his younger lab members and has helped secure resources to support their visits to labs internationally. His work has received various prizes and awards, including the Hirnliga Alzheimer Prize, AD/PD Young Faculty Award, Jerome Lejeune Award and Janssen Innovation Prize.

### **AAIC Neuroscience Next 'One to Watch' Award**

This award recognizes the next generation of leaders in neuroscience: the students, postdoctoral researchers and early career investigators who are trailblazers in scientific thinking, collaboration, communication and/or outreach. Four individuals were honored with a 'One to Watch' Award this year:

**Angeline Dukes** is a final year Ph.D. candidate in the lab of Dr. Christie Fowler at University of California, Irvine. The daughter of Haitian and Trinidadian immigrants and a first-generation college graduate, she earned her bachelor's degree in biology from the Historically Black College/University (HBCU), Fisk University, in 2017. As an addiction neuroscientist, her research seeks to assess the long-term effects of adolescent nicotine and cannabinoid exposure. Aside from research, she is passionate about the support and mentorship of underrepresented people in the sciences. As such, Dukes is the Founder and President of Black in Neuro, an international grassroots organization dedicated to amplifying, providing resources to and cultivating a supportive community for Black scholars in neuroscience-related fields.

**Eduardo Zimmer** is an Assistant Professor at Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) in Brazil. He holds a bachelor's in pharmacy and a master's and Ph.D. in biochemistry from UFRGS with a 2-years period as a Ph.D. exchange student at McGill University, Canada. After a short period of postdoctoral training at the Department of Biochemistry at UFRGS, Zimmer established his laboratory at the Department of Pharmacology. He won multiple individual awards, including the Best Brazilian Ph.D. thesis in 2016. In addition, Zimmer has been nominated to the Brazilian Academy of Sciences and has become an Instituto Serrapilheira grantee. His laboratory focuses on understanding the cellular origins of Alzheimer's disease, with a particular interest in astrocytes.

**Ron Nachum** is a senior at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in Virginia, USA. After losing his grandfather, a Holocaust survivor, to a long battle with Alzheimer's disease in early 2020, Ron wanted to help the millions of other families around the world caring for loved ones just like his own. He developed an accessible system for Alzheimer's disease screening requiring only a smartphone or laptop camera. Nachum's system works by capturing videos of patients writing with a regular pen and paper that are then analyzed with novel computer vision and machine learning algorithms to screen patients based on their fine motor movement abilities.

**Victor Ekuta** is an MIT linQ Catalyst Fellow, MIT Office of Engineering Outreach Programs Instructor, M.D. Candidate, and member of Black in Neuro. He has conducted several innovative neuroscience research projects and led multiple outreach programs and neuroscience courses for underrepresented students. In the future, he plans to specialize in academic neurology as a physician-scientist-advocate, employing novel approaches to treat human brain disease, combat health disparities and boost diversity in STEM.

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### **About AAIC Neuroscience Next**

AAIC Neuroscience Next is a global, no-cost virtual conference that showcases the work of students and early career investigators in cognitive, computational, behavioral, and other areas of neuroscience research. At AAIC Neuroscience Next, attendees will have access to information on funding and networking opportunities, further advancing their careers and accelerating the future of neuroscience.

### **About the Alzheimer's Association**

The Alzheimer's Association leads the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support. Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's and all other dementia®. For more information, visit [alz.org](http://alz.org) or call the 24/7 Helpline at 800.272.3900.