



WHAT IS PRIMARY PROGRESSIVE APHASIA? *by Dr. S. Ahmad Sajjadi*



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Degenerative brain diseases are diverse in their presentation and underlying pathology. Language difficulty (aphasia) is a common presentation of neuro-degeneration. Aphasia can accompany other cognitive problems, like forgetfulness, or can be the sole initial presentation of the disease.

Primary progressive aphasia (PPA) is the term used when progressive language problems are the first manifestation of neuro-degeneration. Patients suffering from PPA might have problems with expression or comprehension of language and some patients have mixed features. PPA can be a devastating condition, with many sufferers developing the disease before age 65, when they are active and have young families.

PPA is a pathologically diverse condition; the same types of language problems can be caused by different biological changes happening in the brain. Alzheimer's disease (AD) and frontotemporal

degeneration (FTD) are the two main pathologies seen in PPA. Many patients with PPA develop non-language problems with the progression of their disease. For example, some develop significant mobility and balance problems, some become forgetful, and some develop abnormal behavior and sweet tooth. Studies have shown that the underlying pathology predicts the type of disabilities patients develop following the initial language problems.

Like other types of dementia, there is currently no cure for PPA but symptomatic treatments are available. Some patients benefit from speech therapy, and medications help with problems such as depression, anxiety, abnormal behavior, and sleep problems. Those who develop mobility problems also benefit from physical and occupational therapy.

Given how little is known about this important condition, our research aims to increase understanding of the diagnosis and prognosis of PPA and to discover improved symptomatic treatments and, ultimately, a cure. Research will be essential to improving clinical care for the patients and families confronted with this challenging condition. If you have questions about PPA, please contact me at ssajjadi@uci.edu.

DR. RUTH BENCA FEATURED ON FACEBOOK LIVE WITH MARIA SHRIVER

Maria Shriver, founder of The Women's Alzheimer's Movement, hosted a stimulating Facebook LIVE discussion on brain health last month to kick off her national *Move For Minds* campaign in partnership with Equinox to raise awareness and funds for Alzheimer's disease research.

Among the esteemed panelists invited to participate in the discussion, UCI MIND faculty member and Chair of the Department of Psychiatry and Human Behavior at UCI, Dr. Ruth Benca, discussed the critical link between sleep and brain health with over 25,000 Facebook viewers. View the full recording at www.mind.uci.edu/wam-facebook-video/.



Dr. Ruth Benca (center) discussed research on sleep & brain health with Maria Shriver (left)

AN EXCITING ANNOUNCEMENT

by Dean Frank LaFerla



Frank LaFerla, PhD & Joshua Grill, PhD

Dear Friends of UCI MIND,

I am excited to announce that as of April 1, Joshua D. Grill, PhD, became sole Director of UCI MIND. Dr. Grill and I have been Co-Directors of UCI MIND since July 1, 2016, during which time we attracted high-caliber faculty, increased research funding, and have seen the Institute grow in stature, locally, nationally and internationally. When I recruited Dr. Grill to join the UCI MIND team, it was with hope and optimism that he would be integral in leading the Institute to new heights. I am extremely proud to say that he has exceeded even my expectations.

The Alzheimer's Disease Research Center (ADRC) grant, the backbone of UCI MIND, is due to be submitted for renewal in May 2019. I feel strongly that it would be hard to convince reviewers that as Dean of the Ayala School of Biological Sciences, ADRC Director, Co-Principal Investigator of the newly funded Alzheimer's Disease Mouse Model grant and Co-Director of UCI MIND, that I would have sufficient time to dedicate to the success of the ADRC in the future. Thus, I have made the decision to step down as Co-Director of UCI MIND. Josh has all the right values to be the full director, and he has certainly proven to be very dedicated and effective. I have complete confidence in his ability, and that of the entire UCI MIND team, to continue the rich tradition of laboratory and clinical research for which we are so highly regarded.

I am pleased to share with you that I will remain the Director of the ADRC, housed within UCI MIND. I will continue to work closely with Josh as he takes on his new role as Director of UCI MIND and also with the skilled researchers who have dedicated their lives to discovering the means to understand, treat, and ultimately prevent Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. I will of course continue to lead my own laboratory, which is similarly committed to this purpose. As always, thank you for your loyal support of UCI MIND.

COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY

Part of UCI MIND's mission is to share exciting research advances with the community through outreach and collaborative partnerships with local organizations. Our *Ask the Doc* program, started by Dean Frank LaFerla in 2011, is a unique way for UCI MIND experts to answer questions from the community about brain health and Alzheimer's disease research, diagnosis, and care. So far this year, UCI MIND has partnered with Senator Pat Bates, Assemblyman Bill Brough, The Susi Q Center, Alzheimer's Orange County, Alzheimer's Association, Orange County Chapter, Down Syndrome Association of Orange County, Regional Center of Orange County, and Fullerton Public Library to provide this valuable Q&A panel to over 600 community members!



Assemblyman Bill Brough greeted 300 *Ask the Doc* attendees at South OC Senior Day in March



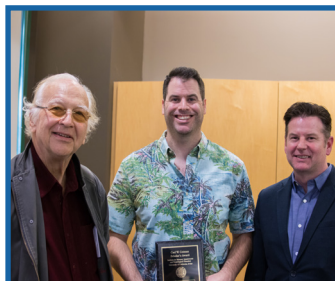
The Susi Q Center founder, Ann Quilter (center), with *Ask the Doc* panelists (from left) Drs. Joshua Grill, Malcolm Dick, Lindsay Hohsfield, & Aimee Pierce

The next *Ask the Doc* panel on Saturday, August 4 will be translated in Mandarin at the Irvine Chinese School. Through this program and other opportunities, UCI MIND is committed to ensuring our local community has access to experts at the cutting-edge research in Alzheimer's disease treatment, prevention, and care. To stay informed of upcoming community events, join our email list at www.mind.uci.edu/events/ and visit our website calendar at www.mind.uci.edu/calendar/.

UCI MIND'S EMERGING SCIENTISTS STRUT THEIR STUFF

On March 30, UCI MIND's trainee organization, REMIND, led by co-chairs Stefania Forner, Alessandra Martini, and Sarah Royer, hosted its Emerging Scientists Symposium. The 9th annual event featured invited graduate student speakers Eva Morozko (Thompson lab), Sarah Royer (Anderson lab), and Morgan Coburn (Blurton-Jones lab); invited postdoctoral speakers Sarah Hernandez (Thompson lab), Christy Itoga (Xu lab), and Laura Trujillo-Estrada (LaFerla lab); a trainee poster competition; and a keynote presentation by UCI Chancellor's Professor and internationally renowned Huntington's disease researcher, Dr. Leslie Thompson.

Eva Morozko and Sarah Hernandez were awarded for outstanding poster presentations that highlighted their scientific discoveries in Huntington's disease. Hernandez, along with graduate student Andrew Holbrook (Gillen lab), were the recipients of the Carl W. Cotman Scholar Award, for their leadership and promising scientific contributions to the field of neurodegenerative disease research. UCI MIND thanks the REMIND co-chairs for another successful symposium and congratulates all the exceptional young emerging scientists who participated.



Cotman award recipient Andrew Holbrook with Dr. Carl Cotman (left) & mentor Dr. Daniel Gillen (right)



REMIND co-chair Dr. Stefania Forner presented her research on Alzheimer's disease

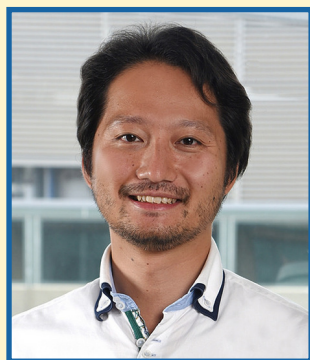


Poster award recipient Eva Morozko presented her research on Huntington's disease



Poster and Cotman award recipient Dr. Sarah Hernandez (left) with mentor & keynote speaker Dr. Leslie Thompson

NEW FACULTY MEMBER



UCI MIND welcomes new faculty member Kei Igarashi, PhD, Assistant Professor of Anatomy and Neurobiology in the UCI School of Medicine.

Dr. Igarashi earned a doctorate in neuroscience from the University of Tokyo and completed postdoctoral training at the RIKEN Brain Science Institute in Japan, the Kavli Institute for Systems Neuroscience in Norway, and Yale University School of Medicine. He joined the faculty of UCI in 2016.

Dr. Igarashi's research focuses on the deterioration of spatial navigation and spatial memory in Alzheimer's disease, with an aim toward improving diagnosis and treatment. Specifically, his laboratory investigates cellular and circuit mechanisms for sensory perception and memory in healthy participants and how impairment of such mechanisms causes memory deficit using Alzheimer's disease models.

UCI GIVING DAY RAISES AWARENESS AND FUNDS FOR ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH

Thanks to the collective support of our community, UCI MIND raised a total of \$26,498 from 109 gifts through UCI's annual Giving Day campaign on April 25! All of the funds raised on Giving Day will directly support cutting-edge Alzheimer's disease research right here at UCI.

A special thank you to our Anteaters Against Alzheimer's who helped raise awareness of Giving Day through social media and rallied alumni, family, and friends to support the critical research happening at UCI MIND.

If you missed Giving Day but would still like to support Alzheimer's research, please click here:

<http://bit.ly/DonateUCIMIND> to make a donation in any amount.





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