

March 2022 | Issue 6

# Biomedical Genetics Section

## Newsletter

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Welcome to the new Biomedical Genetics Section Quarterly Newsletter!

### Meet the People

**We are pleased to feature our Data Analyst, Dhawal Priyadarshi, in the Biomedical Genetics Section! Dhawal has given an amazing introduction about himself and his experience.**



Hi, I am Dhawal Priyadarshi and I joined the Biomedical Genetics department in February 2021 and have been working closely with Dr. Gyungah Jun since.

I am a master's in Data Analytics Engineering from Northeastern University and have worked in industry as a Data Scientist.

My interests are in employing data solutions using cloud, machine learning, and data analysis pipelining. So far I have been working on developing a database solution for precision medicine and genome driven drug discovery. I also look forward to working on advanced methods for genomic data driven insights for drug repurposing and patient subgrouping.

In the past, I have worked in developing data pipelines and machine learning solutions. One of my favorite ones involved application of Convolutional Neural Networks in identifying threat objects in 3D X-ray scans of airport check-in luggage. I have a thirst for learning new things and I hope I can solve some pertinent problems in precision medicine through my skills.

# Boston University News

## Ed Media Office Hours for Zoom Purge Protection



Starting **March 13**, Zoom Cloud Recordings that are at least 180 days will be automatically deleted. A deleted recording may be recovered from the Zoom website for up to 30 days after it was deleted. Recordings that should remain accessible to others, including instructional content, should be uploaded to [BU MyMedia \(Kaltura\)](#). Find more information [here](#).

## Employees Wellness Activities



### [Sargent Choice Nutrition Center Cooking Demonstrations](#)

Wednesday, April 20, 12 to 1 pm

Please contact the Faculty and Staff Assistance Office at [fsao@bu.edu](mailto:fsao@bu.edu) or 617-353-5381 if you have any questions or would like to schedule an appointment.

### [2022 Fitbit® Activity Challenge, April 11th – May 23rd](#)

Register a team for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual, team-based Fitbit® Activity Challenge! This year's challenge takes place from April 11<sup>th</sup> – May 23<sup>rd</sup>, and the deadline to register a team is Friday March 25<sup>th</sup>.

## Commencement 2022

From Dr. Jean Morrison, All full-time faculty are invited to participate in individual [school/college convocation ceremonies](#) and the [All-University Commencement](#) on **Sunday, May 22** at 1 pm at Nickerson Field.

Specific commencement information for faculty can be found on the commencement website at <https://www.bu.edu/commencement/faculty-information/>.

Your presence at these commencement ceremonies is greatly appreciated by our graduates and their families and friends. Please plan to join us during this celebratory weekend.

## BU Updates on COVID-19



**March 7, 2022** mark the end of Boston University's masking mandate, which has been in place since the arrival of the coronavirus almost two years ago, except in classrooms and certain other venues. The University is weighing a decision to lift the classroom mask mandate effective April 4.

COVID-testing for on-campus employees becomes optional that day, too. Those who opt to continue masking and testing may do so.

### **Faculty and Staff Community Testing**

Faculty and staff will no longer be required to test weekly as part of our regular community testing program. Testing will still be available for faculty and staff who would like to continue testing or who need to test due to a [close contact exposure](#). We encourage anyone with symptoms to continue to self-schedule testing through the Healthway portals at the [Health Services Annex](#).

### **Face Masks**

We have updated our face mask policy and are no longer requiring masks to be worn in most areas on our campuses including dining halls, residential housing common areas, shared offices, libraries, food courts, Fit-Rec, athletic venues, and common areas in buildings and colleges. Masks continue to be required indoors for classes, on the BU Shuttle, and in all healthcare facilities.

We encourage everyone to continue to use high-quality filtering masks such as N95s, KN95s, KF94s, and FFP2s to reduce viral transmission based on personal risk.

### **Vaccination Verification at Public Venues**

We continue to recommend that all visitors to Boston University are up to date on their COVID-19 vaccinations and adhere to any masking policies that are in effect. The Fitness & Recreation

Center and venues which host ticketed and non-ticketed entertainment and athletic events open to the general public will no longer be requiring proof of vaccination for entry and our visitor policy has been updated accordingly.

Please see our [Back2BU](#) website for updates and additional details about our COVID-19 protocols and [here](#).

### **Lifting of Special Exceptions Due to Omicron Variant**

Remote teaching is no longer an option and all residential courses should be taught in-person. If a faculty member needs to miss an in-person class, they should work with their dean (or their designee) to develop alternate plans. This might include identifying another faculty member or senior doctoral student who can teach your class, or rescheduling classes until you are able to return to campus. We continue to encourage faculty, when possible, to make recorded lectures available to students who cannot attend class because they are in isolation or quarantine.

### **Coverage of At-Home COVID-19 Test Kits**

January 15, 2022, you and your dependents covered under the BU Health Plans will be able to seek reimbursement for at-home COVID-19 diagnostic tests per calendar month, as announced by the Departments of Labor, Treasury and U.S. Health and Human Services.

“We are grateful to all of you for your vigilance in getting us through this latest COVID surge. It is a relief to see the public health trends moving in the right direction, and we are glad to be able to take this step in returning to a more normal, in-person teaching, learning, and working environment.” - Jean Morrisson.

**Fun Facts:** Recent evidence has indicated that chewing gum can enhance attention, as well as promoting well-being and work performance.

[Chewing Gum: Cognitive Performance, Mood, Well-Being, and Associated Physiology](#)



## Biomedical Genetics Section Updates

### Biomedical Genetics Faculty Grant:



#### **Identifying Brain Epitranscriptomic Changes Associated with Alcohol Use Disorder**

Huiping Zhang, PhD

Award Number: 1R01AA029758-01

Chronic alcohol consumption may result in methyl-adenosine modification of brain RNAs, thus altering the stability and expression of brain RNAs involved in reward or addiction-related pathways. This R01 project will (1) identify differentially methylated and expressed messenger RNAs (mRNAs) in multiple regions of postmortem brains of subjects with alcohol use disorder (AUD), (2) validate AUD-associated brain mRNA methylation and expression changes by mouse modeling, and (3) confirm the effect of AUD-associated brain mRNA methylation changes on mRNA expression and neuronal activity by an innovative epitranscriptome editing approach. The findings will provide insight into a novel epitranscriptomic mechanism of AUD and facilitate the design of a novel AUD therapeutic strategy through altering the methylation status of specific mRNAs.

**Congratulation to Dr. Huiping Zhang**

## 2022 Wing Tat Lee Award:



The 2022 Wing Tat Lee awards, funded to establish cooperative research programs between BUSM and Chinese universities

Huiping Zhang, PhD, will collaborate with Ying Liu, PhD, associate professor of genetics at Soochow University, to study the genetic mechanism of 22q11.2 deletion syndrome (22q11.DS), which is a disorder characterized by heart abnormalities, recurrent infections and distinctive facial features. They will use genome editing techniques to study the function of genes and genetic variants within the 22q11.2 deletion region. Functional genetic variants

identified in this deletion region could be useful diagnostic biomarkers for 22q11.DS

**Congratulation to Dr. Huiping Zhang**

## Dr. Farrer Interview with CNN: Fight Alzheimer's in your mid-30s by tracking these warning signs

On Wednesday, March 23, 2022, Dr. Lindsay Farrer interviewed with Sandee LaMotte from CNN, and discussed about the recent study published in Alzheimer's and Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association, [Farmingham Heart Study](#).



"What's unique about the study is the large sample of individuals that are examined every four years or so, starting at age 35, and followed into the age when an Alzheimer's diagnosis may occur," Farrer said.

According to the Study, People 35 to 50 could lower their Alzheimer's risk by 15.4% if they raised their high-density lipoprotein, or HDL, by 15 milligrams per deciliter. People between the ages of 51 and 60 who raised their HDL reduced their risk by 17.9%.

"The take-home message is that people who are in their 30s and early 40s need to have their lipids and blood sugar measured. That's the only way you'll detect any issues," Farrer said.

"But many people that age feel they're healthy and say, 'Why do I need to see a doctor all the time?' So it's encouragement for people to start having regular checkups at that period of your life," he added.

Find more information of the Interview [here](#).

Congratulation to Dr. Lindsay Farrer



## Exciting News for Biomedical Genetics Section

*Congratulation to Nancy Ortega's Art Work on BU Art's Day!*



*Congratulation to Moonil Kang's Wife Performance!*

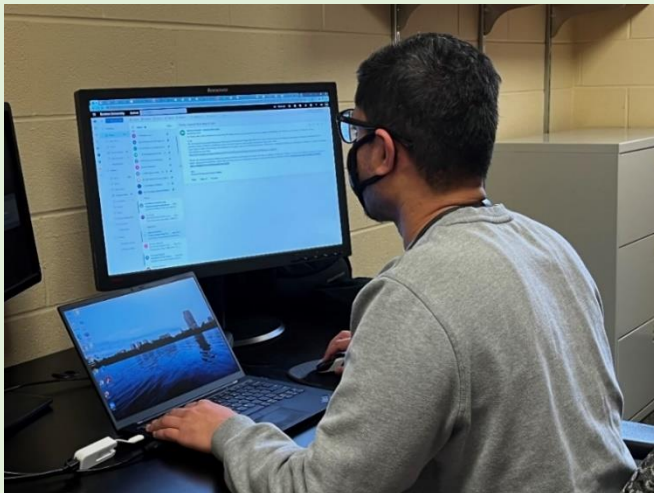




*Dr. Chung is working on his incoming Projects!*



*Dhawal Priyadarshi working in his office*



*We are sharing the Conference room with the genetics Counselling department neighbor! Please let Phuong ([phvn@bu.edu](mailto:phvn@bu.edu)) know if need help reserving the room on specifics time.*

## Research News

### NIH Increase on Salary Limitation for FY 2022



National Institutes of Health has issued updated guidance regarding the salary limitations for FY 2022 reflecting an increase in the Executive Level II salary level from \$199,300 to \$203,700 effective January 2, 2022. See [NIH Guidance NOT-OD-22-076](#) for detailed information.

### National Institutes of Health

The new salary cap may be used for budgeting purposes effective immediately. For active awards, including awards that have been issued in FY 2022 (continuation and new), that were restricted to the previous Executive Level II, if adequate funds are available in active awards, and if the salary cap increase is consistent with the institutional base salary [Institutional Base Salary](#), recipients may rebudget to accommodate the current Executive Level II salary level effective **January 2, 2022**.

Find more information [here](#).

### NIH Support for Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Trainee and Individual Fellow Childcare Costs



### Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards



National Institutes of Health  
*Research Training and Career Development*

National Institutes of Health has made available funds for trainees and fellows supported by Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Institutional Research Training (T) Awards and Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Individual Fellowship (F) awards to defray the costs of childcare.

Find more information [here](#).

## Promoting Diversity in Biomedical Research



Top takeaways from a recent National Institutes of Health (NIH) UNITE Initiative event, which highlighted opportunities for diversifying the biomedical research workforce and building new career pathways in the field.

Find more information [here](#).

## New Sponsor Updates – NIH and DOE

NIH Notice [NOT-OD-22-050](#) announces publication of the updated NIH Grants Policy Statement ([NIHGPS, Rev Dec 2021](#)). This update is applicable to all National Institutes of Health grants and cooperative agreements with budget periods beginning on or after October 1, 2021.

Starting with FY 2022 funding opportunity announcements, the DOE Office of Science (SC) will require two major changes to proposal submissions to increase transparency, avoid conflicts of interest in the review process, standardize information, and address research security issues: New collaborator template, New biosketches and current and pending financial support disclosure.

Find more information [here](#).

## Resources

### **Submit an Announcement Request Form and share your news in the next issue of the Biomedical Genetics Section Newsletter!**



Do you have exciting news that you want to share in the next issue of our quarterly Biomedical Genetics Section Newsletter? Submit an [Announcement Request Form](#), located on the Resources page of our [website](#)!