UW ADRC COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

FALL 2024

WE'VE BEEN BUSY IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

Cinco de Mayo Event Pasco, WA

This year the ADRC participated in a Cinco de Mayo event in Pasco, WA. This two-day event took place Saturday, May 4th – Sunday May 5th. Research Coordinator Janet A. Rojina and Research Scientist Sonia K. Bishop from the Outreach, Recruitment and Engagement Core were able to attend the event where they shared information about the UW ADRC, the ADRC newsletter, and various research opportunities. This was a wonderful opportunity that allowed the ADRC to engage with the community and to get to know community partners more.

TEAM MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Kelley Pascoe, MSW, MPH
Graduate Research Assistant, Outreach, Recruitment, and Engagement Core, ADRC

Kelley is learning about sustaining community participation and leadership in research beyond the initial recruitment or idea generation. She is interested in barriers and facilitators to participation (in programming or research) and best practices to promote facilitators and mitigate barriers. She is also excited to learn more about research in Alzheimer's and related disorders as she is new to this area of research. Previously, Kelley worked as a research coordinator in the Improving Prevention through Action (IMPACT) Lab at Washington State University. She actively engaged in translational research into real-world practice of prevention, helping explore mechanisms behind the adaptation, implementation, and sustainment of culturally relevant evidence-based programs and policies. Outside of work, Kelley is usually trail running, backpacking, hiking, rafting, and skiing.

SPOTLIGHT ON ROSA ORTIZ ADRC COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD MEMBER

by Katherine Lopez

Rosa Ortiz is a program coordinator at the Yakima Valley Farm workers clinic. She is originally from California but lived in Toppenish, WA for most of her life. Rosa has worked for the Yakima Farm Workers Clinic for 25 years, supervising community health workers who help patients in the exam rooms with resources and services.

Rosa joined the UW Alzheimer's Disease Research Center Community Advisory board (ADRC CAB) after being invited by Dr. Linda Ko, one of the leaders of ADRC to include more voices from the Yakima Valley on the goals of Alzheimer's research. Rosa regularly sees patients 50 years or older and many of these patients may benefit from Alzheimer's disease and dementia resources.

Access to care, support, and educational resources for Alzheimer's disease and other causes of dementia is crucial in low-income and diverse communities, as these communities have been shown to be more affected by Alzheimer's disease, as well as risk factors. As part of the CAB, Rosa gets to provide personal and community feedback to the ADRC team. "And what I've learned in the CAB is that not only do we provide feedback, but we get to be part of a bigger group where we might be able to advocate for our patients in our community," says Rosa. Being part of the CAB has made Rosa realize that she can make a difference in her own community by encouraging more people to participate in research.

The CAB is trying to help dismantle common barriers to accessing resources across communities in Washington. There are not many places where people can find memory loss resources, aside from the hospital, which is unavailable to some because of documentation status. Having low income, language barriers, and lack of transportation or time to accompany family members to appointments are some of the biggest issues when it comes to getting access to resources in the Yakima valley.

Rosa hopes that in the future, there are accessible clinics specifically for people experiencing memory loss or dementia in diverse and low-income communities. Most agencies focusing on memory loss diagnosis and care are located in the Seattle area or in other big cities, and most people who can get to these agencies are non-Hispanic white people and those who have the means for transportation and time off work.

Rosa also hopes to see more participation from Latino/a/x and Hispanic community members in Alzheimer's research, so findings and treatments can apply to diverse groups. "I thought for sure that when research is done at a national level, everybody's included. And I realized from participating in this CAB that that's not the case." Rosa envisions that cognitive testing and other research evaluations could happen remotely and at sites closer to the Yakima community.

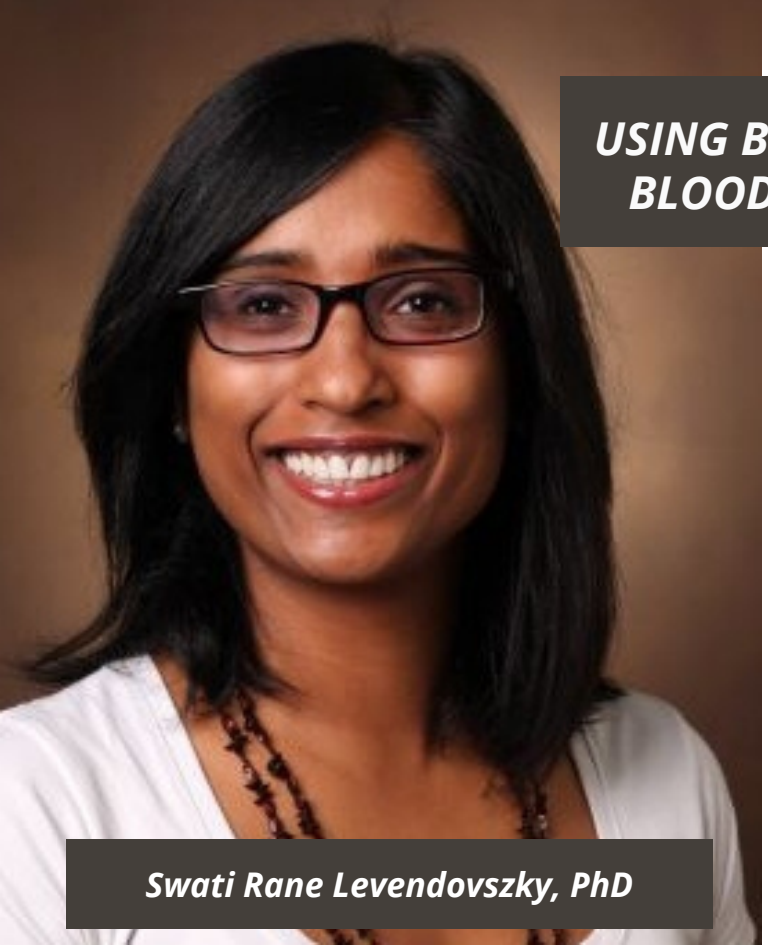
"We are trying to make a difference," says Rosa. "We are trying to participate. And we're trying to speak about our needs. I'm glad that the ADRC is listening."

ADRC WORD SEARCH

C P T H A N K S G I V I N G
I H A L L O W E E N O X Z X
D A Q D P B N F A L L N S Y
E J Z F C O R N Q Y J D V O
R A P P L E C B P W Y R S N
K E B M X J H O S C A R F I
S W E A T E R O C U P M H X
J M O T Y P Z T O U U O A J
X A H L T F U S L I B O R M
B Y B C C D W M D M U N V A
U P D V S P O H P F W R E Z
V I N O P N V M J K B L S E
V G U P I E N L R Q I V T S
X Y E Q M L E A V E S N U W

WORDS

Pumpkin	**Apple**	**Cold**
Fall	**Leaves**	**Corn**
Harvest	**Cider**	**Moon**
Halloween	**Maze**	**Boots**
Sweater	**Scarf**	**Thanksgiving**



Swati Rane Levendovszky, PhD

USING BRAIN IMAGING TO STUDY THE BRAIN'S BLOOD VESSELS AND ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

by Genevieve Wanucha

As the saying goes, what's good for the heart is good for the brain. Our brain health depends on our heart health, specifically on the working of the vessels that transport blood around the brain. Lifestyle factors, such as diet and physical activity, can impact these vessels. Studies show that risk factors for cardiovascular disease, including high blood pressure, smoking, diabetes, obesity, and heart problems, are linked to raised risk of Alzheimer's disease and other causes of dementia.

This link between cardiovascular risk and Alzheimer's disease has a biological basis; cardiovascular risks manifest as cerebrovascular disease. The UW ADRC became one of the first Centers to show, in 2012, that almost 80% of brains affected by Alzheimer's disease also show abnormalities in the brain's blood vessels, on autopsy.

This finding suggests that the cognitive symptoms of dementia are often not explained only by the Alzheimer's pathology of amyloid and tau; they may also involve vessel pathology.

Early in her career, Swati Rane Levendovszky, PhD, who is now an associate professor of radiology at the University of Washington, was inspired by this 2012 study and her mentor, Director of the ADRC, Thomas Grabowski, MD, to explore blood vessel pathology and its relation to Alzheimer's disease in the living brain. She uses magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which is a method of imaging the living brain that reveals brain structure and function and how changes in them relate to symptoms of disease.

Rane Levendovszky has helped the ADRC grow into a top Center for vascular imaging with unique capabilities. "All NIA-funded Alzheimer's research centers around the country can study how the blood flows in the brain, but UW ADRC researchers can study more," she says. "We can study the properties of the vessel walls and how they supply blood to the brain tissue." For example, her team can see whether the vessels can increase the blood supply to the brain when someone is doing a cognitive task, such as thinking hard. These measures can reveal a lot about how Alzheimer's disease and other pathologies are affecting the brain.

Rane Levendovszky is the newly proposed lead of the UW ADRC Imaging and Biomarker Core, which collects and analyzes ADRC brain imaging and biofluid samples and then provides the data to neuroscientists. This Core provides the resources needed for understanding how Alzheimer's develops in the brain.

"Swati has become essential to all MRI operations for the ADRC and other studies. She is garnering a national reputation as an expert in vascular MRI," said Thomas Grabowski, MD, Director of the ADRC.

Blood vessels are also critical to the integrity of the blood-brain barrier, which protects the brain from toxic molecules. As we age, inflammation or Alzheimer's disease can degrade these vessels and allow damaging molecules to slip through into the brain. Rane Levendovszky and her team have developed an MRI method that can assess blood-brain barrier permeability, or 'leakiness.' This method is novel and unique to the field because it is safer to use in older people or those

who have poor kidney function.

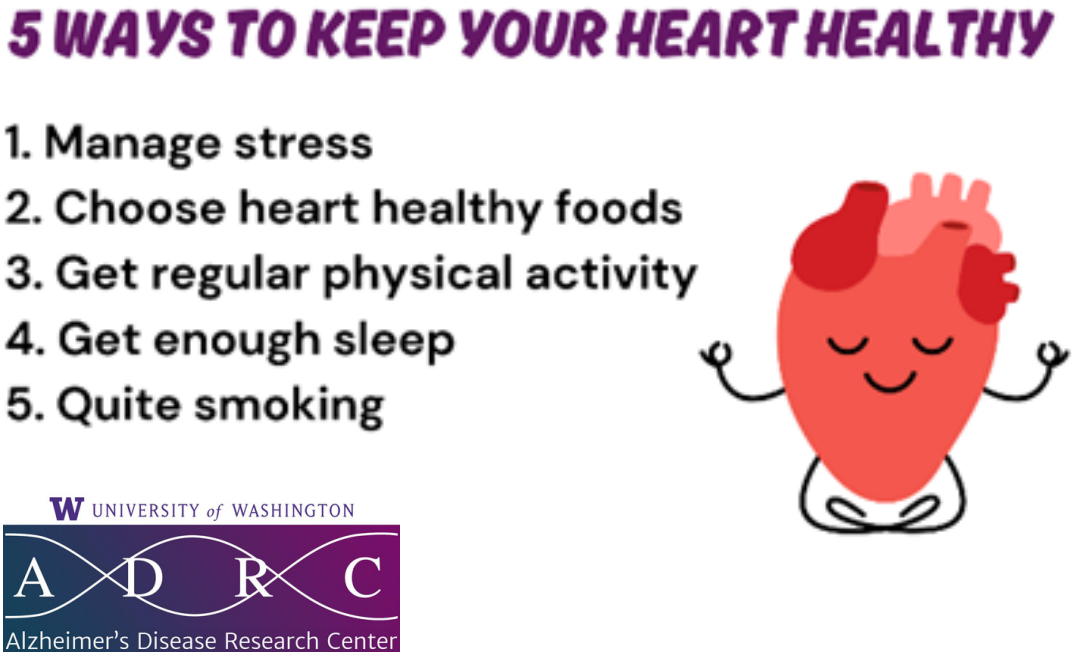
Rane Levendovszky is a member of DEBBIE, a worldwide consortium that aims to develop advanced MRI techniques to assess the blood-brain barrier and use these measures for early biomarkers for Alzheimer's disease. These biomarkers will provide ways to detect and monitor this early stage of disease.

In this vein of work, Rane Levendovszky is mentoring Briana Meyer, PhD, postdoctoral scholar in the UW Department of Radiology on an ADRC-funded project to establish MRI biomarkers of blood-brain barrier dysfunction. One of their aims is to ensure the inclusion of Hispanic and Latino/a/x participants, who are known to have a higher risk of vascular disease than Caucasian populations but who are historically underrepresented in research.

Because of her recognized expertise, Rane Levendovszky was called to work on a national multi-site study called Clarity in Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias Research Through Imaging (CLARiTI). This NIA-funded effort will provide new imaging and blood-based biomarkers for mixed dementia, which is the term for when more than one disease contributes to dementia.

Rane Levendovszky is part of the advanced MRI team of senior scientists across the country within CLARiTI, which leads the innovation in MRI to make it more specific to the study Alzheimer's disease.

"Our participation in CLARiTI is a big highlight of the past year, and becoming part of DEBBIE is another highlight," she says. I think it's a win for the University of Washington and our ADRC."



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RESOURCES

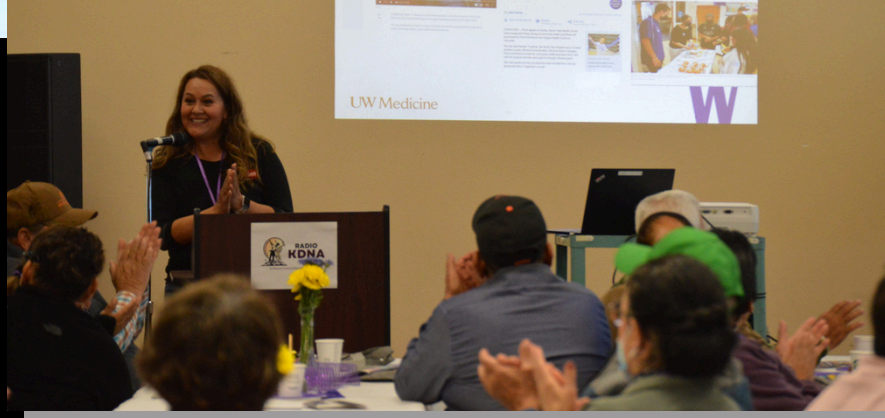
Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/UWADRC

Alzheimer's Association
Phone: 1-800-272-3900
Email: info@alz.org
Website: alz.org
Call the Alzheimer's Association 24-Hour Helpline to speak for free to a Master's level social worker, any day or time.

Explore the monthly education programs offered by the Alzheimer's Association WA State Chapter: alz.org/alzwa/helping_you/education

Conexion Contigo by Lupita Zamora is an independent Spanish language radio program for the community where you will find information, opportunities and more. facebook.com/ConexionContigoRadio

Visit Alzheimers.gov for updated health information tailored to caregivers, people living with dementia, and professionals.
En español: Alzheimers.gov/es



Contact us

Questions about this newsletter:

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En español: **memoria.uw.edu**

UW Alzheimer's Disease Research Center

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Phone: 206-744-0588 or
Toll-free at 855-744-0588

Email: **uwadrc@uw.edu**

Q

Do you have a question about brain health or Alzheimer's research?

A

Send them to adrc-community@uw.edu It could be answered in a future newsletter!