Darwish Memorial Lecture and Symposium

Pediatric Neuro-Oncology in the 21st Century

Thursday February 27th	
Time	**Event**
8:30-8:40	**Drs. Morris Scantlebury and Michael Esser** *Opening remarks*
8:40 – 9:40	**Dr. Yasmin Khakoo** *Connect the Dots in Neuro-oncology: Update on Neurocutaneous Melanocytosis*
9:40 – 9:50	***Break***
9:50 – 10:00	**Dr. Ray Sun** *Case Presentation - Autonomic Dysfunction in a Patient with Brainstem Glioma (supervised by Dr. Kirton)*
10:00 – 10:30 *Via Zoom*	**Dr. Brian Gill** *Epileptogenic Mechanisms of the Tumor Microenvironment and Its Relevance to Pre-Operative Planning* *https://albertahealthservices.zoom.us/j/64660577183?pwd=oQ8kDAa07BCxVO9dVo4RsgtRXXmPZN.1* *Meeting ID: 646 6057 7183* *Passcode: 760306*
10:30 – 11:00	**Dr. Aru Narendran** *Design, Synthesis and Pre-clinical Validation of a Novel Therapeutic Agent Targeting the LIN28/let-7 Oncogenic Pathway in Pediatric Brain Tumors*

11:00 – 11:30	**Dr. Harmeet Kaur** *Imaging in Pediatric Brain Tumors: The Alberta Children's Hospital Experience*
11:30 – 12:00	**Dr. Natalie Logie** *Radiation Oncology for Pediatric Tumor: Long term Effects & Mitigating Factor*
12:00 – 1:00	***Lunch***
1:00 – 1:10	**Dr. Amira Kalifa** *Case Presentation - The Great Mimicker: A Case of an Unusual Pediatric Brain Tumor (supervised by Dr. Woodward)*
1:10 – 1:50 *Via Zoom*	**Dr. Jennifer Chan** *Oncology: State of Affairs in Calgary and Future Directions* *https://albertahealthservices.zoom.us/j/68985671109?pwd=wz7t8IfhACC8ABb4oZj45uI0rrb9ul.1* *Meeting ID: 689 8567 1109* *Passcode: 871576*
1:50 – 2:20	**Dr. Harvey Sarnat** *Ganglion Cell Maturation in Peripheral Neuroblastic Tumours*
2:20-2:30	**Drs. Morris Scantlebury and Michael Esser** *Closing remarks*

2025
DARWISH SYMPOSIUM

PEDIATRIC NEURO-ONCOLOGY IN THE 21st CENTURY

Sam Darwish Memorial Lecture Keynote Speaker

Dr. Yasmin Khakoo

MD, FAAN, FAAP

Yasmin Khakoo, MD, FAAN, FCNS, FAAP is a triple boarded child neurologist/neuro-oncologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and President-Elect of the Child Neurology Society. A self-proclaimed guardian of the nervous system, Dr. Khakoo diagnoses, prevents and treats neurologic complications in oncology patients. She has an interest and expertise in 2 rare conditions: neurocutaneous melanocytosis and opsoclonus myoclonus ataxia syndrome. She is a graduate of the 2019 cohort of the AAN Women Leading in Neurology which she credits with putting her imposter syndrome into "remission". She became Editor-in-Chief of *Pediatric Neurology* in 2022. She received the 2023 Child Neurology Society Arnold P. Gold Humanism in Medicine Award, the 2024 American Medical Women's Association Inspire Award and a 2025 AAN A.B. Baker Teaching award. She is a strong advocate not only for her patients but also for the underrepresented in medicine, including BIPOC, LGBTQ+ people and the differently abled.

"Connect the Dots in Neuro-oncology: Update on Neurocutaneous Melanocytosis"

Dr. Ruixiang "Ray" Sun

Third year Pediatric Neurology Resident from University of Calgary.

"Neurology Case Presentation - Autonomic Dysfunction in a Patient with Brainstem Glioma"

Dr. Brian J.A. Gill

Dr. Brian J.A. Gill, MD is a neurosurgeon and scientist in the Department of Neurosurgery at Columbia University Irving Medical Center who specializes in the management of complex brain tumors. Dr. Gill obtained his undergraduate degree at Case Western Reserve University and his medical degree at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons. Dr. Gill completed his neurosurgical training at New York Presbyterian Columbia University Irving Medical Center, where he served as chief resident for the department. He then obtained specialty training in neurosurgical oncology from Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center before returning to practice at Columbia University Irving Medical Center. Dr. Gill leads a collaborative research effort focused on characterizing the molecular biology of the peritumoral region in glioma, with a particular interest in interactions between tumor cells and neurons. He has received several awards for his research, including the Doris Duke Research Fellowship Award, Neurosurgery Research and Education Foundation Young Clinician Investigator Award, and most recently the NCI Early-Stage Surgeon Scientist Program Award.

"Neurosurgery - Epileptogenic Mechanisms of the Tumor Microenvironment and Its Relevance to Pre-Operative Planning"

Dr. Aru Narendran

Dr. Aru Narendran is a Professor in the departments of Pediatrics, Oncology and Biochemistry and Molecular biology at the University of Calgary, Cumming School of Medicine and holds the Kids Cancer Care foundation endowed chair in clinical and translational research in pediatric oncology. He received a PhD in Neuroimmunology followed by a postdoctoral fellowship in cancer biology at the Ontario Cancer institute (OCI) that contributed to the pioneering research for the generation and characterization of transgenic mouse models. Dr. Narendran received his medical training from McMaster University (MD), Tufts University, Massachusetts (Pediatrics Residency) and the Hospital for Sick Children, Toronto (Pediatric Hematology and Oncology clinical fellowship). He is the recipient of a number of awards including the Odile Schweisguth International Prize in pediatric oncology and the young investigator award from the Children's oncology group (COG). Dr. Narendran is a primary investigator and the head of biology for the international new therapeutics group POETIC (Pediatric Oncology Experimental Therapeutics Consortium).

"Oncology - Design, Synthesis and Pre-Clinical Validation of a Novel Therapeutic Agent Targeting the LIN28/let-7 Oncogenic Pathway in Pediatric Brain Tumors"

Dr. Harmeet Kaur

Dr. Harmeet Kaur is a Clinical Assistant Professor, Department of Radiology and Pediatric Neuroradiologist at the Alberta Children's Hospital

"Radiology - Imaging in Pediatric Brain Tumors: The Alberta Children's Hospital Experience"

Dr. Natalie Logie

Dr. Natalie Logie is a Radiation Oncologist in the Department of Oncology at Alberta Health Services and is a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of Calgary. She received her MD at the University of Alberta (2011) and completed residency at the University of Alberta in Radiation Oncology (2016) followed by fellowship specializing in pediatric radiation oncology and proton therapy at the University of Florida Proton Institute, Jacksonville (2017). She is dual certified radiation oncologist in both Canada (FRCPC) and USA (DABR). She has an interest in both pediatric and AYA oncology outcomes/survivorship and is active in clinical outcomes research with work published in medical journals and textbooks. Dr. Logie has presented her research at peer-reviewed conferences such as the Pediatric Radiation Oncology Society (PROS) and American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO), where she was awarded "Best Oral Presentation" at PROS in 2024, "Best Poster Session" at PROS in 2017, and "Best of ASTRO" in 2015. Dr. Logie holds leadership positions within AHS, acting as the Breast and Pediatric Tumor Team RT Lead for Calgary and is the Co-Chair for the Provincial Pediatric Tumor Team. She is Assistant Program Director for the University of Calgary radiation oncology residency program.

"Radiation Oncology – Radiation Therapy for Pediatric Tumors: Long Term Effects & Mitigating Factors"

Dr. Amira Kalifa

1st year Pediatric Neurology Resident from University of Calgary.

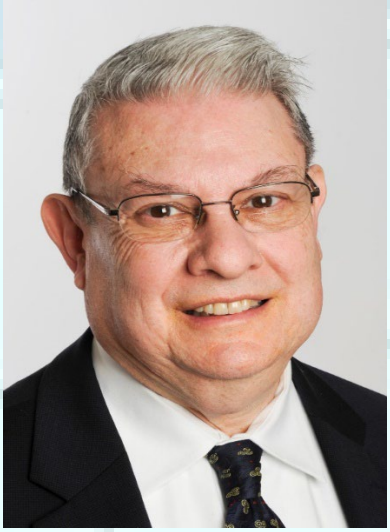
“Neurology Case Presentation – The Great Mimicker: A Case of Unusual Pediatric Brain Tumor”

Dr. Jennifer Chan

Over the past two decades she has been dedicated to a career as a clinician and researcher, working across the cancer spectrum to uncover, understand, and address the cancer challenge. Since 2021, Dr. Chan has been at the helm of the Arnie Charbonneau Cancer Institute serving as Institute Director. She is also Associate Professor in the Department of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine, at the University of Calgary. Setting the stage for a career dedicated to understanding the intricate workings of cancer, Dr. Chan received a bachelor's degree in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from Dartmouth College and an MD from McGill University. She then completed clinical training in Anatomic Pathology and Neuropathology at Harvard University. Following a research fellowship at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, she became a staff pathologist at Brigham & Women’s Hospital, and the Pathology Leader of the Biological Samples Platform at the Broad Institute. In 2008, Dr. Chan moved to Calgary where she not only fulfills clinical duties in Neuropathology at Foothills Hospital and Alberta Children's Hospital, but also operates her own research lab, while simultaneously leading and executing on the strategic vision for Calgary’s cancer research arm, the Arnie Charbonneau Cancer Institute. It's here that her passion ignites, fueled by the desire to address the tough questions that surround cancer. In the lab, Dr. Chan delves into the intricacies of growth factor signaling, transcription factor function, and the delicate balance of tumor cells with their microenvironment. Her involvement in collaborative projects to molecularly characterize pediatric and adult brain tumors underscores her commitment to leaving no stone unturned in the quest for answers. Aligned with her desire to learn about this ever-changing disease, Dr. Chan leads the Clark H. Smith Tumor and Tissue Bank collecting patient samples and building a legacy of research. Beyond the lab coat and microscope, Dr. Chan is driven by a singular purpose – to meet the cancer challenge – through collaboration, innovation and research with hopes of having an impact on a disease that effects 1 in 2 Canadians.

“Oncology – A State of Affairs in Calgary and Future Directions”

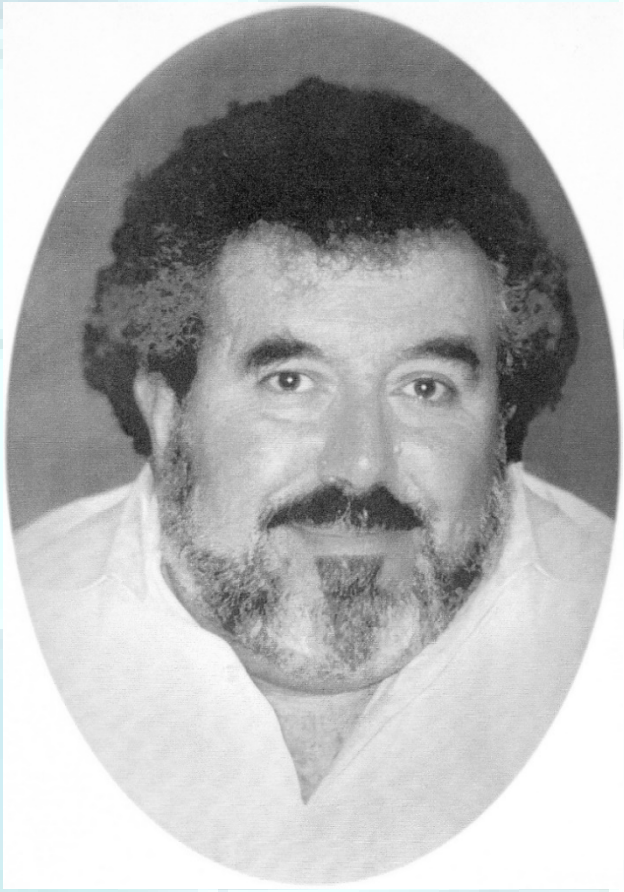
Dr. Harvey Sarnat



Dr. Sarnat is Professor of Paediatrics, Pathology (Neuropathology) and Clinical Neurosciences at the University of Calgary (Canada). His academic interests and most research publications over many years are in the fields of neuroembryology, developmental (fetal and neonatal) neuropathology, brain malformations, neonatal neurology and the neuropathology of childhood epilepsy. He serves on the Editorial Boards of 9 journals and has over 200 research publications in peer-reviewed journals; he has authored, co-authored or edited 12 textbooks, and has contributed chapters to 130 specialty books and monographs. Distinguished awards include giving the keynote Gordon Mathieson Lecture at the 50th anniversary meeting of the Canadian Association of Neuropathologists in 2010 and again in 2021, the Bernard Sachs Research Award and Lecture at the 45th annual meeting of the Child Neurology Society in 2016 and having an annual endowed lectureship in his name at the University of Calgary, the Harvey B. Sarnat Developmental Neuroanatomy and Neuropathology Lectureship, since 2013. A Harvey Sarnat Clinical Research Fellowship in Neonatal Neurocritical Care was announced in 2022 by the Section of Neonatology of the University of Calgary. He is a frequent invited speaker at many medical congresses and institutions within Canada and internationally in the U.S., Europe, Latin America, Japan, and Australia.

"Neurology – Ganglion Cell Maturation in Peripheral Neuroblastic Tumors"

Dr. Husam Darwish



Dr. Husam Darwish, was a highly distinguished Paediatric Neurologist and formerly Chief of the Division of Pediatric Neurology from 1993 until March 2002, in the Department of Pediatrics. Dr. Darwish came to Calgary as a faculty paediatric neurologist in 1978, after completing his specialty training in Toronto at the Hospital for Sick Children. He not only developed the first training and service programs in paediatric neurology at Alberta Children's Hospital, together with Dr. Robert H.A. Haslam, head of the department of pediatrics, but he subsequently developed one of the first paediatric epilepsy clinics in North America, and EEG monitoring laboratory and participated in the formation of an early programme for the surgical treatment of epilepsy. His dedication to patient care at all hours, his unselfish tutoring of trainees, research contributions in the field of infantile epilepsy and his participation in the development of paediatric neurology as an established medical specialty in Canada are legendary. His legacy at Alberta Children's Hospital will long be remembered as the foundation of our present patient care, EEG teaching and research programs in childhood seizure disorders.

The funds for the Darwish Symposium were endowed by the Alberta Children's Hospital (ACH) Foundation in 2003 and contributions come from across Canada and internationally.

Event Chair: Dr. Morris Scantlebury

Dr. Morris H. Scantlebury is Professor of Pediatrics and Clinical Neuroscience at the University of Calgary, as well as Consultant Pediatric Neurologist and Epileptologist at Alberta Children's Hospital. Dr. Scantlebury is Scientific Director, Discovery Science, Alberta Children's Hospital Research Institute and he directs the CIHR funded Developmental Epilepsy Research Laboratory. His research is focused on elucidating the mechanisms underlying febrile seizures and infantile spasms, with the goal of identifying novel treatments for these conditions. With over 20 years of experience in epilepsy research and clinical management, Dr. Scantlebury is recognized globally for his expertise in the pathophysiology and treatment of epilepsy.

Event Organized by:

Afshan Jamil
Lanna Bryksa
Rumi Dasgupta
Sabrina D'Alfonso
Twyla Blagdon