

**Pennsylvania Geriatrics Society**

WESTERN DIVISION

*An Affiliate of the American Geriatrics Society*

2023

**ANNUAL REPORT**



**Pennsylvania Geriatrics Society**  
WESTERN DIVISION

EDUCATE, COMMUNICATE and ENGAGE  
healthcare professionals from all disciplines  
in the provision of  
QUALITY HEALTHCARE  
for all older persons



TABLE OF CONTENTS	
Finances	2
Membership	2
Educational Programming	3
31 <sup>st</sup> Annual Clinical Update in Geriatric Medicine Review	4
Fall Program	6
David C. Martin Award	9
Legislative Update	9
Geriatrics Teacher of the Year Award	10
Looking Ahead	11

The [Pennsylvania Geriatrics Society-Western Division](#) (PAGS-WD) serves as the regional affiliate of the American Geriatrics Society (AGS). 2023 was a productive year and the Society is continuing to thrive and prioritize quality programming for its members. Providing specialized and relevant content is vital for keeping members engaged and up to date with the latest developments in the field of geriatrics.

The Society is dedicated to advancing its mission of *educating healthcare professionals from multiple disciplines to foster professional and public awareness in geriatric medicine*. By offering valuable educational programs and serving as a leading voice in eldercare, the Society is actively contributing to the improvement of healthcare for the elderly population. The presence of a comprehensive and accessible website, [www.pagswd.org](http://www.pagswd.org), further enhances the accessibility of information for professionals involved in geriatric care, ensuring they have access to timely and relevant resources.

The Board of Directors provides active oversight of our organization’s mission and goals. The Board maintained a full slate for 2023.

Throughout the year, an emphasis was placed on each strategic goal item, and all successfully accomplished.

1. Promote geriatric education for all geriatric healthcare professionals.
2. Provide an opportunity for networking with other professionals who share an interest in improving care for older adults.
3. Advocate for programs and public policy which will improve the health and well-being of older adults.
4. Encourage students and residents to pursue careers in geriatrics.

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## Finances

The Society's finances remain strong. The careful oversight of the Secretary/Treasurer, in collaboration with the President and Board of Directors, ensures that the Society operates within its budget and remains financially robust. The three primary accounts include a checking account, business money market and the special education business money market. The successful outcome of the Clinical Update in Geriatric Medicine Conference, in a virtual format once again, not only indicates the Society's adaptability to current circumstances but also demonstrates the strong interest and support for the educational programs it provides. A healthy balance in the accounts, resulting from the income made by virtual conferences, contributed to the Society's ability to further its mission and continue to provide valuable resources and programs for healthcare professionals involved in geriatric medicine.

## Membership

[Membership](#) continues to remain steady with multiple healthcare disciplines comprising the organization. Maintaining a steady and diverse membership base is crucial for the continued success and influence of the Pennsylvania Geriatrics Society-Western Division (PAGS-WD). Our 2023 membership stayed strong at 235 members.

The sustained interest from multiple healthcare disciplines, including young career physicians, is a promising sign for the future of geriatric medicine in the region. The society had a total of 63 students, residents, and fellow members. Program directors of Internal Medicine and Family Medicine residency programs were asked to distribute recruitment information to their residents and fellows. Each trainee can join the organization at no cost for the duration of their training. The initiative to offer free membership to residents for the duration of their training is a particularly effective strategy to foster early engagement and cultivate interest in the field of geriatrics. This approach not only encourages participation but also facilitates the integration of emerging professionals into the broader geriatric medicine community, potentially fostering long-term commitment to the field.

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Recruitment of new members and retention of existing members is a top priority. Resources for recruitment outreach campaigns include: the registration list of the annual Clinical Update conference; the Pennsylvania Medical Directors Association membership list; the American Geriatrics Society state listing, and the Fall Program attendee list. Furthermore, the Board of Directors is directly involved in the retention process. Each Board member sends personalized retention letters to colleagues. Membership support enables the organization to continue to provide quality educational programs and sustain the various society awards.

Administrative services are handled through a partnership with the Allegheny County Medical Society (ACMS), which provides support and additional resources for new membership outreach campaigns, as well as maintaining all society business.

### **Educational Programming**

It's evident that the Pennsylvania Geriatrics Society-Western Division (PAGS-WD) is committed to enhancing the expertise of healthcare professionals in the field of geriatrics, and its focus on providing high-quality educational programs is a testament to this dedication. By consistently delivering exceptional [learning opportunities](#), the society is playing a critical role in ensuring that healthcare providers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to offer top-notch care for the geriatric population.

The maintenance of strong partnerships with various companies and organizations is an excellent approach to support the Society's programming efforts. Collaboration and partnerships can offer additional resources, expertise, and support, contributing to the development of even more comprehensive and impactful educational initiatives.

# 31<sup>st</sup> Annual *Virtual*

## Clinical Update in **GERIATRIC MEDICINE**

March 23-24  
**2023**

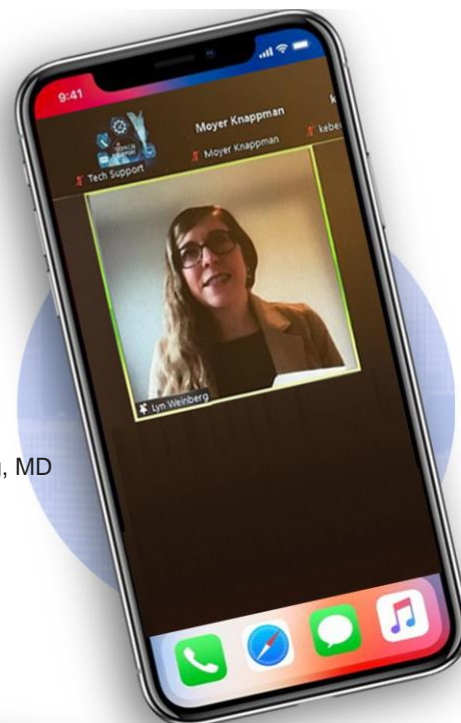
Over 330 healthcare professionals gathered virtually to attend the [31st Annual Virtual Clinical Update in Geriatric Medicine](#) held March 23 – 24, 2023. This year’s virtual conference attracted attendees from 21 states and representation from Canada, England, and Germany.

Attendees recognized and appreciated the convenience of attending the conference from their home or office, while participating in dynamic educational sessions. An added benefit for all registrants: the ability to view recorded lectures and download the handout materials, up to 30 days after the conference.

With the fastest growing segment of the population comprised of individuals more than 85 years of age, this conference is a premier educational resource for healthcare professionals involved in the direct care of older people. Presented by the Pennsylvania Geriatrics Society – Western Division, UPMC/University of Pittsburgh Division of Geriatric Medicine and University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine Center for Continuing Education in Health Sciences, the program offered an evidence-based approach to help clinicians take exceptional care of these often-frail individuals.

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Patricia Bononi, MD



Lyn Weinberg, MD



# 31<sup>st</sup> Annual *Virtual*

## Clinical Update in **GERIATRIC MEDICINE**

March 23-24  
**2023**



Edward R. Marcantonio, MD, SM

Highlights of the meeting included Live Q&A Sessions with presenters. By using the chat feature, attendees had the opportunity to engage with speakers in these informative sessions. New this year: the course provided 10.0 hours of Physical Therapy credit!

Distinguished guest faculty **Edward R. Marcantonio, MD, SM**, Section Chief for Research in the Division of General Medicine at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, and Professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School gave an Update on Delirium. **Paula Leslie, FRCSLT, Reg HCPC, CCC-SLP** joined this year from the UK and presented Modern Approaches to Supporting People with Eating, Drinking, & Swallowing Impairments.



Paula Leslie, FRCSLT, Reg HCPC, CCC-SLP

Back by popular demand, the Geriatric Cardiology Expert Panel featuring **Deirdre O'Neill, MD** presented Beware of the Elevated Office Blood Pressure Assessment; **Eiran Gorodeski, MD, MPH** presented Ideal Heart Failure Care: Pearls for Geriatrics, and **Daniel Forman, MD** presented Optimizing Functional Status in Older Adults with Cardiovascular Disease.

Thank you to our Premier Sponsor: UPMC Health Plan, and to our exhibitors who sponsored the program: AHN Healthcare@Home, Community LIFE, Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield and Allegheny Health Network, XerisPharmaceuticals.



Cardiology Panel: Daniel Forman, MD (upper left, Deirdre O'Neill, MD (upper right), Eiran Gorodeski, MD (lower left), and Shuja Hassan, MD (lower right)

# Fall Program

On Thursday, November 2, 2023, the Pennsylvania Geriatrics Society-Western Division met in person for the first time since 2020 for their annual Fall Program. This year's program was a debate on offering lecanemab to patients with dementia. The society had a great showing with over 70 internists, family practitioners, geriatricians, pharmacists, nurses, nursing home administrators and social workers in attendance at the Rivers Casino Banquet Center.

Speakers this year included **Alison O'Donnell, DO, MPH**, Geri-PACT Medical Director, Veterans Administration Pittsburgh Healthcare System, **Steven M. Handler, MD, PhD, CMD**, Associate Chief of Staff, Geriatrics and Extended Care, Veterans Administration Pittsburgh Healthcare System, and **Eric Rodriguez, MD, MPH**, Associate Professor of Medicine, Geriatric Division, University of Pittsburgh. The debate and Q&A sessions were moderated by **James D Tew, MD**, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Psychiatry.

This year's Fall Program was designed to educate attendees on currently available therapeutic options for major neurocognitive disorder, highlighting new monoclonal antibody therapies. The risks and benefits of the use of these novel agents were highlighted through a pro-con debate style interactive learning session. Attendees walked away with the knowledge to be able to recognize currently available therapeutic options, compare risks and benefits of monoclonal antibody therapy in major neurocognitive disorder, and identify dosing and monitoring strategies for safe use of monoclonal antibody therapy in major neurocognitive disorder.

At the end of the debate, attendees voted on whether they would prescribe the case patient with lecanemab. 77% voted that they would not prescribe this drug, while 23% would prescribe lecanemab.

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## OUR MEMBERS



Shuja Hassan (left), MD was recognized for 15 years of service as Course Director of the Clinical Update in Geriatric Medicine

Left to right: Judy Black, MD, Erika Hoffman, MD (guest), Fred Rubin, MD and David Nace, MD

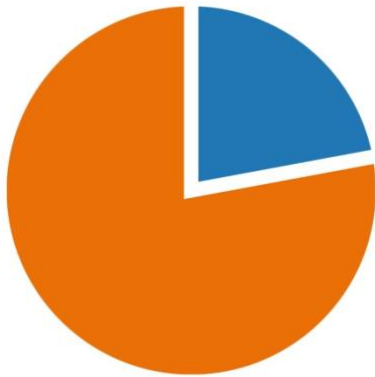


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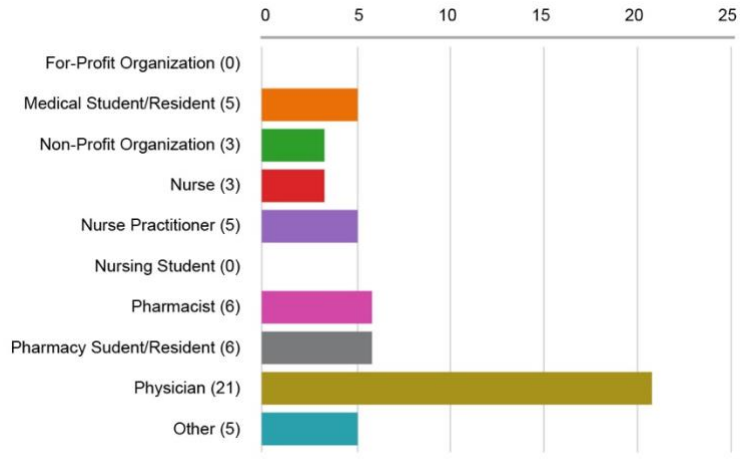
## Fall Program (cont)

Would you recommend lecanemab for this veteran? (0 points)



Yes ● (12)      No ● (42)

What is your occupation? (0 points)



### OUR MEMBERS

Whether you would prescribe lecanemab or not, here are some key takeaways from the debate –

#### Safety Takeaways

- Infusion-related reactions were common (over 25%), mostly mild, and preventable with pre-medication.
- Amyloid-related imaging abnormalities (ARIA) were mostly mild to moderate in severity, occurred early, and typically resolved within 4 months.
- Symptomatic ARIA was relatively rare: 2.8% and 0.7% of lecanemab group had symptomatic ARIA-E (edema) and ARIA-H (hemorrhage), respectively.
- ARIA more common in ApoE ε4 carriers, especially homozygotes.
- Discontinuation due to adverse event: 6.9% in lecanemab group vs. 2.9% in control group.



Left to right: Lyn Weinberg, MD, Heather Sakely, PharmD and Rollin Wright, MD

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OUR MEMBERS

**Lecanemab Medication Highlights**

- Must have mild cognitive impairment or mild dementia due to Alzheimer’s disease.
- Lecanemab is a monoclonal antibody, preferentially targets soluble aggregated amyloid beta ( $a\beta$ )
- Dosing: 10 mg/kg IV infusion over 1 hour, once every 2 weeks
- Duration: Up to 18 months of treatment
- Requires close monitoring by prescriber and team and regularly scheduled MRIs.
- The Clarity AD Phase 3 trial results:
  - Mean difference in CDR-SB score vs. Placebo: -0.45 (95% CI: -0.67 to -0.23)
  - 27% slowing of decline after 18 months.
- What is the clinical significance of a -0.45 difference on the Clinical Dementia Rating Scale-Sum of Boxes (CDR-SB)? A 0.5-point difference in the score may mean the difference between “consistent slight forgetfulness” and “moderate memory loss: more marked for recent events; defect interferes with everyday activity.”



Left to right: Pamela Toto, PhD, OTR/L and Rollin Wright, MD

The attendees also had the opportunity for a 30-minute Q&A session with the speakers that was robust and educational.

A huge thank you to our planning committee members, Lauren Cotherman, DNP, Heather Sakely, PharmD, James Tew, MD, Lyn Weinberg, MD, and Rollin Wright, MD, as well as our PAGS-WD members and guests for making this event a huge success.

Thank you to our Fall Program sponsors Astellas Pharmaceuticals, Pfizer Vaccines, and Xeris Pharmaceuticals.



Left to right: Chris O'Donnell, MD, Alison O'Donnell, MD and James Tew, MD

## David C. Martin Award

Established in 1999, the David C. Martin award recognizes academic excellence in the field of geriatric medicine by medical and health professional students. This philanthropic effort, solely supported by Society funds, provides each award recipient an honorarium to defray the costs of attending the annual meeting of the American Geriatrics Society. Eligible students will have their scholarly work accepted for presentation at the meeting. To date, the Society has awarded over \$93,000 to students in the region.

[The 2023 David C. Martin Award](#) recipients were **Lily G. Bessette**, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, **Jenny Knecht-Fredo**, Penn State Neese College of Nursing, and **Stephanie Ko**, Penn State College of Medicine. Lily, Jenny, and Stephanie's abstracts were accepted by the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) for presentation at the AGS 2023 Annual Scientific Meeting, May 4-6, in Long Beach, CA.



Lily G. Bessette



Jenny Knecht-Fredo



Stephanie Ko

**Lily** plans to complete her PhD in Epidemiology through the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health, and continue research in aging and geriatrics, specifically in geriatric prescribing decisions, such as deprescribing initiatives, prescribing cascades, and comparative effectiveness and safety studies for prescribing of novel drugs for which geriatric patients are underrepresented in randomized control trials. **Jenny** would like to continue her work in the academic setting focusing on translational research that improves the care of older adults in rural settings. Outside of research, she hopes to focus her teaching within gerontologic courses that encourage and empower nurses and nurse practitioners to continue to work with older adults. **Stephanie** is interested in Emergency Medicine with a focus on improving Geriatric care in the Emergency Department. In the future, she hopes to continue research, become involved in teaching, and establish a Dementia-Friendly Emergency Department.

## Legislative

By participating in state and local policy meetings and collaborating with the American Geriatrics Society (AGS), the Society played a crucial role in shaping programs and policies that directly impact older individuals, their families, and healthcare professionals.

The strong representation of the PAGES-WD on the AGS Council of State Affiliate Representatives (COSAR), with Dr. Neil Resnick serving as Co-Chair, speaks to the Society's esteemed standing within the broader geriatric community. Being recognized as a role model for other AGS State Affiliates reflects the Society's exceptional organizational practices, particularly in areas such as membership renewal, educational offerings, and overall organizational success.

By advocating for the needs and concerns of older adults, as well as healthcare professionals specializing in geriatric care, the Society is playing a critical role in influencing policy decisions and resource allocations at both the local and national levels. This proactive approach demonstrates the Society's commitment to making a tangible and lasting impact on the broader healthcare landscape.

# Geriatrics Teacher of the Year Award

Initiated in 2015, [the Geriatrics Teacher of the Year Award](#) is presented to two outstanding teachers (a physician and a nonphysician healthcare professional) for their dedication and commitment to geriatric education. Members and non-members of the Society are eligible for the award, with nominees having demonstrated leadership and inspired learners to better the care of older adults, as well as having contributed to the growth of geriatrics in their professions. Dr. Rollin Wright chairs the selection committee.

The Society is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2023 Geriatrics Teacher of the Year Award: **Karen Scandrett, MD**, Associate Professor, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, was the recipient of the Geriatrics Teacher of the Year Award for a Physician and **Christine O'Neil, PharmD, BCPS, BCGP, FCCP, FASCP, TTS**, Professor of Pharmacy Practice, Duquesne University School of Pharmacy, was the recipient of the Geriatrics Teacher of the Year Award for a Healthcare Professional. Drs Scandrett and O'Neil were recognized at the 2023 Fall Program.

The 2024 call for nominations will begin in January. Award eligibility and criteria, along with the nomination form, will be available on the society's website at [www.pagswd.org](http://www.pagswd.org). The annual award recognizes and honors both a physician and a healthcare professional from healthcare disciplines including nursing, advanced practice, physical therapy, pharmacy, occupational therapy, dentistry, audiology, speech-language, pathology, and social work.

## OUR MEMBERS



Left to right: Christine O'Neil, PharmD and Heather Sakely, PharmD, President



Left to right: Karen Scandrett, MD, and Rollin Wright, MD, Awards Chair

## Looking Ahead...

# 2024

holds a promising and exciting future for PAGS-WD as it continues to play a vital role in geriatrics in our region. The commitment to engaging and educating healthcare professionals to provide quality healthcare for older individuals is crucial, especially as the aging population continues to grow.



Heather Sakely, PharmD

Recognizing and celebrating the efforts of geriatrics educators and medical students through awards like the Geriatric Teacher of the Year Award and the David C. Martin Award is an outstanding way to encourage excellence in the field. Additionally, the ongoing partnership with the American Geriatrics Society and involvement in public policy advocacy for older adults demonstrate a dedication to making a positive impact on the broader healthcare landscape.

The Officers and Board of Directors will remain committed to providing strong leadership, keeping members engaged, and continuing to develop future Geriatric professionals through our programs aimed at students, residents, and fellows.

The call for loyalty, support, and participation from members reflects an understanding of the collective strength needed to address the challenges and opportunities in geriatrics.

*Your continued 2024 involvement is key to our success!*

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather".

Heather Sakely, PharmD  
*President*