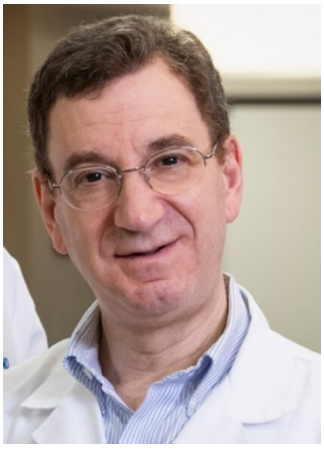
Research Symposium | April 3-5, 2025

Keynote Speaker:



Russell H. Swerdlow, MD

Professor, Departments of Neurology, Cell Biology and Physiology and Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, University of Kansas School of Medicine and Director of Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, Neurodegenerative Disorders Program and Heartland Center for Mitochondrial Medicine, University of Kansas

"Mitochondria and Mitochondrial Cascades in Alzheimer's Disease"

Dr. Russell Swerdlow is a professor in the Departments of Neurology, Cell Biology and Physiology, and Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Kansas School of Medicine. He directs the University of Kansas Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, its Neurodegenerative Disorders Program, and the Heartland Center for Mitochondrial Medicine.

He received undergraduate and MD degrees from New York University and trained as a neurologist and Alzheimer's specialist at the University of Virginia. He holds the Gene and Marge Sweeney Chair at the University of Kansas and is a recipient of an S. Weir Mitchell Award from the American Academy of Neurology, a Cotzias Award from the American Parkinson's Disease Association, a Chancellor's Club Research Award from the University of Kansas, a Dolph Simons Research Achievement Award in the Biomedical Sciences from the University of Kansas, and the Oskar Fischer Prize. From 2017-2021 he sat on the NIA Board of Scientific Counselors. Dr. Swerdlow's research focuses on brain energy metabolism, its role in Alzheimer's disease, and its therapeutic manipulation.

Featured Speaker:

Barbara Binzak-Blumenfeld, PhD

Co-Head of the FDA and Biotechnology Section, Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC

"The Role of FDA in Scientific Research and Medical Practice"

Barbara A. Binzak Blumenfeld, PhD, is Co-Head of the FDA & Biotechnology Section at the law firm Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney PC in Washington, DC. Barbara has worked with clients on virtually all categories of FDA-regulated products, focusing on medical devices, drugs and biologics. She leverages her unique background, integrating science and biomedical ethics into her legal practice.

Prior to law school, she earned her PhD in molecular biology from the Mayo Graduate School at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, writing her dissertation on "Biochemistry and Genetics of Two Electron Transferring Flavoprotein-Utilizing Mitochondrial Enzymes: Short/Branched Chain Acyl-Coenzyme A Dehydrogenase and Dimethylglycine Dehydrogenase." She pivoted her focus from the lab to the law, using her scientific experience to further a career in food and drug law. She attended Case Western Reserve University School of Law in Cleveland, Ohio, earning her JD with a health law certificate. Barbara also received her MA in biomedical ethics from Case Western as well.

During her 22 years of practice, Dr. Binzak-Blumenfeld has written and spoken on numerous topics and has served on various professional boards and groups. She was a working group member for a grant awarded from the NIH's Human Microbiome Project to the University of Maryland for the study of the federal regulation of probiotics. She has held numerous positions within the Food and Drug Law Institute, including serving as a member of the Board of Directors. She also served from 2016-2023 on her alma mater Cardinal Stritch University's College of Arts and Sciences Advisory Committee. In 2022, she was recognized by Corporate Counsel in its Women, Influence and Power in Law Awards as an honoree in the category of "Law Firm – Collaborative Leadership."

Featured Speaker:

Angela Slitt, PhD

Professor and Director Research Development, University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy

"Leveraging a Pharma Framework to Identify Critical Factors involved in Per- and polyfluorinated Alkyl Substance (PFAS) Tissue Distribution and Toxicokinetics"

Angela Slitt, PhD is a professor in the Department of Biomedical Sciences in the College of Pharmacy at the University of Rhode Island (URI). She has 20 years' experience as a toxicologist, specializing in mechanisms of liver injury and biliary excretion/transport, with numerous full-length publications in the area of toxicology. Her research program also includes the study of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) and metabolic disorders, hepatic transport processes, and toxicant excretion, and evaluation of plant and food-derived polyphenolic compounds for anti-inflammatory activity. Her work has been published in journals, such as Diabetes, Antioxidants and Redox Signaling, Free Radicals Biology and Medicine, and PLOS One.

Dr. Slitt currently holds NIH and USDA awards to study aspects of metabolic disease. She currently serves as an associate editor for BMC Pharmacology and Toxicology, and serves on the editorial boards of various journals, such as Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology and Journal of Biochemical and Molecular Toxicology. She is also an active Society of Toxicology member, serving on the membership committee and Secretary/Treasurer for the Northeast Regional Society of Toxicology Chapter, and serves on various scientific expert review panels. Dr. Slitt is a passionate educator who is involved in toxicology teaching at the undergraduate level and has opened her laboratory at URI to allow successful summer research experiences for high school, undergraduate and high school teachers.

Featured Speaker:

Gretchen Gibson, MPH, DDS

Assistant Group Practice Leader and Associate Professor of Dental Medicine, Kansas City University

"EHR Data and how it can tell the story of treatment effectiveness"

Dr. Gibson provided dental care to our nation's Veterans for over 30 years at various VA hospitals. She focused on older and medically compromised patients. Throughout her career, Dr. Gibson also worked in the VA on a national level. She served as director, National Homeless Veterans Dental Program, advocating for dental care as part of homeless rehabilitation programs. She published research related to the effects that dental care had on homeless rehabilitation outcomes.

Her early research focused on salivary hypofunction while a provider in the salivary dysfunction clinic at Baylor College of Dentistry. Dr. Gibson served until 2023 as the director of the Oral Health Quality Group, a national research group committed to evaluating VA dental and medical data to inform evidence-based protocols and guidelines for Veteran dental care. This group published multiple recommendation and guideline papers for VA Dentistry, based on VA data and evidence-based literature analysis. Her research endeavors include extensive work on the use of fluoride in high caries risk adults, as well as the impact of a fluoride-based quality measure on caries outcomes. Her work includes clinical data analysis to establish efficient clinic models for VA Dentistry. Most recently Dr. Gibson has worked with dental and non-dental researchers to evaluate the antibiotic and opioid prescribing patterns of VA dentists and the effectiveness of stewardship interventions within VA Dentistry.

Featured Speaker:

Ehab Sarsour, MS, MSc, PhD

Associate Professor of Basic Science, Kansas City University

"Targeting lipid metabolism in the pancreatic cancer microenvironment to enhance therapy outcomes" or "Lipolysis Regulates the Chronological Life Span of Aging Stromal Fibroblasts – implication on wound healing and cancer therapy"

Dr. Sarsour is currently an associate professor of cellular and molecular biology in the Department of Basic Sciences, College of Osteopathic Medicine at KCU. Before his PhD at the University of Iowa, he owned and supervised clinical laboratories in Jordan, where he earned his bachelor's degree in microbiology and master's in immunology. Prior to joining KCU, he served as an adjunct assistant professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology at the University of Iowa. His research program focuses on aging, cancer and drug development to enhance therapy outcomes for cancer patients. A major contribution of his is the discovery of "cellular chronological lifespan," a new concept in aging and cancer research, describing the time interval quiescent cells can still successfully re-enter the cell cycle and replicate.

His research has received significant attention, leading to invitations to present at national and international meetings and institutions such as the American Professional Wound Care Association, Radiation Research Society, Society for Redox Biology and Medicine, Cleveland Clinic, and University of Nebraska Medical Center. Dr. Sarsour has received many awards, including young investigator and travel awards from the Society for Redox Biology and Medicine and the Radiation Research Society. He has published extensively in leading peer-reviewed journals, with over 2000 citations, and has attracted private funding for his research. He has served as a co-investigator on NIH-NCI R01 funded grants and is currently a principal investigator on several pending NIH grant applications. Additionally, he is an associate editor for the Frontiers in Aging - Aging and Cancer journal and an academic editor for the Antioxidant Journal.

Currently, Dr. Sarsour's research focuses on changes in lipid metabolism with age to enhance cellular renewal and regeneration, particularly for wound healing, and on developing novel cancer therapies targeting the cancer microenvironment. He collaborates with institutions like UC Santa Cruz, University of Iowa Hospitals, University of Nebraska Medical Center, and Loxagen Inc. to create treatments that complement standard therapies like radiation and chemotherapy, aiming to improve patient outcomes.

Featured Speaker:

Aaron Segal, PhD

Assistant Professor of Bioethics, Kansas City University

"Public Perspectives on Compensation for Biospecimen Donation"

Aaron Eli Segal, PhD, is currently Assistant Professor of Bioethics at Kansas City University. His primary research interests are in the ethics of clinical research and normative ethical theory. He is particularly interested in the evaluation of risks and benefits in clinical research, the inclusion of people who are unable to provide informed consent, and the ethics of compensation in clinical research. Other work includes analysis of regulatory barriers to inclusion and the ethics of altruistic research participation.

Prior to joining KCU, Dr. Segal completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the NIH Clinical Center Department of Bioethics, where he was a member of the Bioethics Consultation Service and the Clinical Center Ethics Committee. He holds a PhD from the University of Pittsburgh and a BA from the University of Chicago.

Featured Speaker:

Jeff Staudinger, PhD

Professor of Pharmacology, Kansas City University

"Differential Gene Regulation by SR12813 and Rifampicin: Insights into PXR Activation and Metabolic Pathway Modulation in a Colon Cancer Cell Line"

Dr. Staudinger serves as the director of the MSSU-KCU Stress Research Consortium (MKRC). The MKRC is housed within the Biomedical Research Laboratory (BMRL), which is comprised of approximately 3,000 square feet of office and wet-lab space located 6.8 miles from the KCU campus on the campus of Missouri Southern State University (MSSU) in Joplin.

Dr. Staudinger also serves as the course director for the Biomedical Science Research Elective (IDIS 198) offered through KCU's College of Osteopathic Medicine (COM). Student participation in this research elective course serves as an entry into ongoing research efforts and is intended to provide a framework within which both KCU-COM and two-year Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences students may engage in biomedical science summer research projects in Joplin. This course represents a mechanism by which students will receive academic credit for their participation in our research studies. These research-related activities are sponsored and located at the BMRL at MMSU, the KCU campus or other approved regional partner institution(s) in Joplin.