Our Trainees

Sierra Root

Biography:
BS Chemistry-Biology (University of Hartford, 2005)
PhD Biomedical Sciences-Genetics and Developmental Biology (UConn Health, 2014)
Post-doctoral Fellow (Year 3)

It is my career objective to advance the field of monocyte and osteoclast development, their supporting cell types and their role in pathological conditions. During my PhD, I focused on human embryonic stem cell derived monocytes and osteoclasts as well as monocyte/osteoclast progenitors from human peripheral blood. I chose a postdoctoral fellowship at UConn Health to further develop my doctoral projects and study the role of monocytes, osteoclast and bone supporting cells within the hematopoietic compartment of the murine bone marrow within the collaborative initiative at UConn Health specifically in the Muscoskeletal Biology Research labs.

Michelle Spoto

Biography:
Rochester Institute of Technology, B.S., Biomedical Sciences

In pursuing both a DMD and PhD, I want to better understand the field of dentistry from both a clinical and scientific standpoint. My goal is to work as a clinician and researcher at an academic dental institution.

I chose UCHC for its emphasis on evidence-based dentistry and its significant research contributions. Over the past three years, UCHC has given me the skills to be an inquisitive self-learner. Looking forward to learning even more during my time here!

David N. Paglia

Biography:
B.S. Mechanical Engineering: (Manhattan College, Riverdale, NY, 2006)
M.S. Biomedical Engineering: (New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ, 2008)
PhD Biomedical Engineering: (Rutgers University and NJIT Joint Program, Newark, NJ, 2011)
Post-Doctoral Fellowship: Rutgers, Newark, NJ (2011-2012)
Post-Doctoral Trainee: UConn Health 5th Year (T90 NIDCR Trainee-3rd Year), Farmington, CT

It is my career objective to promote the advancement of research in the fields of orthopaedics, cell biomechanics, and musculoskeletal biomechanics. Through my research endeavors, I plan to mentor rising scientists and pursue teaching opportunities. I chose a post-doctoral fellowship at UConn Health based on the strong foundation for collaborative research and mechanistic

approach towards musculoskeletal research. As a T90 Trainee, I have been privileged to work in a well-respected group with supportive mentors and to have the support of the T90 committee mentors.

David Manz

Biography:
David graduated from the University of Connecticut with a major in biological Sciences and a minor in business. He is currently in his fifth year of the combined D.M.D./Ph.D. program at the University of Connecticut Health Center. Being a former intern at the University of Connecticut Health Center, David felt very comfortable with the culture and the opportunities available here. David aspires to integrate clinical practice with advancing knowledge to innovate, and ultimately improve patient care.

Ninna Shuhaibar

Biography:
University of Zulia, Maracaibo, Venezuela. Dentistry
University of Connecticut, Cell Biology Department, Post-doctoral Fellow.

After completing my degree in Dentistry in December 2015, I became interested in developing a career as a researcher to complement my clinical training. I have been working as a postdoctoral fellow at UConn Health since July 2016. In the future, I am interested in pursuing an orthodontist degree with the ultimate goal of applying my research skills to help develop new therapies for the improvement of dental health.

Why UConn Health? Because it has a great dentistry department both in the clinical and research and it is also a welcoming environment for people all around the world.

Veneta Qendro

Biography:
B.S., Biology (University of Natural Sciences in Tirana (Albania)
B.S., Biomolecular Sciences (Central Connecticut State University
PhD Candidate, Biomedical Sciences, Cell Biology

In the near future, I would like to incorporate the knowledge I have gained during my years of research into investigating new pathways of cancer therapy, in the academic or industrial setting.

Matthew A. Zambrello

Biography:
Undergraduate Degree – Molecular and Cell Biology, University of Connecticut
DMD/PhD student, year 6

After I complete the DMD/PhD program, I intend to integrate my NMR skills with a better understanding of healthy and diseased periodontium through completion of a residency program in periodontology. This will allow me to identify the most important questions that affect periodontal health and to apply my skillset to them through multiple avenues including NMR-based metabolomics studies of the oral flora, structural studies of inflammatory proteins and studies of disordered proteins that are involved with biomineralization. Over the longer term, I would like to obtain a position as faculty at a dental school so that I can teach, conduct research and see patients.

I chose to attend UConn because of the high quality of School of Dental Medicine and the unique opportunities it offers for clinicians and scientists. The School of Dental Medicine is renowned in Connecticut for being an outstanding institution. This status reflects the excellent training that it offers to its students. In particular, the strong emphasis on basic science makes the curriculum well designed. During my time here, I have also learned how important it is to get immersed in the community and to get involved in ways outside of strictly science and dental medicine.

A. Vijaykumar

Biography:
BDS, Mumbai India
MS, University of Medicine & Dentistry New Jersey (Rutgers School of Dental Medicine)
5th Year PhD in Biomedical Sciences, Skeletal Biology and Regeneration (SBR)

My long-term career objectives are to incorporate research and clinical dentistry to make a career as a clinician-scientist. The PhD program at UCHC provides an excellent environment to train and work with accomplished minds from diverse backgrounds that will help me achieve my professional goals.

Ryan P. Russell

Biography:
University of Connecticut, B.S., Physiology and Neurobiology
Central Connecticut State University, M.A., Biomolecular Sciences

My goal is to remain in academia in order to teach the next generation of scientists while pursuing my own research interests and fostering outside collaborations with industry to improve musculoskeletal repair outcomes.

After completing my master's program, I did an internship in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and held a position in clinical research here at UCH. I wanted to further my basic skeletal biology research knowledge to translate basic science breakthroughs to the clinic to improve the quality of life for individual patients.

Patience Meo Burt

Biography:
B.S. Biology (Post University, 2009)
M.A. Molecular Sciences (Central CT State University, 2010)

Currently I am a 4th year Ph.D. candidate in the Biomedical Science program. I chose UConn Health due to the outstanding skeletal biology program and research opportunities that combine basic science and human health. In the future, I hope to continue to incorporate this translational component in my scientific career.

Henry C. Hrdlicka

Biography:
Nebraska Wesleyan University, 2014, B.S., Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

I chose to perform my PhD studies at UConn Health due to its umbrella program. Without this unique feature, I would never have been able to rotate in a variety of labs across different Areas of Concentration, which eventually led me to Skeletal Biology and Regeneration and my thesis lab and mentors.

Upon completion of the program, I aspire to stay in academia where I will divide my time between teaching and training the next generation of students and pursuing my own research interest in skeletal autoimmune conditions, such as rheumatoid arthritis.