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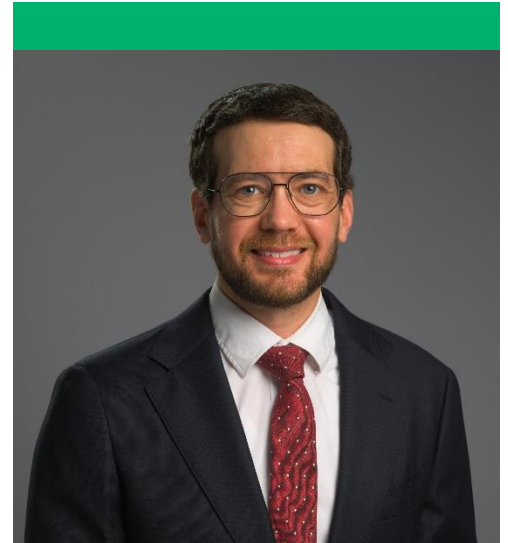
The Richard G. Cole Faculty Scholar

Advancement of Medicine

Last year, I presented an abstract of my research showing that certain sleep and cardiovascular symptoms associated with dysregulation of norepinephrine, an understudied neurotransmitter in Parkinson's disease, were associated with worse motor and nonmotor symptoms of the disease. The work, presented at the International Parkinson and Movement Disorder Society's annual International Congress, inspired the idea that the norepinephrine system could be a novel treatment target in Parkinson's disease.

This research provided the basis for my application to the National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke, or NINDS, Clinical Trials Methodology Course. After a competitive process, I was selected for the program, which provides a structured curriculum to help young investigators understand the scientific and technical details of writing a clinical trial. The course includes weekly didactics and regular small group meetings with other young investigators and senior experts in the field. This gave me an opportunity to develop a clinical trial to test a new pharmaceutical agent to treat anxiety and other nonmotor symptoms of Parkinson's disease.

Not only has my protected time helped me develop in research, but it has also helped me grow as an academic clinician. Last winter, the American Neuropsychiatric Association accepted a case report for presentation. The report is about a patient with Parkinson's disease who was misdiagnosed as having Parkinson's disease psychosis due to auditory and visual hallucinations, but he actually had a tumor in a specific part of his brain that caused psychotic symptoms. Later this year, I will be presenting another case at the Functional Movement Disorder Society conference related to a patient who developed a functional movement disorder (which can be an early sign of Parkinson's disease) after a COVID-19 infection.





The exposure gained from my work has also created opportunities for community engagement. Last fall, I was invited to speak at the inaugural “More Than Parkinsonism” symposium at Rush. I presented on neuropsychiatric symptoms in Huntington’s disease at an education day supported by the Huntington’s Disease Society of America. In the winter, I was invited to speak at a “Parkinson’s Disease 101” class for community members in the Chicago area who are diagnosed with Parkinson’s disease or know someone who has been recently diagnosed.

Research

I am particularly proud to have presented my research titled “Motor and nonmotor symptoms in Parkinson’s disease with co-morbid neurogenic orthostatic hypotension and REM sleep behavior disorder” at the International Parkinson and Movement Disorder Society’s annual International Congress. I am excited to see my reputation as an expert growing based on the increased number of invited talks.

The NINDS Clinical Trials Methodology Course I participated in required a commitment from the department of 20% of time dedicated to research. This would not have been possible without the financial support linked to my endowed faculty position. The didactic portions of the course have ended, and I am now developing manuscripts, abstracts, and presentations for national and international conferences to support my development as an expert in the field.

The Year Ahead: 2026 and Beyond

In 2026, I will prioritize manuscript publication, apply for additional funding to expand my research career, and increase my engagement with public and scientific communities through more invited talks.

With Gratitude

With gratitude and appreciation, I would like to thank Richard G. Cole for establishing this faculty scholar award. Your support advances our work and brings us closer to fulfilling the dream of changing the world for the better.