



**CROHN'S
& COLITIS**
FOUNDATION

REACH-IBD Newsletter *Summer 2024*

Kelly's Korner

Kelly Cushing-Damm, MD, MSCI — University of Michigan

A teal rectangular banner for a video player. On the left is a circular video thumbnail showing a woman with a white play button overlay. In the top right corner is the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation logo. To the right of the thumbnail, the text "Kelly's Korner" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font.

 **CROHN'S
& COLITIS**
FOUNDATION

Kelly's Korner

**Your IBD Career starts here with
our job board**





CHRISTOPHER M. JOHNSON

BAYLOR SCOTT & WHITE HEALTH

How I became Interested in IBD

I grew up in Southern Illinois and completed both my undergraduate and medical education at the University of Illinois. I pursued a combined MD/PhD program, studying host-microbe interactions for my PhD. During medical school, I found that the field of gastroenterology was a lot of fun, and I realized that specializing in IBD allowed me to pursue my interest in the immune system in a clinically relevant way.

My Involvement with the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation

My journey with the Crohn's & Colitis Foundation began during my residency, when I became a Professional Member as a trainee. I have attended the Crohn's & Colitis Congress regularly and participated in the Take Steps Charity Walk. I am now participating in [IBD Qorus](#), the Foundation's quality of care research initiative.

The Impact of Mentorship on my Career

Rod Macleod and Richard Tapping at University of Illinois, my immunology professor and PhD advisor respectively, nurtured my love of science and the human immune system, teaching me to think like both a scientist and a physician. Tim Pfanner, my first clinical mentor at Baylor Scott and White, Texas A&M, is one of the most compassionate physicians I've ever met. He taught me how to connect with patients and care for them like I would my own family.

During my time at UPMC, David Binion showed me how to build a research program and how to push myself to achieve excellence. Having the right mentors is critical to achieving your career goals in medicine. If you talk to anyone who has achieved great things in medicine, they will give you a list of mentors who guided them and supported them through their career.

Future Plans and Goals

My goals are to build an IBD Center at Baylor Scott and White, continue outcomes research to improve our ability to care for IBD patients, and to share my passion for IBD with others through education and mentorship.

Hobbies and Personal Interests

My greatest joy comes from spending time with my wife and three kids. We love traveling. I enjoy playing guitar. My wife and I have also embarked on a new adventure: training to become master scuba divers.





**POONAM
BENIWAL-PATEL,
MD**

MEDICAL COLLEGE OF WISCONSIN

I was introduced to IBD as a fourth-year medical student. During an away rotation on the IBD inpatient service at the University of Chicago, I was lucky enough to work with Dr. Laura Raffals as my attending and Dr. Christina Ha as my visiting fellow. I was immediately intrigued by the immunology foundation of IBD. I also loved the balance of inpatient and outpatient care.

Dr. Sumona Saha and Dr. Freddy Caldera's amazing mentorship during my GI fellowship at the University of Wisconsin sealed my future career in IBD. In my third year of fellowship at UW, I pursued a focused IBD sub-fellowship. **Additionally, I spent one month working with Dr. David Rubin at the University of Chicago through the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation's Visiting IBD Observership, which is designed to give qualified gastroenterology fellows with an interest in IBD the opportunity to gain real-world experience at a leading IBD specialty center.**

My connection with the Foundation has continued beyond my training through research. For example, I have been involved with SPARC IBD (Study of a Prospective Adult Research Cohort with IBD), the Foundation's multicentered longitudinal study of adult IBD patients. I have been the Medical College of Wisconsin site PI for studies including PROP-RD (Prospective Registry for the Study of Outcomes and Predictors of Pouchitis and Pouch-Related Disorders), collaborating with Ed Barnes, and LOGIC with Bharati Kochar.

Currently, I have a passion for incorporating nutrition as part of IBD clinical care and I strive to empower each of my patients through shared decision-making. My research interest includes understanding the impact of obesity on IBD, as it relates to disease severity, therapy response, and body composition.

Looking ahead, my aspirations include bringing intestinal ultrasound (IUS) to the Medical College of Wisconsin. I firmly believe IUS will revolutionize the quality of IBD care we deliver to our patients. I plan to continue to collaborate with other clinical researchers to better understand how to tailor IBD therapies (including nutritional therapy) by taking into account body composition, so that we can better personalize IBD therapy for all of our patients.



I love spending time with my husband and three children - game night and travelling are favorite activities. I also enjoy hiking, improvising recipes to create my own, reading and a good cheese/wine tasting.

Meet the Fantastic Four Additions to the REACH-IBD Committee

Taha "Sonny" Qazi, MD - Cleveland Clinic

Dr. Suha Abushamma, an associate staff at the Cleveland Clinic in the IBD medical home, is from Sudan, where she completed her medical schooling. During her internal medicine residency at Cleveland Clinic, she developed an interest in gastroenterology following her first inpatient rotation in GI. She recalls, "As fate would have it, the GI fellow on service reached out to me asking if I was interested in being involved in research. I jumped at it! That fellow was Dr. Florian Rieder (world renowned IBD fibrosis specialist, and former REACH-IBD committee member), who became my mentor since internship, and the rest is history!"

Dr. Abushamma is currently leading a comprehensive registry of IBD patients with permanent ostomies, addressing significant gaps in research and practice guidelines, and aims to expand this registry nationally to other junior investigators in the field. She hopes to network and collaborate with her colleagues in her new committee role.



Dr. Nisha Loganantharaj, director of Inflammatory Bowel Diseases at Louisiana State University in New Orleans, discovered her passion for gastroenterology and IBD during her first year of general surgery residency. Inspired by the multidisciplinary approach to IBD at LSU, she pivoted to internal medicine. As a GI fellow at LSU, she was captivated by the detailed complexity of IBD, the team-based approach, and the longitudinal patient care. Dr. Loganantharaj's time at conferences solidified her focus on IBD education for GI fellows.



She states, "Through REACH-IBD, I hope to promote IBD education for healthcare professionals in gastroenterology and organize educational events for fellows, trainees and early-career gastroenterologists."



Dr. Amanda Wenzel, pediatric gastroenterologist and native Midwesterner, completed her residency at Children’s Wisconsin in 2017 and her fellowship at Ann & Robert H Lurie Children’s Hospital of Chicago in 2020. Currently, she is an IBD specialist at Children’s Wisconsin, where she developed a passion for IBD. She shares, “Partnering with patients on their quest for remission reminded me why I went into medicine, and I knew I wanted to continue taking care of these patients throughout my career. I also enjoy the opportunities to partner with patients and colleagues on policy, patient education, fundraising, and patient advocacy



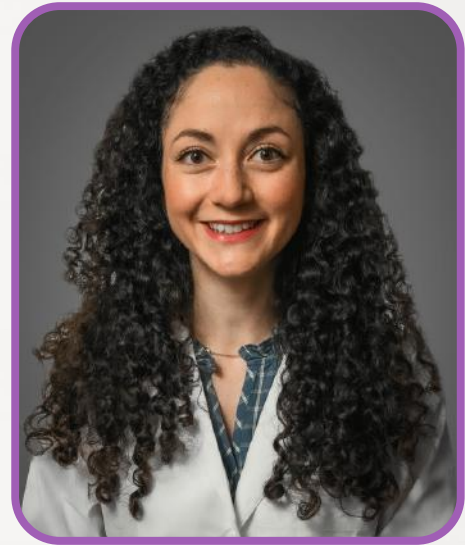
efforts. It’s an evolving and fast-paced field, and I am so thankful to be where I am today.”

When she’s not taking care of patients, Amanda enjoys gardening, spending time with her daughter and husband, and exploring the beauty of the great state of Wisconsin.

Through REACH-IBD, Amanda hopes to engage with like-minded colleagues on educational and advocacy efforts in IBD. Specifically, she is particularly interested in collaborations focusing on transitions of care from pediatrics to adult care.



Dr. Michelle Rosario, an IBD provider at the University of Southern Florida, knew early in her training that she wanted to pursue gastroenterology. She writes, “Throughout training, I gravitated toward caring for IBD patients. Forming enduring relationships with patients and families became a major deciding factor in choosing my path.” After completing both her GI and Advanced IBD fellowships at Penn State, she recently became involved in Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation Morning of Community, working to eliminate barriers to care in diverse communities through education.



She reports on the valuable role of her mentors who “challenged, supported and encouraged me along the way. It is through their guidance that I have begun to achieve my goals.”

In her downtime, the native Floridian loves spending time with family and friends, and dancing salsa and merengue.

As a REACH-IBD committee member, Dr. Rosario looks forward to working with a team of colleagues and mentors who bring their own unique experience and passion for IBD care to the group. She is excited about taking part in mentoring, fostering career development, and working on educational initiatives.



REACH-IBD Webinar

Career Crossroads: Your Guide from Fellowship to Mid-Career

Wednesday, September 18, 2024 @ 8-9:30 p.m. EST

[CLICK TO REGISTER](#)



FEATURING



Benjamin Click, MD, MS
Assistant Professor of Medicine
University of Colorado



**Raymond K. Cross,
MD, MS, AGAF, FAGG**
Dir., Inflammatory Bowel &
Colorectal Diseases
University of Maryland School of Medicine



Harry J. Thomas, MD
Austin Gastroenterology

AND MORE!

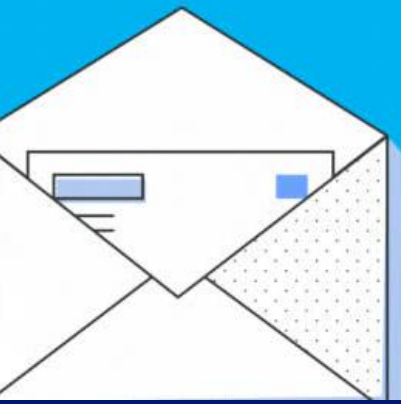
Ready to Level Up? Get Expert Advice and Navigate Your Next Career Move with Confidence!

Are you a fellow or mid-career professional eager to advance your career?

This webinar is for you! Join us to learn:

- **How to navigate your next career steps, whether in private practice or academia.**
- **Key differences and similarities between private practice and academic pathways.**
- **Essential insights for finding your perfect job.**

This is a unique opportunity to ask questions, learn from field experts, and gain the skills needed for informed career decisions.



WHAT IF A FEW SENTENCES AND A COUPLE HOURS OF YOUR TIME HELPED **STOP STEP THERAPY** AS WE KNOW IT?

Would you be willing to gather **five** signatures on a pre-written letter and drop it off at the local office of your member of Congress? **It's an easy yet highly impactful action.**

You can find all the resources you need to complete this important activity in our **Summer Recess Activity Toolkit** - from locating the address of your lawmaker's office to tips for dropping off the letter.