Women in Toxicology
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP
Mentoring • Visibility • Leadership • Education

President's Message

President
Doris Zane, PhD, DABT
Gilead Sciences, Inc.

Happy Fall, WIT Members!

It has been an incredible honor to serve as President of the Women in Toxicology (WIT) Special Interest Group (SIG) over the past six months. WIT was founded to enhance the visibility of women scientists in the field of toxicology, and our mission is to elevate women through **mentoring, visibility, leadership, and education**. As reflected in our logo, WIT's activities focus on these four pillars:

- **Mentoring**: Promoting the recruitment and retention of women in toxicological sciences.
- **Visibility**: Recognizing and celebrating the accomplishments of women toxicologists.
- **Leadership**: Creating career development opportunities for women in the field.
- **Education**: Sponsoring scientific and educational programs—including symposia, poster and platform sessions, workshops, and continuing education courses—on current scientific topics and policy issues that advance toxicology.

cont. pp 2

Inside this Issue

Vice President
Jamie DeWitt, PhD, DABT
Oregon State University

Vice President-Elect
Mindy Reynolds, PhD
Washington College

Secretary/Treasurer
Andrea Kim, PhD, MBA, DABT
Evommune, Inc.

Past President
Toufan Parman, PhD, DABT
Sangamo Therapeutics

Senior Councilor
Elizabeth Vancza, PhD
Merck & Co., Inc.

Junior Councilor
Lauren Walker, PhD
Pliant Therapeutics

Postdoctoral Rep.
Giorgiana-Madalina Ursu, PhD
Brown University

Graduate Student Rep.
Chenghui Jiang
Rutgers University

President's Message, cont.

WIT provides a valuable platform for women to connect, support one another, and share both career successes and challenges. Since its inception in 1999, WIT has launched impactful initiatives to fulfill its mission, including:

- **Endorsing Scientific Sessions**
  - VP Jamie DeWitt led the Program Committee, composed of the WIT EC and volunteers. I'm thrilled to announce that 10 WIT-endorsed sessions were accepted for the 2026 SOT Annual Meeting!
- **Supporting SOT-Wide Award Nominations**
  - VP Jamie DeWitt and VP-Elect Mindy Reynolds led the Awards Committee, which reviewed nominations and provided constructive feedback to strengthen applications. We look forward to the results in early 2026.
- **Publishing the Biannual Newsletter**
  - Secretary/Treasurer Andrea Kim led the Newsletter Committee, composed of the WIT EC and volunteers, to foster engagement and knowledge-sharing.
- **Establishing Endowments and Awards**
  - Senior Councilor Liz Vancza and Junior Councilor Lauren Walker lead the WIT Awards Committee. See Page 7 for details on available WIT Awards—apply by December 1, 2025!
  - Past President Toufan Parman leads our Endowments. We are working to fully fund the LEAP Award—see Page 7 for more info.
- **Showcasing Members Online**
  - Postdoctoral Rep Madalina Ursu and Graduate Student Rep Chenghui Jiang manage our LinkedIn and website. Reach out to them if you'd like to be featured!
- **Hosting Educational Webinars**
  - ***September 17, 2025*:** WIT Best Manuscript Award recipient Chi-Yun Chen presented her work, "*Beyond Detection: Quantifying Micro/Nanoplastics Biodistribution with a Physiologically Based Toxicokinetic Modeling Approach*," joined by guest speaker Priscila Lotsch (Auburn University).
  - ***October 27, 2025*:** Joint webinar with the SOT Carcinogenesis Specialty Section: "*Rethinking Chemical Carcinogenicity Assessment in the Context of NAMs*."
  - Q1 2026: Joint webinar with the Drug Discovery Toxicology Specialty Section—an encore of the IQ DruSafe Protein Degrader Series:
    - Session 1: Nonclinical Safety Assessment of Targeted Protein Degraders
    - Session 2: PK and ADME Properties of Heterobifunctional Protein Degraders
    - Session 3: Teratogenicity Safety Assessment of CRBN-Engaging TPDs
  - Q1 2026: 2025 WIT LEAP Award recipient Lizzie Bowdridge will present her LEAP experience!

As you can see, WIT is powered by a phenomenal group of women scientists who volunteer their time and talents to help the Executive Committee carry out our mission. I encourage each of you to lift up your fellow women colleagues—not only in times of challenge, but also in moments of celebration.

Though it's only Fall 2025, I'm already looking forward to seeing everyone in **San Diego in March 2026**!

Until then,
Warm regards,
Doris Zane, PhD
2025 WIT President

2025 Executive Committee and Election Update

This year, due to the unanticipated departure of WIT EC VP-Elect Dr. Nicole Kleinstreuer—following her well-deserved promotion and expanded responsibilities—we held a special election to fill this important role. It is with great pleasure that I announce our membership has elected **Dr. Mindy Reynolds** as the new VP-Elect.

Dr. Reynolds has been a dedicated member of WIT for many years, contributing in numerous ways, including reviewing WIT award applications and assisting with WIT-facilitated SOT Award nominations. A long-standing and highly engaged SOT member, she has served on multiple committees and subcommittees, frequently as chair or co-chair. Dr. Reynolds is the Alonzo G. and Virginia Geck Decker Endowed Professor and Chair of the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology major at Washington College, where she teaches courses in biochemistry, toxicology, and cell & molecular biology. We are thrilled to welcome such an accomplished and committed colleague to the WIT Executive Committee.

Following our annual election cycle, we also experienced changes in other key EC roles. Our Secretary/Treasurer, Dr. Manisha Sonee, and our Graduate Student Representative, Ms. Cassie Winz, concluded their service—Dr. Sonee due to personal reasons and Ms. Winz upon her graduation. We are deeply grateful for their contributions and leadership.
To continue the work of the EC, we are delighted to announce two new appointments:

Dr. Andrea Kim as Secretary/Treasurer. Dr. Kim is a past President and Secretary of the Northern California Chapter of SOT and brings extensive EC and financial oversight experience to this role.

Ms. Chenghui Jiang as Graduate Student Representative. Ms. Jiang was highly recommended by her peers. She is a PharmD graduate and a 3rd year PhD candidate in the Joint Graduate Program in Toxicology at Rutgers University in the Laboratory of Dr. Lauren Aleksunes.

We are fortunate and proud to have both Dr. Kim and Ms. Jiang join the EC, and we are excited about the dedication, perspective, and expertise they bring to our leadership team.

Toufan Parman, PhD, DABT
Past President of WIT EC

WIT Sponsorship

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to the growth and success of WIT. For questions, please contact SOT at SOTHQ@toxicology.org

SOT Women in Toxicology (WIT) has become a vibrant community, actively engaging members through a variety of enriching activities and events. One of the highlights has been the recognition of our members' professional accomplishments through various awards that inspire and motivate our community. However, the success of these initiatives relies heavily on the generous support of our members. To continue fostering excellence and providing valuable opportunities, WIT needs funding. We are reaching out for your generous donation to help sustain and expand our programs. The table below displays WIT's mission-related activities and funding goals.

WIT Mission	WIT Mission-Related Activity	Amount to Raise
Leadership	Annual Reception (Food, Drinks, A/V and Tech Support), Webinars, award plaques, printing	Up to $25,000
Mentoring	WIT mentoring activity and award: Career Panel at Annual Meeting, Mentoring Webinars, Mentoring Award	Up to $8,000
Visibility	WIT Awards: Postdoctoral Fellow Achievement Award, Outstanding Young Investigator Award, Smith and Hook Achievement Award, Best Manuscript Award	Up to $4,000
Education	WIT Training Award: Leap Award, Educational Webinars	Up to $6,000

We have outlined various sponsorship levels and the corresponding acknowledgments in the table below. Your support, at any level, will make a significant impact and is greatly appreciated.

Contribution Level	Amount	Acknowledgment
Supporter	< $500	WIT Website and LinkedIn
Bronze	$500 - $1,000	Same as Supporter + WIT Poster and Reception Slides
Gold	$1,000 - $3,000	Same as Bronze + announcement at the Reception
Silver	$3,000 - $5,000	Same as Silver + Photo op at the Reception
Platiunum	> $5,000	Same as Gold + Newsletter Spotlight and/or Interview, you or your company's name as Sponsor of one of WIT's activity of your choice

WIT Sponsors

Thank you to our generous sponsors this year!

Gold

Angela Lynch,
MSPH, PhD, DABT
TOXPLUS, LLC

Gilead Sciences, Inc.

Silver

Takada Pharmaceutical Company Limited

Bronze

Jamie DeWitt,
PhD, DABT
Oregon State University

Supporter

Brinda Mahadevan,
MS, PhD, ERT, FATS
Brincor Associates, LLC,

Please consider donating to WIT! We rely on sponsorships to fund our organization's activities. Use the QR code to the left to access our donation page.

2025 WIT Award Winners

Best Manuscript Award	Vera W. Hudson and Elizabeth K. Weisburger Student Scholarship Award	Outstanding Young Investigator Award
Chi-Yun Chen University of Florida	**Veronia Basaly** Rutgers University	**Jessica R. Murray** US EPA

LEAP Award	WIT Mentoring Award	Postdoctoral Achievement Award
Elizabeth Bowdridge West Virginia University	**Menghang Xia** NIH / NCATS	**Michelle Kossack** Brown University

Celebrating Women in Toxicology Awards

Postdoctoral Award	Graduate Award	Undergraduate Award
Candace Longoria Rutgers University	**Idoia Meaza Isusi** University of Louisville	**Aidan Briggs** Colorado State University

2025 Female SOT Award Recipients

Education Award, *in Memorandum*	Founders Award	Distinguished Toxicology Scholar Award
Barbara Hales McGill University	**Marion F. Ehrich** VA-MD College of Vet Med	**Debra L. Laskin** Rutgers University

Enhancement of Animal Welfare Award	Leading Edge in Basic Science Award	Public Communications Award
Nicole C. Kleinstreuer NIEHS/NICATM	**Robyn L. Tanguay** Oregon State University	**Anne H. Chappelle** Safe Bridge Consultants, Inc.

2025 Female SOT Supported Award Recipients

Colgate-Palmolive Grant for Alternative Research	Colgate-Palmolive Postdoctoral Fellowship Award in *In Vitro* Toxicology
Maria Teresa Cruz University of Coimbra	**Idoia Meaza Isusi** University of Louisville

Apply for Awards

These awards celebrate women in toxicology and recognize excellence at every career stage. Recipients will be spotlighted at the WIT Reception during the Annual SOT Meeting. Nominate yourself or a colleague today!

Undergraduate Student	Celebrating Women in Toxicology Award
Graduate Student	Celebrating Women in Toxicology Award Vera W. Hudson and Elizabeth K. Weisburger Scholarship Fund Student Award
Postdoctoral Fellow	Celebrating Women in Toxicology Award
Early Career*	Outstanding Young Investigator Award Mentoring Award Best Manuscript Award
Mid- to Late Career	Smith and Hook Distinguished Service Award Mentoring Award Best Manuscript Award

We encourage you to apply on our **website**

If you have any further questions, please contact Elizabeth Vancza elizabeth.vancza@merck.com or Lauren Walker iamLamwalker@gmail.com

DEADLINE: DEC 1

Donate Here

* NOTICE - The WIT Leadership, Experience, Application, and Practice (LEAP) Award is currently **inactive** until the endowment minimum is reached. This award supports early- and mid-career women scientists in toxicology by providing opportunities to learn new techniques, expand skills, and receive mentorship through a host organization.

Individuals and organizations are encouraged to donate to help activate this award and support the next generation of women toxicologists.

Please enter "For WIT LEAP Award Endowment Fund" on Line 17 of the donation page to ensure your contribution is marked for the LEAP Award. Thank you!

New Approach Methods (NAMs): Featuring Women Leaders

Alexandra Strohm, PhD

What are NAMs?
New Approach Methods (NAMs) broadly refer to any technology, methodology, or a combination of approaches that can provide information on chemical hazard and risk assessment. Examples of NAMs include computational modeling, read across methods, artificial intelligence, omics applications, cell cultures, organoids, high-throughout screening assays, imaging bioassays, and small alternative model organisms (Schmeisser et al., 2023; Sander et al., 2022).

How can NAMs be used?
NAMs can facilitate large-scale, unbiased characterization of biological mechanisms underlying adverse health effects. Additionally, NAMs can be used to collect data on chemicals for which there is limited toxicity information available. NAMs can also be used to reduce or limit animal testing by providing alternative models for evaluating potential health effects of substances.

The history of pyrogen testing demonstrates how NAMs can be used to enhance risk assessment and reduce animal testing. The rabbit pyrogen test was historically used to test whether drugs could cause fever in humans (Hort and Penfold, 1912). Over time, this test was replaced with the Limulus amebocyte lysate, or LAL, test which uses horse crab blood to detect pyrogens through its clotting response (Levin and Bang, 1964). Later, the monocyte activation test was developed to test for pyrogenicity as monocytes also react to pyrogens (Hartung and Wendel, 1996). There are numerous reasons for this progression, including differences in species sensitivity, assay accuracy, and the ability to detect a broader range of pyrogens (Fennrich, et al., 2016).

Women Leading Research in NAMs

Research is ongoing to develop NAMs and evaluate their performance across numerous industries and applications. **Piper Hunt, PhD**, a research biologist at the U.S. FDA, leads NAMs research using non-mammalian models for chemical safety assessment. Dr. Hunt became involved in NAMs research early in her career as a graduate student at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. There, she studied genes and machinery involved in intracellular transport using human fibroblasts from patients with cellular trafficking disorders. More recently, she has been developing assays in C. elegans to test for teratogenicity by examining developmental milestones, activity levels, and morphological changes in response to early and continuous exposures (Hunt et al., 2025; 2025). These assays have the potential to differentiate between effects that are irreversible, partially reversible, and withdrawal-like. Dr. Hunt emphasizes that the use of NAMs is an important step to improve predictive toxicity testing while simultaneously lowering the volume of testing in vertebrates. When asked what she saw as the future of NAMs in toxicology, she highlighted the need for a better balance of positive and negative controls in large chemical test panels to help determine true negative and positive prediction rates. She also stressed that chemicals and/or different chemical classes should be tested across a variety of assays to help determine where dosimetry is most needed to predict effects in humans.

Annie Kathuria, PhD at Johns Hopkins' Department of Biomedical Engineering pioneers NAMs research using her expertise in cerebral organoid tissue engineering. Dr. Kathuria was inspired to pursue NAMs research during her PhD studies at King's College London, where she first read about the development of an in vitro three-dimensional culture system for deriving brain tissue (Lancaster et al., 2013). She has been working in tissue culture engineering for over 10 years now and recently led the development of a multi-region brain organoid, which integrates cerebral, endothelial, and mid/hind brain organoids into one structure (Kshirsagar, et al., 2025). This model could be used to understand how neurodevelopmental disorders or environmental exposures may disrupt neural-endothelial interactions across multiple brain regions. She has also been using cerebral organoids, induced pluripotent stem cells (iPCSs), electrophysiology, transcriptomics, and machine-learning approaches to identify biomarkers for neuropsychiatric disorders (Cheng, et al., 2025). Ultimately, these approaches could be used to create personalized models for studying neuropsychiatric disorders and treatment paradigms. Dr. Kathuria sees NAMs approaches such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, omics, and organoids being used in the future for large-scale data collection, characterization, and drug-discovery. She also illustrates how stem cell researchers, pharmaceutical companies, and other scientists will collaborate to move NAMs research forward.

Expert Advice

When asked what advice they would give to others interested in NAMs, here's what the experts said:

"If you are starting from assay development, figure out who the end-user of your data is and what they are looking for; learn their 'language' so you can communicate to them the utility of your findings. If you are starting from the perspective of filling toxicological data gaps, talk to as many biologists as you can to figure out what models/methods/pathways are compatible with the questions you want to answer." - Piper Hunt, PhD

"It is going to be an uphill battle to get people to adopt NAMs...but we are moving in the right direction. Be resilient and learn to adapt. Those two things will be very necessary." - Annie Kathuria, PhD

How can you get involved?

Training and resources on NAMs are widely available. Some suggestions are the **CAATwalk newsletter** and the USEPA catalog of **NAMs training materials**

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Piper Hunt, PhD and Annie Kathuria, PhD for their contributions and insights into NAMs research.

References

Cheng, K., Williams, A., Kshirsagar, A., Kulkarni, S., Karmacharya, R., Kim, D. H., ... & Kathuria, A. (2025). Machine learning-enabled detection of electrophysiological signatures in iPSC-derived models of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. APL Bioengineering, 9(3).

Fennrich, S., Hennig, U., Toljashvili, L., Schlensak, C., Wendel, H. P., & Stoppelkamp, S. (2016). More than 70 years of pyrogen detection: Current state and future perspectives. Alternatives to laboratory animals, 44(3), 239-253.

Hartung, T. and Wendel, A. (1996). Detection of pyrogens using human whole blood. In Vitro Toxicol 9, 353-359.

Hort, E. C., and Penfold, W. J. (1912). Microorganisms and their Relation to Fever1. Epidemiology & Infection, 12(3), 361-390.

Hunt, P. R., Olejnik, N., Yourick, J., & Sprando, R. L. (2025). The Caenorhabditis elegans worm development and activity test (wDAT) can be used to differentiate between reversible and irreversible developmental effects. Toxicology Reports, 102124.

Hunt, P. R., Ferguson, M., Olejnik, N., Yourick, J., & Sprando, R. L. (2025). Developmental Exposures to Three Mammalian Teratogens Produce Dysmorphic Phenotypes in Adult Caenorhabditis elegans. Toxics, 13(7), 589.

Kshirsagar, A., Mnatsakanyan, H., Kulkarni, S., Guo, J., Cheng, K., Ofria, L. D., ... & Kathuria, A. (2025). Multi-Region Brain Organoids Integrating Cerebral, Mid-Hindbrain, and Endothelial Systems. Advanced Science, 12(33), e03768.

Lancaster, M. A., Renner, M., Martin, C. A., Wenzel, D., Bicknell, L. S., Hurles, M. E., ... & Knoblich, J. A. (2013). Cerebral organoids model human brain development and microcephaly. Nature, 501(7467), 373-379.

Levin, J. and Bang, F.B. (1964). The role of endotoxin in the extracellular coagulation of Limulus blood. Bulletin of the Johns Hopkins Hospital 115, 265– 274.

Sandner, G., A. Konig, M. Wallner, and J. Weghuber. 2022. Alternative model organisms for toxicological fingerprinting of relevant parameters in food and nutrition. Crit Rev Food Sci Nutr. 62(22): 5965-5982. DOI: 10.1080/10408398.2021.1895060

Schmeisser, S., Miccoli, A., von Bergen, M., Berggren, E., Braeuning, A., Busch, W., . . . Tralau, T. (2023). New approach methodologies in human regulatory toxicology - Not if, but how and when! Environ Int, 178, 108082.

Where Science Meets Business: A Perspective on Independent Toxicology Consulting

Brinda Mahadevan, MS, Ph.D., ERT, ATS Fellow

Toxicology Consulting is more than just data review. It is a field that covers dual areas, and requires both scientific rigor and strategic business insights. However, the rules aren't always spelled out.

Over the past 20 years I've worked in academia, in industry in the pharmaceutical, and nutrition sectors in the area of preclinical safety. Five years ago, I made that leap into consulting equipped with technical training but little understanding of how to translate it into business impact. Since then, I've navigated regulatory landscapes, client expectations, that taught me practical lessons that had to be learned.

When the COVID-19 pandemic reshaped how we work, it also opened unexpected doors. The shift to remote work gave me the flexibility to explore consulting more seriously, and I leaned into it with certifications that helped establish my credibility in toxicology. But credentials alone weren't enough. What truly made the difference was seeking out mentors who had walked this path before me. Their guidance helped me understand not just the science but the business mindset, understanding of clients, and several other acquired skills that define successful consultants. The conversation with mentors helped me reframe my thinking and provided me resources to spring board into the area of consulting. That's why I'm writing this, to pass on what I've learned and encourage others to seek guidance early and often.

This piece is for early and mid-career scientists who are curious about consulting, unsure where to begin, or simply looking for direction from someone still close to the learning curve. I hope to share the lessons I've learned, the skills acquired that shaped me, and the mindset that helped turn scientific expertise into trusted consulting practice. When I transitioned into consulting, I thought technical expertise would be my strongest asset and in many ways, it was. For example, I was able to troubleshoot and navigate a false positive signal in a toxicology assay and serve as a bridge between the CRO and the client. However, I quickly learned that consulting demands more than scientific acumen. It requires adaptability, strategic thinking, and the ability to communicate complex ideas to non-scientists with clarity and confidence.

First and foremost, I started on small projects, asked for feedback, and treated every client engagement as an educational opportunity. In this process, I learnt that consulting requires fluency in timelines, budgets and client priorities. Project based budgeting requires the estimation of costs per client project, including time, materials, travel and lab visit fees (if monitoring a study). This would mean daily transaction tracking on income, expenses, reimbursements and billable hours, in addition to invoicing and payments. Even though one can start out with a simple spread sheet, use of budgeting tools would help automate and visualize the cash flow. Another important aspect to running the consulting business is to understand tax compliance which would include federal, state and local tax obligations as independent contractors. Working with a CPA (Certified Public Accountant) who is familiar with consulting businesses would assist with better tax planning and strategize quarterly tax payments, retirement contributions and deductions to minimize tax liability.

These are just a few of the many tips I picked up through my journey in consulting and definitely does not encompass all there is to learn. It's easy to write them out in a helpful list but understanding the realm of toxicology consulting can be a long, daunting process. Keep a steady flow of clients, define the niche and focus on specialty areas of toxicology. I chose the area of food safety and regulatory toxicology. Networking and collaboration supports the expansion of clientele, and building a professional website that includes the services, credentials, and contact information aides to build a strong online presence. It took me a few years to get the hang of it in independent consulting and it would've taken even longer if I didn't have mentors to guide me along the way. A steep learning curve in toxicology consulting is normal but there's no reason for you to face it alone. That's the best piece of advice I can offer – don't hesitate to ask for help because, mentorship can make all the difference.

Navigating the Job Market as an Early Career Professional

Michelle Kossack, PhD

If you are reading this, you have probably looked at many similar articles offering advice on navigating the academic job market. The issue is that every person's experience is different to the next. There is so much advice out there, and while you're on the job market you will get a lot of unsolicited advice. Here is a brief summary of my unique journey and what I have learned along the way.

Securing an academic position takes a long time and involves a lot of uncertainty. One of the most difficult parts of the process of finding a job, is the unknown that goes along with it. When will this end? When will you hear back? Will you have a job in 6 months? Where will you even be living next year? With all the endless possibilities and uncertainty, gathering the mental strength and serenity to get through it without going crazy is a skill. This is a skill you need to master as an academic. This uncertainty is constant. Will the grant be scored? What will the paper reviewers say? Will you get tenure? For me, learning to deal with the uncertainty was its own skill and one that I am thankful I've learned (although not mastered). One resourced that first helped me develop my comfortability with uncertainty was the NIH Becoming a Resilient Scientist (BRS) series. This course had great tips and frameworks to use when dealing with the unpredictability of academia.

I started my postdoc in July 2019. In February 2022, I submitted my first K99 application which was scored but not funded. I reapplied in November 2022 and in January 2023 I had about 1 year of funding left and started applying for jobs. I was very selective with my applications because everyone told me that I would get the K99. "Your first score was great they just want you to resubmit to prove it". My second score was worse, which was extremely disappointing after the encouraging comments I received. Luckily, I was in negotiations for a job with a university, although the timeline was tight. I threw in a third submission of the K99 because I still had 1 month of eligibility left and "you miss 100% of the shots you don't take" (Michael Scott). In mid-November 2024, on a Monday night, I got my official job offer, and on Wednesday afternoon I received a fundable K99 score. The journey from job application to job offer on paper took 11 months. I had already wrapped up my experiments and was packing my house to move but now I had a K99, what next?

Making the decision between the job and the K99 was very difficult, as the university was not able to defer the position long enough, and I wasn't willing to give up the K99. Ultimately, I'm happy I took the K99, but this was a turning point and leads to my first piece of advice: make decisions for you, not for others. EVERYONE is going to offer you opinions on what you should do, your advisor, other postdocs, mentors, random people that know nothing about academia.

All this advice is informative; you want to consider all the different perspectives. But in the end, these are your decisions, decisions that will only affect you (and your family), and no one else. Make sure you consider the opinions, but make the best decision for you, because you will always be disappointing someone. The job you take might not be the top offer, but as long as it's the best offer for you, it is the best.

In Summer of 2024, I re-entered the job market, feeling pretty good about myself. I was told "you have a K99, everyone will want you", "you'll have so many options with the K99". But once again the path was not paved in gold. First, there were very few jobs in toxicology; second, the election changed the game. Job postings were canceled, searches were called off, hiring froze, grants were terminated, and Brown (my postdoc University) was a public target for funding freezes. This precarious situation made the need to secure a job offer paramount. I applied for 30 jobs, got zoom interviews at 5, in-person interviews at 3, was rejected from 9, and never heard from the rest. I received 2 offers and signed the one that fit me best. I made the choice to take a job now even though I still had more time on my K99, rather than risk waiting for another interview/offer/opportunity that might never come.

Even though I was getting help from my mentors, advisor, other postdocs, and friends, the entire experience was extremely overwhelming and very isolating. This leads me to my last piece of advice, ask for help. I only made it through this process because I had people on my side the entire time. A not-so-short list of things I asked of others: a copy of their research statement, teaching statement, and cover letter; revision notes for my statements; more revision on my statements when it was a job I really cared about; advice on which jobs are worth applying too; feedback on my presentation; feedback on my chalk talk; copies of budgets/supply needs to open a new lab; feedback on my requests; confidential feedback on my interview from trusted colleagues, etc. This whole process is new for the applicant, and I asked for help and guidance at every step along the way. Don't be afraid to ask and learn from many different sources, without this feedback you won't improve and grow. Don't let anything stand in your way of your dream job, even your ego.

Finally, a note on the personal: life doesn't stop while you search for a faculty position. During this process my personal life was on its own rollercoaster and these events effected my choices. When I broke up with my partner, suddenly I was no longer geographically restricted, and had a lot more free time to finish experiments. When I met my now husband, I spent a lot of time looking at international positions. I couldn't travel to multiple interviews a week because I had two cats at home. These twists and turns are all part of the process of discovery and landing the position that is right for you; your process will be uniquely yours. Hopefully if you learn resilience, make decisions that are right for you, and ask for help, you will join me as a new Assistant Professor.

Taking Control of Your Career

Kim Zaccaria, PhD

Recap of the 2025 Career Panel

WIT's career panel was thrilled to host its 4th Annual Career Session at the 2025 Annual SOT meeting in Orlando, co-chaired by Drs. Kristal Rychlik and Kim Zaccaria. Over 50 participants attended the session to discuss work-life balance, the art of negotiation, and the importance of establishing mentor relationships. As in past years, the format was highly interactive, with presenters introducing background information on each of the major themes and then challenging participants with real-world scenarios to work through in small groups. Presenters included the co-chairs as well as Dr. Almudena Veiga-Lopez. Each table was set up for success with numerous WIT volunteers serving as table moderators. Scenarios included discussions regarding equitable distribution of "invisible labor" in the workforce, salary negotiation, and finding a mentor outside your organization/institution. For those who missed the session and would like to learn more, scan the QR codes below to see full scenario descriptions.

Scenario 1

Managing Stress through Work-Life Balance

Scenario 2

The Art of Negotiation

Scenario 3

Navigating the Mentorship Maze: Finding your Career Compass

WIT will be partnering with Career Advancement, Mentoring, and Network (CAMAN) Committee for a joint Mentoring/Networking Event at the 2026 SOT Annual Meeting planned for Monday, March 23, 7:30 pm-9:00 pm, in the Marriott Marquis San Diego Marina, the Headquarters Hotel.

Webinars

WIT Best Manuscript Presentation

Beyond Detection: Quantifying Micro/Nanoplastics biodistribution with a Physiologically Based Toxicokinetic Modeling Approach

Speakers:
Priscilla Falagan Lotsch, PhD, Assistant Professor,
Department of Biological Sciences, Auburn University
Chi-Yun Chen, PhD, Postdoctoral Research Fellow,
University of Florida, Winner of the 2025 WIT Best Manuscript Award

September 17th, 2025

Webinar Recording and Materials

Dr. Priscila Falagan Lotsch will explore how micro- and nanoplastics from everyday items like cups and forks affect human brain cells, offering insights into their potential neurotoxicity using real-world particle sources.

Dr. Chi-Yun Chen will present the first physiologically based toxicokinetic model predicting micro/nanoplastic biodistribution, featuring an interactive tool for simulating exposure and supporting human health risk assessments.

SOT Carcinogenesis Specialty Section and SOT WIT Special Interest Group Joint Webinar

Rethinking Chemical Carcinogenicity Assessment in the Context of NAMs: Current Frameworks, State of the Science, and New Horizons

Speakers:
Amber Goetz, PhD, Syngenta CP LLC
Carole Yauk, PhD, University of Ottawa, Canada
Annamaria Colacci, PhD, Università di Bologna, Italy

October 27th, 2025
11:00AM-1:00PM EST

Webinar Recording

This session will explore how New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) are transforming chemical carcinogenicity assessment, highlighting current frameworks, cutting-edge science, and future directions for reducing animal testing and improving risk evaluation.
Registration is required for this free webinar.

Webinars

SOT Out Toxicologists and Allies & Women in Toxicology Special Interest Groups Joint Webinar

Dissecting Sex and Gender in Toxicology

December 12th, 2025
3:00-4:30PM EST

Register Here

Speakers:
Megan Massa, PhD, Assistant Teaching Professor, Emory University
Liisa Galea, PhD, Professor, University of Toronto, Center for Addiction and Mental Health Canada
Patricia Silveyra, PhD, Professor, Indiana University

This panel will explore how to define, study, and communicate about sex and gender—complex, evolving concepts with significant scientific and social implications. It will address challenges in research design, policy, and inclusivity, aiming to balance scientific rigor with social responsibility. Registration is required for this free webinar.

Announcements

Interested in serving on the WIT Executive Committee?

Positions open for 2026 are:

Vice President-Elect (Serve total of 4 years)
Treasurer/Secretary (Serve total of 2 years)
Junior Councilor (Serve total of 2 years; 1 position)
Graduate Student Representative (Serve total of 2 year; 1 position)

If you're interested in any of the positions, please contact Toufan Parmant at **parmant@hotmail.com** by **November 30th**

Detailed officer duties can be found on the Officer & Duties page of the WIT website (scroll to the bottom to find the PDF) and the WIT Bylaws.

SOT MARCH 22-25 SAN DIEGO

The 65th Society of Toxicology Annual Meeting and ToxExpo is approaching! The meeting will be held March 22-25, 2026 in San Diego, California. Check out the **meeting website** for the program, registration, ToxExpo Exhibits, and information about award opportunities.

Abstract Submissions

Due November 13, 2025
Submit on the **website**

Celebrating Your Success

CONGRATULATIONS! These announcements are a great way to recognize WIT members' achievements and advancements.

Career Advancement/Transition

Brittany Baisch, PhD, DABT, ATS, Enko Chem, Inc.
Promoted to Director of Regulatory Sciences.

Toufan Parman, PhD, DABT, Alector, Inc.
Started a new position as the Head of Nonclinical Sciences at Alector, Inc. (August 2025), managing the Bioassay Development, Pharmacology, and Toxicology teams.

Julie Hall, PhD, Lincoln Memorial University
Promoted to Assistant Dean of Undergraduate Programs in the College of Mathematics, Sciences, and Health Professions (2024).

Shikha Sharma, PhD, University of New Haven
Transitioned to a tenure-track Assistant Professor role in the Department of Forensic Science at the University of New Haven, CT (2024).

Giorgiana-Madalina Ursu, PhD, Brown University
Re-appointed as Postdoctoral research associate for a continuous 4th year.

Janet A. Thompson, PhD, FDA
Joined the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products as a Pharmacologist, following a 25-year career as a Biologist with NIOSH.

Colleen McLoughlin, PhD, Enhesa
Promoted to Director of Toxicology and Interdisciplinary Sciences.

Angela Slitt, PhD, University of Rhode Island
Promoted to Department Chairperson, Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Rhode Island, College of Pharmacy.

Nicole McNabb-Kelada, PhD, RTI International
Started new position as a Postdoctoral In Vitro Respiratory Scientist at RTI International (April 2025).

Marquea King, PhD, Booz Allen Hamilton
Transitioned following a 22-year career in the federal government (USEPA and USDA) to consulting tech firm at Booz Allen Hamilton.

Vanitha Thurairasu, MD, MPH, Ministry of Health Malaysia
Enrolled in Doctoral Program in Environmental Health-Toxicology to deepen expertise in reproductive and developmental toxicology.

Degree/Professional Certifications

Rachel Renda, PhD, St, John's University
Successfully completed PhD Defense in September 2025 on the "Evaluation Of The Mechanism Of Cell Death After Exposure To Amorphous Silicon Dioxide Nanoparticles In Rat Pleural Mesothelial Cells And Golden Syrian Hamsters."

Brittany Baisch, PhD, DABT, ATS, Enko Chem, Inc.
Received certification / accepted as a fellow of the Academy of Toxicological Sciences (ATS).

Azita (AJ) Cuevas, PhD, MPH, DABT, Combe, Inc.
Received certification / accepted as a fellow of the Academy of Toxicological Sciences (ATS).

Anne Loccisano, PhD, DABT, Exponent
Received certification / accepted as a fellow of the Academy of Toxicological Sciences (ATS).

Cheryl Marker, PhD, DABT, Canyon Labs
Earned Diplomate of the American Board of Toxicology (DABT) in 2024.

Ashley Brinkman, PhD, DABT, ERT, Central Garden and Pet Company
Earned listing on the European Register of Toxicologists (ERT).

Giorgiana-Madalina Ursu, PhD, Brown University
Attended an online flipped course organized by CIRTL (Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching & Learning) on presenting a TAR (Teaching-as-Research) project.

Nicole McNabb-Kelada, PhD, RTI International
Graduated from UC Davis in March 2025 with PhD in Pharmacology and Toxicology.

Evelyn Reategui Zirena, PhD, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Recertification through the American Board of Toxicology.

Awards

Giorgiana-Madalina Ursu, PhD, Brown University
Postdoctoral Travel Award at the 12th Conference on Metal Toxicity & Carcinogenesis (October 2025).
Student and Early Career Investigator Travel Award for the Environmental Mutagenesis and Genomics Society (EMGS) 55th Annual Meeting (June 2024).

Shikha Sharma, PhD, University of New Haven
Women in Toxicology Award, Postdoc 1st place (2024) by WIT.

Brittany Rickard, PhD, North Carolina State University
SOT NEXT Award to attend the National Cancer Institute's RNA Biology Initiative.
American College of Toxicology North American Travel Grant.

Celebrating Your Success

Awards

Debra Laskin, PhD, Rutgers University
2025 Society of Toxicology Distinguished Scholar Award.

Ashley Brinkman, PhD, DABT, ERT, Central Garden and Pet Company
2025 Society of Toxicology Midwest Regional Chapter Early Career Toxicologist Award.

Ishita Virmani, PhD, Medical University Innsbruck
Executive committee service award by SOT Medical Device and Combination Product Specialty Section

Ruth Roberts, PhD, ApconiX
2025 King's Award for Enterprise in Innovation, presented at Windsor Castle.

Judith Zelikoff, PhD, New York University School of Medicine
Lifetime Achievement Award, SOT, Inhalation and Respiratory Specialty Section.
Award from the AAMC for community work with the Ramapough Lenape Tribal Nation.

Vanitha Thurairasu, MD, MPH, Ministry of Health Malaysia
Giving Economy Awards (2024), aligned with UN SDGs. Talent Grooming Programme (TGP) Graduate (Cohort 10), National Institute of Health, Malaysia (2024).
STP Student Travel Award Recipient – Society of Toxicologic Pathology 43rd Annual Symposium, Baltimore, USA (2024).
Best Oral Presentation Award, 4th International Conference on Occupational and Environmental Diseases (2025).
Travel Award Recipient – International Urban Health Summit 2025, Hannover, Germany.

Elected/Appointed Leadership

Toufan Parman, PhD, DABT, Alector, Inc.
Elected to the Board of Directors of the American Board of Toxicology, May 2025.

Judith Zelikoff, PhD, New York University School of Medicine
Director Community Engagement in the NYU Division of Environmental Medicine.

Ashley Brinkman, PhD, DABT, ERT, Central Garden and Pet Company
Elected as Junior Councilor of Society of Toxicology Out Toxicologists and Allies (OTA)

Sue Fenton, PhD, North Carolina State University
Elected as a 2025-2027 Councilor in the Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention.

Brittany Baisch, PhD, DABT, ATS, Enko Chem, Inc.
Vice President of the CT State Colleges & Universities Foundation

Azita (AJ) Cuevas, PhD, MPH, DABT, Combe, Inc.
Appointed to the CT State Colleges & Universities Foundation Board.

Giorgiana-Madalina Ursu, PhD, Brown University
Elected as Postdoctoral Representative for Women in Toxicology Specialty Interest Group within the Society of Toxicology (2025-2026).

Grants/Funding

Julie Gosse, PhD, University of Maine
Receipt of R15 AREA grant (Gosse PI) 1R15ES037871-01, National Institutes of Health (NIEHS), New Mechanisms of Mitochondrial Toxicity: Focus on Antibacterial Agent Cetylpyridinium Chloride Effects on Immune and Barrier Cells.

Jennifer Larson-Casey, PhD, University of Alabama at Birmingham
Grant awarded from the American Lung Association. Grant mechanism: ALA Hastings Innovation Award for Interstitial Lung Disease

Evelyn Reategui Zirena, PhD, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
Received grant from the Society of Experimental Biology to do outreach in home country of Peru. "I went to different low-income communities, talked about my work and conducted fun toxicology experiments."

Jennifer Newell-Caito, PhD, University of Maine
NSF Grant (IUSE-EDU Grant 2416714) StressCURE: A modular approach to Course-based Undergraduate Research Experience (CURE) laboratory course design focused on the C. elegans model system.

Angela Slitt, PhD, University of Rhode Island
NIH R01 "The role of albumin and other serum factors in Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substance (PFAS) accumulation and toxicity". "This funded R01 award will examine the impact of albumin and IgE for the retention, kinetics, and toxicity of Per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances."

Christine Kim, PharmD, Rutgers University
Awarded a F31 from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK). This prestigious fellowship supports promising predoctoral students and provides mentored research training to prepare them for independent research careers. "Particularly, I'm investigating how melatonin, a widely used sleep supplement, protects against vancomycin-induced kidney injury. Vancomycin, one of the key antibiotics used empirically to treat septic patients, is strongly linked to acute kidney injury, which can result in permanent renal damage."

Sue Fenton, PhD, North Carolina State University
The Center for Human Health and the Environment received a competitive 5-year renewal from NIEHS.

Judith Zelikoff, PhD, New York University School of Medicine
Awarded NIEHS- R2A and R25 grants.

Celebrating Your Success

Grants/Funding

Julie Hall, PhD, Lincoln Memorial University

NSF IUSE grant "StressCURE: A Course-based Undergraduate Research Experience Toolkit for Creating Laboratory Courses That Investigate Biological Stress in the Roundworm Caenorhabditis elegans." in collaboration with four other faculty members (SOT members) from four other institutions. Co-PIs: Josh Gray, Jennifer Newell, Mindy Reynolds, and Sam Caito.

Vanitha Thurairasu, MD, MPH, Ministry of Health Malaysia

NIHR RIGHT4 Scholarship Recipient – for Asia Pacific Association of Medical Toxicology (APAMT) 2024 Congress, Penang, Malaysia.
IUTOX CTDC12 Fellowship Awardee – 12th Congress of Toxicology in Developing Countries, Santiago, Chile (2024).
Fellowship Awardee – HESI International Training Course on Environmental Toxicology and Health, Bangkok, Thailand (2024).
IUSS Stimulus Fund Recipient – 3rd Joint Workshop on Digital Soil Mapping & GlobalSoilMap, Bengaluru, India (2025).

Publications

Melissa Badding, PhD, DABT, Biologics Consulting

Badding MA, Aly N, Sondenheimer K. Determining a NOAEL for the Consortium Linking Academic and Regulatory Insights on BPA Toxicity (CLARITY-BPA) Core Study. (2025) Frontiers in Toxicology, 20 August 2025 Sec. Developmental and Reproductive Toxicology. Volume 7 - 2025 | https://doi.org/10.3389/ftox.2025.1639737 .

Vanitha Thurairasu, MD, MPH, Ministry of Health Malaysia

Thurairasu V. and Kumareswaran S. (2024). Innovative Strategies to Reduce Maternal Mortality in Post-Pandemic Era, Journal of Health Management, Malaysia. eISSN: 2948-5126; Volume 21: No.2/2024.

Nicole McNabb-Kelada, PhD, RTI International

McNabb-Kelada NA, Burke T, Jayaraman S, Mills LJ, De La Torre AI, Silvia M, Scrader H, Nacci D, Clark BW, Whitehead A. 2025. PBDE flame retardant exposure causes neurobehavioral and transcriptional effects in first-generation but not second-generation offspring fish. Environmental Science & Technology. 59(35): 18496-18513.
McNabb-Kelada NA, Burke T, Jayaraman S, Mills LJ, De La Torre AI, Silvia M, Schrader H, Nacci D, Clark BW, Whitehead A. 2025. Early life PBDE flame retardant exposures cause neurobehavioral alterations in fish that persist into adulthood and vary by sex and route of exposure. Environmental Science & Technology. 59(35): 18480-18495.

Kathy Orsted, MS & Smita Salian-Mehta, PhD, DABT, ERT, Gilead Sciences.

The IQ Work Group, on the use of recovery animals, chaired by Sim and including Kathy as a contributing member, is pleased to share the results of the recent survey titled "Challenges and Opportunities for Continuous Refinement in the Use of Recovery Animals." The corresponding presentation slides will be shared with the Chinese health authority as part of a broader dialogue on reducing animal use in nonclinical studies. This presentation will be accompanied by additional subtopics contributed by other participating companies. The recommendations and impact are that recovery animals are not always necessary, strategic exclusion can reduce animal use without compromising data quality or regulatory acceptance, and strong support for refinement and reduction in line with 3Rs principles, respectively. This will be presented to the Chinese Health Authority as a part of a broader discussion! Congrats to Kathy and Sim that their work was recognized as a topic to engage with the Chinese HAs! DOI 10.1177/10915818241243350.

Giorgiana-Madalina Ursu, PhD, Brown University

Cyran A*, Ursu GM*, Krawic C, Zhitkovich A. Differential effects of mercury compounds on mutagenicity, genotoxicity and repair of UV-DNA damage. Toxicology. 2025 Dec; 518:154277. doi: 10.1016/j.tox.2025.154277. Epub 2025 Sep 8. PMID: 40930455; PMCID: PMC12477637. (*shared first authorship).
Ursu GM, Krawic C, Zhitkovich A. (2025). Nuclear SUMOylation and Proteotoxic Stress Responses to Metals with Different Ligand Preferences. Chem Res Toxicol. doi: 10.1021/acs.chemrestox.5c00040.

Smita Salian-Mehta, PhD, DABT, ERT, Gilead Sciences

Pillai SP, Datta K, Lutterbuese P, Salian-Mehta S, Chen W, Stebbings R, Philip B, Villano CM. Strategies to reduce the use of non-human primates in the development of oncology therapeutics: CD3-bispecifics. Regul Toxicol Pharmacol. 2025 Dec;163:105910. doi: 10.1016/j.yrtph.2025.105910. Epub 2025 Jul 18. PMID: 40685066.

Other

Vanitha Thurairasu, MD, MPH, Ministry of Health Malaysia

Conference Presentations: Mapping Environmental Toxicology Research Trends, STP Annual Symposium, Baltimore, USA (2024).
Impact of Occupational Hazards on Sick Leave During Pregnancy, CTDC12, Chile (2024).
Risk Perception and Pesticide Exposure Among Pregnant Women, HESI Conference, Bangkok, Thailand (2024).
A Climate-Responsive Urban Framework for Health, International Urban Health Summit, Hannover, Germany (2025).

Giorgiana-Madalina Ursu, PhD, Brown University

Invited to review two papers for Journal of Clinical Immunology (April/July and September/October 2025).

Judith Zelikoff, PhD, New York University School of Medicine

Extensive work bringing environmental health and toxicology to Indigenous populations throughout the US, including the Ramapough, Lakota, Sioux, Dakota communities.

Vanitha Thurairasu, MD, MPH, Ministry of Health Malaysia

Global Health and Community-Based Volunteering: Engaged in humanitarian relief with MERCY Malaysia, and supported eco-health campaigns under Malaysia's Ministry of Environment. Participated in UN SDG-aligned initiatives, such as the Giving Economy Awards 2024, recognizing contributions as an "Impact Changemaker" in environmental and social resilience. Selected cohort member for the University of Cambridge's DemEd Global program on child rights, sustainable development, and law.

Shikha Sharma, PhD, University of New Haven

"It has been a rewarding journey since I first joined SOT and WIT as a postdoctoral member. I was fortunate to complete two postdoctoral fellowships. In 2024, I had the privilege of joining the Department of Forensic Science at the University of New Haven as an Assistant Professor, where I now teach undergraduate and graduate courses and mentor graduate research students. I am deeply grateful for the leadership opportunities; including serving as Secretary on the Postdoctoral Assembly (PDA) Executive Board (2024–2025) and as Postdoctoral Representative of the Occupational and Public Health Specialty Section (2023–2024). Dedicated to mentoring the next generation of forensic scientists and fostering interdisciplinary research that bridges toxicology, public health, and forensic science."

Thank You, Volunteers!

Nominating Committee


Alicia Bolt


Raya Boyd


Koren Mann


Jennifer Rayner


Mindy Reynolds


Deniz Emul


Sarah Campion

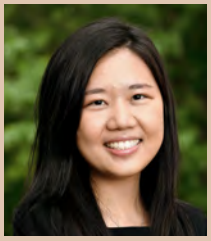
Newsletter Committee


Andrea Kim


Giorgiana Madalina Ursu


Alexandra Strohm


Megan Hager


Winny Soerianto


Chenghui Jiang


Erin Huber

Connect with WIT on LinkedIn! Join our group