



## President's Message

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I hope you are all in good health and spirits. Meeting everyone in Salt Lake City and at the RASS mixer was a great pleasure.

Another exciting year has dawned upon us, and I am honored to have your support to serve you as your President for the 2024–2025 term. RASS continues to be more relevant and a beacon of excellence and collaboration, and I am fully committed to upholding these values as we navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead.

I am grateful for your unwavering support, active participation, and steadfast commitment to RASS. Your invaluable contributions are the driving force behind the RASS Executive Committee (EC). The EC members, including Cecilia Tan (Past President), Anne Loccisano (Vice President), Kan Shao (Vice President-Elect), Katy Goyak (Secretary/Treasurer), Sarah Burnett (Senior Councilor), Melissa Heintz (Junior Councilor), Chi-Yun Chen (Postdoctoral Representative), Alyssa Bellomo (Outgoing Student Representative), Disha Gupta (Incoming Student Representative), and I have already completed our first tasks, which were pre-proposal review and review and endorsement of the several high-profile proposals for the 2025 Scientific Sessions.

As a continuation of the past activities, we have an exciting lineup of events planned for the coming year. Our monthly informative and accessible flagship [RASS Webinar Series](#) continues to cover a range of subjects, from technical skills, emerging technologies, etc., to industry best practices. These webinars are generally from Fall to Spring on the second Wednesday of each month. I want to give a special shout-out to our RASS Webinar Series Coordinator, Annie Jarabek, for serving in this role and for her dedication for almost two decades. If you have any suggestions for topics or speakers, feedback, etc., please get in touch with any of the [EC members](#) or [Annie Jarabek](#). We also welcome proposals for joint webinars from other Specialty Sections. [George Woodall](#) and his colleagues also deserve a special mention for coordinating the Risk Assessment Syllabus that complements the RASS Webinar Series and other RASS-related mentoring activities. We thank the Syllabus Committee for making this training event possible. So many of our members have excelled in promoting the activities of RASS. Unfortunately, space will not allow me to mention everyone, but I commend everyone for your continued support and participation.

Your continued support, participation, and volunteering are crucial to our collective success and to make RASS as impactful as possible. As such, please consider ways to become more involved with RASS activities, such as contributing to the [Endowment Fund](#), serving on the Endowment Fund Committee or the Risk Assessment Syllabus Committee, running for an EC Officer position, being a speaker, or volunteering to assist in the award selection process or at the Annual Meeting. If you are interested in volunteering, please send your contact information to our volunteer coordinator, [Alea Goodman](#), who has been a valuable volunteer for many years. Please get in touch with any of the EC members with any suggestions or questions. You can also follow RASS on [LinkedIn](#) as an additional means of communication and involvement. We aim to serve you and provide the resources, support, and networking opportunities needed to make RASS the best community it can be and for all of us to excel in our respective fields.

Congratulations to all RASS members serving on the SOT Council and other committees. We are proud of all of you. Finally, let's remember those who are no longer with us. We shall forever be indebted to them for the time they spent with us and for promoting RASS activities. Together, I am confident we will achieve great things and make a lasting impact on RASS. I look forward to working with you all in the coming year.

Warm regards,

Bernard Gadagbui, MSc, PhD, DABT, UKRT  
RASS President 2024–2025



Bernard Gadagbui,  
RASS President

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## 2025 RASS OFFICER NOMINATIONS

RASS is one of the largest SOT Specialty Sections. Our members have a broad spectrum of scientific experience and influence and participate in many of the most important decisions in applying toxicology for the greater good. This standing is and will continue to be only as strong as the RASS leadership. If you or someone you know might be interested in helping direct RASS's continuing presence in the field, then there are several Officer opportunities for which you may be a terrific fit. Serving as an Officer presents a great opportunity to get involved with our Specialty Section and the wider Society, and most importantly, serving on the Executive Committee is fun!

There are four upcoming RASS Officer vacancies for which nominations are being received: Vice President-Elect (Presidential chain: 4-year commitment), Secretary/Treasurer (2-year commitment), Junior Councilor (2-year commitment), and Graduate Student Representative (2-year commitment). This year's RASS Officer nominations committee is headed by our RASS immediate Past President, Cecilia Tan. **Please submit your nomination for yourself or a colleague via the official RASS email ([sotrassawards@gmail.com](mailto:sotrassawards@gmail.com)) as soon as possible (the deadline is November 15, 2024).**

NOTE: All candidates must be RASS members. All candidates in the Presidential or Treasurer chains must be Full, Associate, Retired, or Emeritus members of SOT. Student and Postdoctoral Representatives must be Student or Postdoctoral members of SOT.

If you are interested in reviewing the roles and responsibilities of each position before committing, these can be found on the [RASS Officers webpage](#).

## RASS ENDOWMENT FUNDS

RASS has five Endowment Fund-supported awards for students and postdocs: the John Doull Risk Assessment Endowment Award, the Perry J. Gehring Risk Assessment Student and Postdoctoral Endowment Awards, the Robert J. Rubin Student Travel Award, and the Andersen-Clewell Trainee Award. We encourage our members to [contribute](#) to our Endowment Funds, as they provide stipends to graduate student and postdoctoral members who display excellence in Risk Assessment.

Our goal in the next year is to increase each fund by at least \$2,000 (\$8,000 in total). With your help, the annual RASS merit-based Endowment Fund awards will continue to increase each year. Please help us meet this goal and continue to support the next generation of toxicologists. Please visit the [SOT website](#) to see current contributors and learn more about the Endowment.

### RASS Officers

#### President

Bernard Gadagbui, PhD, DABT

#### Vice President

Anne Loccisano, PhD, DABT

#### Past President

Cecilia Tan, PhD

#### Vice President-Elect

Kan Shao, PhD, DABT

#### Secretary/Treasurer

Katy Goyak, PhD, DABT

#### Councilors

Sarah Burnett, PhD

Melissa Heintz, PhD

#### Postdoctoral Representative

Chi-Yun Chen, PhD

#### Student Representative

Outgoing: Alyssa Bellomo

Incoming: Disha Gupta

#### Newsletter Editors

Sarah Burnett, PhD

Melissa Heintz, PhD

Katy Goyak, PhD, DABT

Bernard Gadagbui, PhD, DABT

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## RASS WEBINAR SERIES

RASS webinars are held from Fall to Spring, generally on the second Wednesday of each month. If you cannot participate in any of the live RASS webinars, links to the past webinar slides and recordings are available on the RASS website. Information on upcoming webinars, along with recordings of past webinars, can be found on the [RASS Events webpage](#).

Below are the recent and upcoming webinars in the 2024-2025 series.

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**December 11, 2024**

To be determined

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**November 13, 2024**

**Advancements in Data Harmonisation through Co-creation and AI-ready Tools: Insights and Future Outlook**

**Nina Jeliaskova, PhD**

Technical Manager, Ideaconsult Ltd.

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**October 9, 2024 ([See Recording](#))**

**Evaluating the Consistency of Judgments Derived through Both *in silico* and Expert Application of the Cramer Classification Scheme**

**James Firman, PhD**

Postdoctoral Researcher, School of Pharmacy and Biomolecular Sciences, Liverpool John Moores University

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**September 11, 2024 - Joint Webinar with the Mixtures Specialty Section ([See Recording](#))**

**Integrating Exposomics and Neuroimaging to Uncover Risk Factors and Neural Mechanisms of PTSD in 9/11 Responders**

**Megan K. Horton, PhD, MPH**

Professor, Department of Environmental Medicine and Public Health, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

**Azzurra Invernizzi, PhD**

Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Environmental Medicine and Public Health, Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

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We would like to thank Annie Jarabek, who plans and coordinates the RASS webinars. We would also like to use this opportunity to collect feedback, suggestions, and ideas for future RASS webinars from the RASS membership. If you have suggestions for topics for future RASS webinars, please email the official RASS email ([sotrassawards@gmail.com](mailto:sotrassawards@gmail.com)) or Annie Jarabek ([jarabek.annie@epa.gov](mailto:jarabek.annie@epa.gov)).

# RISK ASSESSMENT SYLLABUS

The Risk Assessment Syllabus Planning Committee, with the support of RASS leadership, has continued the development of a dedicated “Risk Assessment Syllabus” that was initiated in 2022. This training series complements the existing RASS webinar series and other RASS-related mentoring initiatives.

The objective of this Syllabus is to provide participants with an introduction to the fundamental concepts and terminology associated with chemical risk assessment, as well as a practical perspective on the application of risk assessment principles to inform decision making. Each event in the series is focused on a selected risk assessment-related topic and has speakers from academia, government, and/or industry, with each speaker providing their perspective on what risk assessment means in their respective sector.

The Syllabus provides Trainees with valuable insights that enhance their awareness of the importance and sector-specific aspects of risk assessment in their professional careers and the required skills for the respective job profiles. For current professionals, the Syllabus provides an opportunity to refresh and advance their understanding of risk assessment principles and to develop sector-specific perspectives on contemporary topics in human and environmental health sciences.

The Syllabus is currently hosted in a web-based format to maximize attendance. Individual events are structured to contain a formal presentation focusing on a specific aspect relevant to risk assessment, followed by an open panel discussion with invited experts in the field. Our most recent webinar “Overview of Regulatory Standards and Guideline Reference Values” was held in June 2024; details on this event can be found below and on the [RASS Events webpage](#).

## Risk Assessment Syllabus: Overview of Regulatory Standards and Guideline Reference Values

### Speakers:

George Woodall, PhD, Toxicologist, US EPA  
Rachel Shaffer, PhD, Epidemiologist, US EPA

### Moderator:

Peter Goering, PhD, DABT, ATS  
Retired (previously Supervisory Research Toxicologist and Deputy Division Director, Center for Devices and Radiological Health, US FDA); Past President of SOT 2015-2016

### Panelists:

Rick Becker, PhD, Senior Toxicologist, American Chemistry Council  
Virunya Bhat, PhD, DABT, ATS, Technical Officer, World Health Organization  
Jason Aungst, PhD, Senior Advisor, US FDA

## Risk Assessment Syllabus Planning Committee

George Woodall, RASS Past President 2018-2019  
Nathan Pechacek, RASS Secretary/Treasurer 2019-2021  
Laura Plunkett, RASS President 2020-2021  
Li Yang, RASS Councilor 2020-2022

Daniele Wikoff, RASS Past President 2023-2024  
Cecilia Tan, RASS Past President (current)  
Sarah Burnett, RASS Councilor (current)  
Jon Urban

We would like to thank the Risk Assessment Syllabus Planning Committee, who plans and coordinates the Risk Assessment Syllabus webinars. The Committee is currently seeking experts in any of the disciplines associated with chemical risk assessment to consider serving on the Committee. In addition, the Committee is currently seeking experts to volunteer to participate as a panelist and share their experiences and perspectives in one of the open discussions. We would also like to use this opportunity to collect feedback, suggestions, and ideas for future Syllabus webinars from the RASS membership. If you are interested in serving on the Committee, participating as a panelist for a Syllabus webinar, or have suggestions for topics for future Syllabus webinars, please email the official RASS email ([sotrassawards@gmail.com](mailto:sotrassawards@gmail.com)).

## TRAINEE SPOTLIGHT

We are spotlighting our outgoing and incoming Graduate Student Representatives of RASS, Alyssa Bellomo and Disha Gupta. Alyssa completed her PhD from Rutgers University this fall (congratulations, Alyssa!) and passed on the role of Graduate Student Representative to Disha Gupta. Thank you, Alyssa, for your service to RASS, and welcome, Disha, to your new role with RASS! If you would like to be featured in the next Trainee Spotlight, please email the official RASS email ([sotrassawards@gmail.com](mailto:sotrassawards@gmail.com)).

### Alyssa Bellomo: Outgoing RASS Graduate Student Representative

#### Why did you choose to study/pursue research in the field of toxicology/risk assessment?

I chose to study toxicology because I love chemistry and wanted to pursue a career that applied my knowledge in a way that impacts public health. I discovered that a lot of the questions I was curious about involved how chemicals interact with living organisms – which led me to this field!

#### How does your research support risk assessment?

My dissertation focused on developing and characterizing a murine *ex vivo* model of precision cut lung slices to investigate acute nitrogen mustard toxicity. I am very passionate about reducing animal work in toxicology and advocating for the increased use of alternative models in regulatory and risk assessment settings.



#### What do you like to do outside of work?

I spend a lot of time with my cat watching true crime documentaries. I also like embroidery.

#### What challenges do you see the area of risk assessment facing in the near future?

I think big data is both a positive but also a very large obstacle in science. We have a lot of data that is rapidly being generated – and some from science that is not up to standard. Navigating all this information in a timely manner is becoming increasingly difficult but hopefully AI and other advancing technologies can help us sort out what is most important.

#### How should SOT attract future graduate students and postdocs into the field of risk assessment?

I was fortunate that my graduate program implemented a course in Risk Assessment to make the concept more accessible to us as students. I think SOT can do something similar and have more introductory workshops. The Risk Assessment Syllabus is an amazing opportunity for this, but we should strive to increase awareness of it to other graduate students outside of RASS.

#### What will you miss most about being the Graduate Student Representative for RASS?

When I first joined as the Graduate Student Representative for RASS, I was very overwhelmed. It felt like everyone was speaking a different language, and I saw a side of SOT that I was not exposed to before. It was a great experience to see the inner workings of RASS. I will miss being a part of such a productive and inspiring Executive Board, but I am excited to continue to contribute to RASS in other ways in the future!



# TRAINEE SPOTLIGHT

## Disha Gupta: Incoming RASS Graduate Student Representative

### Why did you choose to study/pursue research in the field of toxicology/risk assessment?

I began my academic journey with a Bachelor in Pharmacy in India, where I developed a deep interest in how drugs and chemicals interact with the human body. This curiosity naturally led me to toxicology, where I could broaden my understanding beyond pharmaceuticals to environmental exposures and their health impacts. The shift to risk assessment felt like a natural progression, as it allows me to apply my knowledge of biology and chemistry to real-world problems. My current research, investigating how carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) exposure causes neutrophil activation and potentially leads to cognitive changes, is the perfect example of the kind of interdisciplinary work I find exciting in toxicology and risk assessment.



### How does your research support risk assessment?

My research focuses on the effects of environmentally relevant levels of CO<sub>2</sub> exposure on immune cells, particularly the activation of NADPH Oxidase and the resulting oxidative stress. These can lead to vascular leakage in brain and could play a role in long-term cognitive decline, providing crucial information for evaluating the health risks of elevated CO<sub>2</sub> levels in various environments. By investigating these mechanisms, my work helps to fill in gaps about the broader health effects of chronic CO<sub>2</sub> exposure, offering valuable data for risk assessors who develop guidelines for safe air quality standards.

### What do you like to do outside of work?

Outside of the lab, I enjoy reading, staying active, and spending time with loved ones. I'm also the Speaker Chair for the Rutgers Association of Toxicology Students (RATS), which allows me to engage with professionals in the field and help organize talks and events. Staying connected with my peers and the broader scientific community is important to me, and I like to spend my free time on activities that refresh my mind and body.

### What challenges do you see the area of risk assessment facing in the near future?

One of the major challenges in risk assessment will be addressing the increasing complexity of environmental exposures. We are exposed to mixtures of chemicals in everyday life, not just single substances, yet most regulatory guidelines focus on individual exposures. Developing methods that account for the cumulative and interactive effects of multiple chemicals is crucial but remains a significant hurdle. Another challenge is the need for more rapid and predictive risk assessment tools. As industries innovate, new chemicals and technologies are introduced at a faster pace than traditional testing methods can accommodate. Developing more predictive, high-throughput, and alternative testing approaches, like computational models and organ-on-a-chip systems, will be essential to keep up with this evolving landscape.

### How should SOT attract future graduate students and postdocs into the field of risk assessment?

SOT could start an initiative that pairs students with professionals in the field to work on real, community-based projects. By focusing on local environmental health challenges, students would get the chance to see how their work directly improves the lives of vulnerable populations. Making risk assessment more hands-on and community-centered would help students feel a stronger connection to the impact they can make, both in their local areas and on a global scale.

### What are you most excited about in being the Graduate Student Representative for RASS?

I'm eager to contribute to building a supportive community within RASS. I look forward to engaging with both established professionals and students, helping to facilitate networking, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing. My role will allow me to advocate for graduate students and postdocs, ensuring that they have access to the resources and support they need to succeed in the field. I'm also excited to help shape future initiatives that make risk assessment more accessible and attractive to the next generation of scientists.

# ANNUAL STUDENT AND POSTDOCTORAL TRAINEE AWARDS

RASS gives five student and postdoctoral trainee awards each year:



- Perry J. Gehring Best Graduate Student Abstract Risk Assessment Endowment Award
- Perry J. Gehring Best Postdoctoral Fellow Abstract Risk Assessment Endowment Award
- John Doull Risk Assessment Endowment Award
- RASS/MechSS Robert J. Rubin Student Travel Award
- RASS/BMSS Andersen-Clewell Trainee Award

Applications are being accepted through the centralized SOT Apply platform. The **deadline for award applications is December 31, 2024** for all student and postdoctoral trainee awards. Application details and links to apply can be found on the [RASS Awards webpage](#). If you have questions about any of the awards, please contact the official RASS email ([sotrassawards@gmail.com](mailto:sotrassawards@gmail.com)).

Applicants are only eligible to win one award but may apply for multiple awards.

## BEST ABSTRACT AND BEST PAPER AWARDS

RASS gives one best abstract award and two best paper awards each year:

- Best Overall Risk Assessment Abstract Award (given at the SOT Annual Meeting)
- Best Published Paper Advancing the Science of Risk Assessment Award
- Best Published Paper Demonstrating an Application of Risk Assessment Award

Applications are being accepted through the centralized SOT Apply platform. **The deadlines are December 31, 2024 for the best abstract award and January 6, 2025 for both best paper awards.** Application details and links to apply can be found on the [RASS Awards webpage](#). If you have questions about any of the awards, please contact the official RASS email ([sotrassawards@gmail.com](mailto:sotrassawards@gmail.com)).

### How are candidate abstracts identified for the best abstract award?

Any abstract submitted to SOT for the Annual Meeting that includes “risk assessment” as a keyword or category will be considered for the best abstract award.



### How are candidate papers identified for the best paper awards?




All papers published in SOT's official journal, *Toxicological Sciences*, between January 1 and December 31, 2024 (in print or online), with at least one SOT member as a co-author, will be considered for the best paper awards. The search term “assessment” will be used to identify candidate papers.



In addition, RASS members can nominate a paper published in any journal for a best paper award via SOT Apply, as long as the paper has at least one SOT member as a co-author.

# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

There are numerous opportunities for RASS members to get involved with RASS-related activities. Fall and Winter are busy times, as the reviewing and judging of student and postdoctoral award applications and best abstract and paper awards are in full force. Your help is greatly needed! The benefits of serving as a RASS volunteer include the following:

-  Getting your name and your ability to help recognized. When you get involved, your willingness to serve and help gets recognized. This is especially important for graduate students and postdocs who are looking to get more involved in SOT.
-  Working with colleagues. In volunteering, you have the opportunity to work on committees with people that you might not otherwise have the opportunity to work with, in a fun and collegial way.
-  It is an AWESOME learning opportunity. When you review award applications and candidates for best paper, you have the opportunity to learn about recent developments in risk assessment. Helping out and learning about risk assessment—what more can one ask for?

Opportunities available:

- Student awards selection committee (Jan–Feb)
- Best abstracts selection committee (Jan–Feb)
- Best papers selection committee (Jan–Feb)

If you would like to enter your name into the RASS Volunteer Pool, please email Alea Goodmanson ([aleagoodmanson@chevron.com](mailto:aleagoodmanson@chevron.com)).



## RASS SPONSORSHIP

RASS offers the opportunity for individuals and organizations to support the future of RASS through several levels of sponsorship. Please consider making a donation to support RASS. Donations can also be made anonymously if preferred. Click [here](#) to make a donation to our operating fund.

| Sponsorship Level | Amount  | Potential Sponsorship Recognition                                            |
|-------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leadership        | \$5,000 | RASS newsletter, RASS business meeting, RASS annual reception, RASS LinkedIn |
| Mentoring         | \$1,000 | RASS newsletter, RASS business meeting, RASS mentoring events, RASS LinkedIn |
| Education         | \$500   | RASS newsletter, RASS annual reception, RASS LinkedIn                        |
| Visibility        | \$100   | RASS newsletter, RASS annual reception                                       |
| Networking        | < \$100 | RASS annual reception                                                        |



We would like to recognize Scott Auerbach and Laura Plunkett (on behalf of her company, BioPolicy Solutions, LLC) for sponsoring RASS at the Education Sponsorship Level. Thank you both for supporting the future of RASS!



## RASS OFFICERS 2024-2025

Thank you to the RASS Officers, who dedicate their time and effort to the success of RASS and RASS members. This fall, we asked each of the RASS Officers about their favorite hobbies, and we would like to share their answers with you so that you can get to know our Officers!

### Past President



**Cecilia Tan**  
US EPA

**Favorite hobbies:** Practicing and teaching yoga, playing mahjong, learning new things related to wellness

### President



**Bernard Gadagbui**  
TERA

**Favorite hobbies:** Gardening, reading, traveling, debating social issues with friends, cooking, volunteering

### Vice President



**Anne Loccisano**  
Exponent, Inc.

**Favorite hobbies:** Working out, cooking, reading true crime books, playing with my cats

### Vice President-Elect



**Kan Shao**  
Indiana University  
Bloomington

**Favorite hobbies:** Traveling with my kids to explore beautiful natural scenery and experience diverse cultural atmospheres, jogging, swimming

### Secretary/ Treasurer



**Katy Goyak**  
Celanese Corporation

**Favorite hobbies:** Reading (sci-fi, history), board games, crocheting

### Senior Councilor



**Sarah Burnett**  
CTEH, LLC

**Favorite hobbies:** Cooking and trying new recipes, reading, playing piano, hiking

### Junior Councilor



**Melissa Heintz**  
ToxStrategies, LLC

**Favorite hobbies:** Mountain biking, hiking, reading, native plants

### Postdoctoral Representative



**Chi-Yun Chen**  
University of Florida

**Favorite hobbies:** Watching films, collecting postcards, hiking

### Graduate Student Representative



**Disha Gupta**  
Rutgers University

**Favorite hobbies:** Hiking, cycling, walking, gardening, singing Indian classical music