

FEBRUARY 2024

VOLUME 2

# Newsletter



## From the Center Director



Just a quick note to let all GENI members and supporters know that as of March 1, 2024, I will be assuming the role as Chief Scientific Officer of the recently established Stravitz-Sanyal Institute for Liver Disease and Metabolic Health at VCU in Richmond, VA. One of the high points of my 12+ years here in Atlanta has been the establishment of GENI in 2022 to fill the much-needed gap for researchers, clinicians, and families related to the needs of children with GI, Liver, Endocrine, and Nutritional needs, based on the growing concerns and life-long ramifications of obesity. I am delighted that Dr. Paul Dawson, PhD, will serve as Associate Director as I transition over the next few months, as Dr. Dawson will then assume the Interim Director role as of June 1, 2024. Dr. Dawson is a world-renowned researcher in bile acid and metabolic pathways, with a strong reputation for collaboration and innovation. I know Dr. Dawson will serve the research goals for the institution and ongoing mentoring, collaboration, and education arms of GENI. In addition, I will be continuing my current research with clinical and research collaborations involving Emory and CHOA and given the unique opportunities and resources of the CSO, will be building new research and implementation initiatives for children and adults based upon GENI themes. I am grateful for all your support and look forward to continuing to work together. The field and the children need this. Please feel free to contact me at my new email address: [saul.karpen@vcuhealth.org](mailto:saul.karpen@vcuhealth.org).

*Best, Saul*

## In This Issue

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Farewell Reception





## **Paul Dawson, PhD, FAASLD**

Professor

Division of Gastroenterology,  
Hepatology, and Nutrition

Department of Pediatrics

Emory University School of Medicine

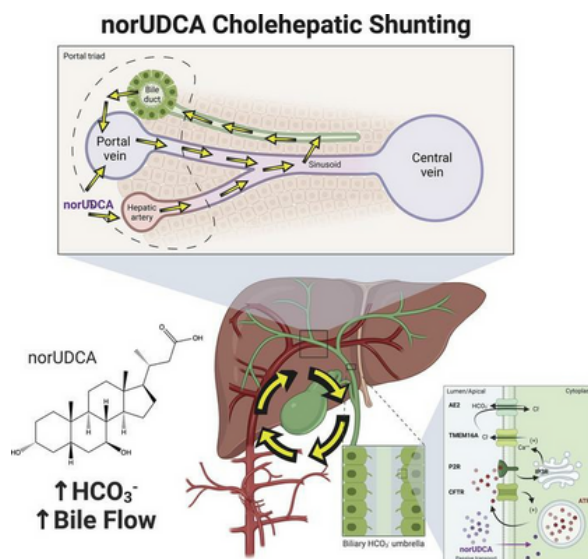
Research Scholar

Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

## **LEADERSHIP TRANSITION**

### **Meet our new Associate Director**

Dr. Paul Dawson has been at Emory since 2014, running his own research initiatives as well as those he runs jointly with Dr. Karpen. His research is focused on elucidating the physiologic and molecular mechanisms controlling bile acid homeostasis and their relationship to the pathogenesis of disease. Much of his lab's efforts include investigating the multiple roles of and therapeutic targets for bile acids in the biology and pathobiology in liver and other organs. Dr. Dawson is a CHOA Research Scholar and has been a stalwart member of GENI's Steering Committee since its inception. We welcome Dr. Dawson's leadership and have full confidence that this transition will be seamless.



Truong JK, Li J, Li Q, Pachura K, Rao A, ... , Karpen SJ, Trauner M, & Dawson PA. Active enterohepatic cycling is not required for the choleretic actions of 24-norUrsodeoxycholic acid in mice. *JCI Insight*. 2023;8(6):e149360.

## **A word from Dr. Dawson**

I am looking forward to building upon the strong foundation for the GENI Center established by Dr. Saul Karpen to address the GI, Liver, Endocrine, and Nutritional needs in children precipitated by the global obesity epidemic. A prime focus of GENI remains identifying those children with obesity and metabolic impairments at greatest risk for development of serious

GI/liver disorders, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and early-onset cancers as young adults and identifying impactful approaches to intervene. I will work to make GENI a welcoming and collaborative home for metabolic research and initiatives to educate patients, families, and colleagues, to address this growing epidemic.

*Best, Paul*

## ***GENI Members Dawson, Karpen, Kugathasan, Morris, and Vos Make Stanford University's List of World's Top 2% Scientists***



Stanford University's updated annual list representing the world's top two percent of the most-cited scientists in various disciplines was released recently. The updated rankings report was prepared by a team of experts led by distinguished Stanford University Professor, John Ioannidis, using standardized citation indicators. The statistical data are divided into two lists. The Lifetime Scientific Influence Ranking captures the comprehensive influence performance of scientists over the course of their careers, while the 2022 Annual Scientific Influence Ranking highlights the academic influence of scientists during the calendar year 2022. The selection is based on the top 100,000 scientists by either composite indicator (c-score, with and without self-citations) or a percentile rank of 2% or above in the subfield. This ranking covers 22 scientific fields and 174 subfields and is considered the most prestigious worldwide. Five GENI scientists were selected to rank on this list, illuminating GENI's prowess in recruiting/assembling some of the brightest faculty to address the causes and consequences of the growing epidemic of childhood obesity and metabolic disease.

### **CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GENI SCIENTISTS!**

Ioannidis, John P.A. (2023) October 2023 data-update for "Updated science-wide author databases of standardized citation indicators," *Elsevier Data Repository*, V6, doi:10.17632/btchxktzyw.6

## **At a Glance**



25 Primary GENI Investigators/Members; 21 Secondary GENI Members



Over \$14.5M awarded to GENI scientists during FY2023; over \$17M proposed



5 GENI investigators listed as world's top 2% scientists

## GENI Events - Fall 2023

- As part of the Doris Duke Award to support clinician scientists, Emory Pediatric Research Centers, Children's Heart Research and Outcomes (HeRO), and GENI invited **Amanda Marma Perak, MD, MSCI, FAHA, FACC**, to present a virtual Special Guest seminar on October 12. Dr. Perak is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics (Cardiology) and Preventive Medicine at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. Her talk was titled "*Intervening at the Origins of Cardiovascular Health and Disease.*"
- Also in October, GENI had the honor of welcoming Dr. Karpen's former mentee, **Sanjiv "Sonny" Harpavat, MD, PhD**, Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine and gastroenterologist at Texas Children's Hospital. He gave a T32 seminar entitled "*Rethinking Assumptions in Pediatrics: Examples from Biliary Atresia Research*" that was well attended. He also presented at the Children's Research Grand Rounds, "*Neonatal Jaundice—From the Perspective of the Primary Care Provider-Specialist Team.*"

## Don't Miss These Upcoming Events:





**CALL FOR ABSTRACTS**

13th Annual  
Southeastern  
Pediatric  
Research  
Conference

**CONFERENCE DETAILS**

 Friday, June 7, 2024  
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM EDT  
 Georgia Tech Hotel and  
Conference Center

**SUBMIT ABSTRACT**

Abstract submissions on any  
and all child health-related  
research topics are welcome  
and encouraged.

**Abstracts due by: Monday,  
April 1, 2024 at 11:59 PM**



2024

## PEDIATRIC EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER CONFERENCE

Tuesday, August 27, 2024  
Health Sciences Research Building I  
Rollins Auditorium & Cafe  
In-Person ONLY

Click [HERE](#) to submit  
your abstract by April 15!

*Who can submit an abstract:* Child health researchers who are residents, medical fellows, post-doctoral fellows (PhD), and junior faculty with a rank no higher than assistant professor are invited to submit abstracts as lead author.

Submit your abstract [HERE](#) by April 1  
Register [HERE](#)



# Dr. Karpen's Farewell Reception - February 6, 2024



Dr. Karpen has been a professor at Emory University and Children's Healthcare of Atlanta since 2011, when he served as Division Chief of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition until February 2023. His many achievements during his time at Emory include serving as Program Director for the first-ever T32 Research Training Program in Translational GI and Hepatology in the Department of Pediatrics. In 2019, his clinical research into the pathogenesis of biliary atresia led to the identification of the first genetic defect linked to the disease. In addition, after 6 years of planning and developing a vision for a research center, Dr. Karpen established the Center for Gastroenterology, Endocrinology, & Nutrition Innovation (GENI) in January 2022 and the Center has since flourished.

While we will miss him, we wish him the very best as he embarks on this new chapter of life that will undoubtedly lead to transformative research discoveries in the treatment of liver disease.