

VAIGS Alumni Newsletter

February 2016



Save the Date

- [National Postdoctoral Association Meeting](#)
 - March 4-6, 2016
- [Han-Mo Koo Memorial Award](#)
 - May 19, 2016
- [Midwest Chromatin and Epigenetics Meeting](#)
 - June 5 - June 7, 2016
- [Grand Challenges in Parkinson's Disease](#)
 - Sept. 26-27, 2016
- [West Michigan Regional Undergraduate Science Research Conference](#)
 - November 5, 2016

VAIGS Alumni on the Move

- Congrats to Van Andel Institute Graduate School student, Aditi Bagchi, M.D., who is part of the team that discovered a new mutation in a cancer-causing gene! Read more by clicking the links below:
 - Spectrum Health:
<http://healthbeat.spectrumhealth.org/boys-mystery-illness-leads-to-genetic-breakthrough/>
 - MLive:
http://www.mlive.com/news/grand-rapids/index.ssf/2016/02/genetic_cancer_breakthrough.html#incart_river_home

Staying Connected

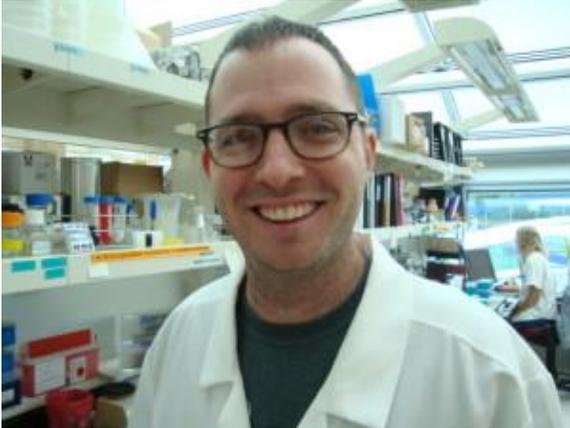
- Join the Graduate Student Association (GSA) Student & Alumni Group on LinkedIn! Please let Nancy Schaperkotter know if you would like to join and she will send you a private invitation.
- For more information regarding opportunities to stay involved with Van Andel Institute and our mission, please don't hesitate to contact the following:
 - Nancy.schaperkotter@vai.org , Student Affairs Contact
 - Teresa.Marchetti@vai.org, VAEI Development Contact

VAIGS News Update- Recent Publications

- **Solitto, Abigail R.**, and Jeffrey P. MacKeigan. 2016. Leaving the lysosome behind: novel developments in autophagy inhibition. *Future Medicinal Chemistry* 8(1): 73–86.
- Andersen, Nicholas J., Elissa Boguslawski, **Cynthia Y. Kuk**, Christopher M. Chambers, and Nicholas S. Duesbery. 2015. Combined inhibition of MEK and mTOR has a synergic effect on angiosarcoma tumorgrafts. *International Journal of Oncology* 47(1): 71–80.
- **Cooper, Jason F.**, Dylan J. Dues, Katie K. Spielbauer, Emily Machiela, Megan M. Senchuk, and Jeremy M. Van Raamsdonk. 2015. Delaying aging is neuroprotective in Parkinson's disease: a genetic analysis in *C. elegans* models. *npj Parkinson's Disease* 1: 15022.

Visit <http://vaei.vai.org/grad-school/> for more , including a list of current students and alumni.

STUDENT SPOT LIGHT - JASON COOPER



Hometown: Austin, Texas

Undergraduate degree/Institution: BS, Biology; BA, Philosophy – University of Texas

Work experience: Clinical Pathology Laboratories (3 years)

Hobbies: Playing piano, mountain biking, participating in triathlons

How would you describe your area of study to your grandmother?

Since elderly people (almost) exclusively get Parkinson's disease, I am studying the role of aging in this disease. Using organisms with genetic mutations that cause (or increase risk) for this Parkinson's, I study how slowing down the aging process can help delay or prevent Parkinson's disease.

What is your primary motivation for persevering through graduate school?

I think that my subject is very interesting. I like to think about questions like, "Why do organisms age?" and, "If everyone lived long enough would every individual get Parkinson's disease?" or, "What molecular events inside the cell control the aging process?"

What do you want to do with your degree?

Someday I would like to have my own lab, but I want teaching to be a large component of my career.

Do you think there is any value in social networking with other graduate students in non-related fields?

Absolutely, you never know where your next idea will come from or where it will take you.

How do you think earning an advanced degree will change your role in society?

I believe that my advanced degree provides a responsibility to educate the public in what I do and to work towards discoveries that impact human health.

Did your past experiences in life or education help prepare you for graduate school or did you have to develop different strategies to succeed?

Yes, both helped: my past experience gave me a foundation, but I learned I must adapt to every situation in which I find myself, otherwise I am not being challenged.

What accomplishment (academic or other) are you most proud of?

In graduate school, submitting my first, first-author manuscript.

Are you involved in other community activities and if so, how have they shaped your graduate experience?

I am involved in setting up and running a lab in a local high school. Teaching others helps us realize how much we have to offer.