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2022 Spring Programming
Where Are They Now

SAVE THE DATE

BSCP Virtual Connect Event
Saturday, April 9, 2022

For information or to register, contact
Hollie DeSilva at [hollie_desilva@hms
.harvard.edu](mailto:hollie_desilva@hms.harvard.edu).

New England Science Symposium
Virtual Symposium

Friday, April 29 and Saturday, April 30, 2022
Registration will be available March 2022.

Virtual Career Fair

Thursday, May 12, 2022, 12–2 PM

REMINDER

Please remember to update your contact
information at www.bscp.org.

Click on “Update Contact Information”
and then “Current BSCP Students/Fellows
and Alumni.”

MENTORSHIP

Anthony René, PhD, and Ria Roberts, MD

“I always say it was like a miracle going to that conference,” says Ria Roberts, MD, of the 2010 Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference, the second she attended. Then a senior at Brandeis University, Roberts knew she wanted to pursue an MD but had no immediate post-graduation plans. “I was just fortunate enough to be matched with Dr. René as my assigned mentor,” she says.

Anthony René, PhD, dedicated his career to helping students find their way to STEM careers. Retired from his position as assistant director of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, he is active as a volunteer training liaison at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). René spent 50 years in national service, the majority of that time managing research training programs for underrepresented minorities, individuals with disabilities, those from disadvantaged backgrounds and people returning to research careers following a hiatus. “My goal is to recruit students into

STEM programs,” he says. “I get students involved with how to find opportunities.” René has been a mentor at every Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference since BSCP was founded.

At the 2010 conference, he introduced Roberts to NIH Research Supplements to Promote Diversity as a way to support herself and gain research experience during a gap year between college and medical school. For Roberts, the gap year turned into nearly two. “I had never even heard of any research supplements until Dr. René introduced me to them,” she says. The program supplements researchers who already have grants to mentor underrepresented minority students. “Dr. René helped to facilitate the process of choosing a principal investigator,” Roberts explains.

She was drawn to the research lab of Dennis L. Kasper, MD, at Harvard Medical School, intrigued by the work he was doing. “Dr. Kasper took me under his wings



Ria Roberts, MD, left, and Anthony René, PhD, right, at a BSCP conference

and showed me the ropes of research," she continues. "Even though I had zero research experience, he always made me feel like I was an important member of the lab. That was super important to me."

While she was a student at George Washington University School of Medicine & Health Sciences, Roberts shared many meals not only with René, but with his wife, Mary Ann Sestili, PhD, as well. "It was just so lovely, and I really felt like I had a support system in the area," Roberts notes. "We have expanded our family," says René, who lives in Maryland. "All of these kids become part of the family, like Ria has." Sometimes he and Roberts met at a restaurant near school — the two mention a South American spot they both enjoyed — or Roberts visited René and his wife at home. "My whole focus is to try to get to students. You have a mentee like Ria, who has taken advantage of it. This is a star," adds her mentor, with a hint of proud parent in his voice.

Now director for Diversity, Inclusion & Advocacy for Graduate Medical Education at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center (BIDMC), director for Diversity Recruitment and Retention for the BIDMC Department of Medicine, a staff physician at Element

Care-PACE (Program for All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly), clinical instructor in Medicine at Harvard Medical School and nocturnist within Harvard Medical Faculty Physicians, Roberts says, "I am very passionate about making sure other people excel as well." She adds that she feels she is taking "baby steps into a role like Dr. René and becoming a mentor to other people." She is active at her alma mater, Brandeis, forming a Pre-Health Clinic for first-generation, underrepresented and disadvantaged college students who are interested in medicine and the health sciences. She invited René to speak at one session and the students enjoyed it so much that she has invited him back.

He says, somewhat tongue in cheek, "Ria and I have used each other. I've referred students to her for advice on medical school interviews." To which Roberts counters that she refers students to Dr. René, "especially if they are interested in research or don't know what to do during that gap year."

"I feel our relationship is so ideal — that's why I wanted to share it with my Brandeis students," she continues. "I sometimes am in disbelief of how my life turned out, especially coming here from the Caribbean,

now being able to use my influence to affect others. If I know someone who wants to be mentored, I am always happy and willing to give advice... especially students who are like me a long time ago. I tell them, "This is achievable."

"This has certainly enriched our lives," says René of his work with students. "It's kind of like being a parent because your job is never over." He concedes that the pandemic has inhibited some of his ability to reach out. For example, he cannot, for the moment, randomly approach young people on elevators and ask if they are interested in STEM, as was his wont.

Roberts advises reaching out to mentors to keep them updated about your life. "When they invest time in you, they are generally interested in hearing how you are doing. They find joy in your success, in any aspect of your life. I even had [Dr. René] FaceTime my then-boyfriend, now fiancé," she says, "and Dr. René will certainly be invited to our upcoming nuptials."

Resource: Dr. René recommends the NIH-supported National Research Mentoring Network for anyone interested in career, research, mentoring opportunities and more: <https://nrmnet.net>.

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2022 SPRING PROGRAMMING

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, BSCP will not host a hybrid Biomedical Science Careers Student Conference in April. In its place will be a series of events and activities scheduled throughout spring 2022.

In addition to the offerings below, BSCP is in the process of scheduling panels, workshops and one-on-one sessions in areas such as financial planning, résumé writing and navigating LinkedIn. Special career coaching sessions are also being developed for postdocs. These programs are for postdocs (research and clinical); medical, dental and graduate students; post-baccalaureates; and college and community college students (particularly Black/African American, Hispanic/LatinX or American Indian/Alaska Native students/fellows).

BSCP Virtual Connect Event

This program will take place virtually on Saturday, April 9, 2022. Attendees will be matched in small groups of similar academic level and interest with an advisor. Advisors provide encouragement, advice and information on available resources, professional opportunities and career paths in their fields of interest. The keynote speaker will be Dennis A. Dean II, PhD, principal investigator, Seven Bridges, who is a member of the BSCP Board of Directors and a former BSCP participant. The keynote address will be interactive. Participants will be able to submit their questions in advance and live through the online platform.

The primary objective of this event is to provide students/fellows with an opportunity to network with advisors/role

models from the basic and clinical sciences, medicine, public health, academia and the biopharmaceutical industry. Student/fellow participants should be seriously interested in or currently studying medicine, biomedical science or other science-related fields such as chemistry, physics, biology, nursing, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, biotechnology, physical therapy, public health, allied health or environmental science.

Please contact Hollie DeSilva at hollie_desilva@hms.harvard.edu to request an application.

New England Science Symposium Virtual Symposium Friday, April 29 and Saturday, April 30, 2022

This symposium is an opportunity for postdoctoral fellows; medical, dental and graduate students; post-baccalaureates; and college and community college students to present their research projects through oral and poster presentations.

The keynote speaker will be Levi A. Garraway, MD, PhD, executive vice president, head of

product development and chief medical officer at Roche and Genentech.

2022 Career Fair — New Offering! Virtual Fair Thursday, May 12, 2022, 12–2 PM

BSCP will provide a virtual venue where BSCP students and fellows will be able to connect with representatives from organizations in industry, academia and government to establish professional relationships and discuss potential job and/or fellowship opportunities.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW **Sherry-Ann Brown, MD, PhD**

Sherry-Ann Brown, MD, PhD, who first became involved with BSCP 20 years ago when she was an undergraduate at Wesleyan University and most recently served as an advisor at the virtual 2021 Student Conference, is assistant professor and director of Cardio-Oncology in the Division of Cardiovascular Medicine at the Medical College of Wisconsin. She joined the college in April 2020 to create the Cardio-Oncology program. Brown is also a research collaborator at Mayo Clinic, where she spent seven years as a resident in Internal Medicine and a fellow in Cardiovascular Diseases with postdoctoral research in the Clinician Investigator program.

Brown says she first knew she was interested in cardiology when she was a high school student in Jamaica, because she recognized then that heart disease was the leading killer in the world. When she was in college, where she majored in physics, she began to think more about the impact of cancer and that she wanted to make a difference there as well. It wasn't until her third year of medical school at the University of Connecticut Health Center, however, that Brown first heard the term *Cardio-Oncology*, which focuses on the prevention, treatment and management of cardiovascular conditions in cancer patients or survivors who develop symptoms either as a result of their cancer treatment or the cancer itself. This field, she realized, was the best way to combine her primary interests.

There are several reasons, Brown explains, why it is important to think about Cardio-Oncology from a minority standpoint:

- There are not many people in the country or the world who are aware of what it is and how to practice it.
- There are not a lot of people who have trained in it.
- There are only a handful of Black individuals who are leaders of Cardio-Oncology centers around the United States, and Brown is one of them.
- Cardiovascular adverse effects from cancer therapies and mortalities happen at higher rates in minority populations, especially among Black people.

These are also reasons, Brown suggests, that students should be interested in considering this field for their careers.

When she left the Mayo Clinic, Brown was looking for a chance to apply her skills and talents as both a physician and scientist to the areas that appeal to her most. Medical College of Wisconsin provided a special opportunity, to come in and help develop a Cardio-Oncology program that also gave her a lot of research time up front, during what turned out to be the beginning of a worldwide pandemic. Brown has built a team of regional individuals and, with federally funded internal grants, is using artificial intelligence to predict which individuals with cancer are at highest risk to develop cardiovascular disease, "so we can develop personalized care to prevent heart disease," she explains. "It's fantastic to be able to do this work."



Sherry-Ann Brown, MD, PhD

Brown and her team are treating individuals from surrounding areas while producing research outcomes that can be applied to those from around the world. Inevitably, given the timing of when Brown began her current position, the work has been impacted by COVID-19, primarily by allowing the program to start off with an emphasis on telemedicine. Since her Cardio-Oncology practice is focused on prevention and management in the outpatient setting, all patients who presented virtually or in person for care were able to be treated. Brown and her colleagues published a paper on starting a program during a pandemic, with an emphasis on how best to protect the patients.

"It is important for all of us — ethnic or racial minorities — to think about fields like these where we can have a global impact, and to go to a place that would give us the tools we need to effect that impact," she says.