



Collaborative Program In Neuroscience (CPIN) UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

[Newsletter – Vol. 41, No. 4 – December 2024](#)



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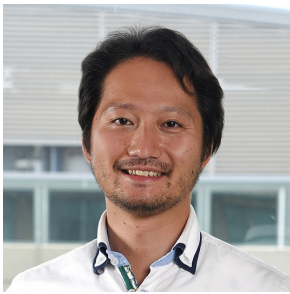
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2024-2025 CPIN Distinguished Lectures

CPIN Distinguished Lecture



Speaker | **Dr. Kei Igarashi, PhD**

Associate Professor, Anatomy & Neurobiology, School of Medicine,
University of California, Irvine

Title | Circuit mechanisms of item memory and its disruption in
Alzheimer's disease

Date | **Tuesday, January 14th, 2025**

Time | 10:00 AM

Location | SS 1087, Sidney Smith Hall, University of Toronto, 100 St George St,
Toronto, ON M5S 3G3

Host | Dr. Kaori Takehara-Nishiuchi, PhD

Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Toronto

Co-Sponsor | Psychology Brain and Behaviour Seminar Series

[Speaker Information](#) | [More Information](#)

Welcome New CPIN Faculty Member



We would like to welcome **Dr. Jacob Vorstman** (Full Professor, Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto), to the CPIN Program. Dr. Vorstman studies the relationships between genes and behaviour, in particular, how genetic variants can contribute to neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism, intellectual disability and schizophrenia. With his work he tries to address the question of translation: how can basic scientific research concretely improve patient mental health care?

Together with his team he initiated a multidisciplinary clinic for children with genetic risk variants associated with psychiatric and/or neurodevelopmental outcomes, called DAGSY (Developmental Assessment of Genetically Susceptible Youth). Furthermore, he co-developed (with Professor Kas, University of Groningen) a smartphone application for the measurement of social and communicative behaviors, which is currently implemented in several studies generating the first data of this kind. He also has received funding to examine ways to improve our current ability to reliably extract mental health diagnoses from large numbers of electronic health records using natural language models.

Taken together his work aims to further insights into the early trajectory of neurodevelopmental and psychiatric conditions. The focus on individual identifiable genetic vulnerability, early biomarkers as well as the use of digital phenotyping and large scale language models all embody his ambition to promote Precision Child Health strategies in neurodevelopment and child psychiatry.



We would like to welcome **Dr. Federico Gaiti** (Assistant Professor, Department of Medical Biophysics, University of Toronto), to the CPIN Program. Dr. Gaiti earned his PhD in evolutionary biology and genomics from the University of Queensland (Australia), where he focused on understanding the evolutionary origin of two major players in human gene regulation: long non-coding RNAs and chromatin marks. Through these studies, he developed a deep interest in understanding how a single normal cell becomes malignant by the accumulation of genetic and non-genetic alterations. This motivated him to pursue a career in biomedical research, to understand the underpinnings of evolutionary plasticity of cancer. As a postdoctoral fellow in Dr. Dan Landau's laboratory at Weill Cornell Medicine and New York Genome Center, he made contributions to the cancer genomics and computational oncology fields by examining the epigenetic dimension of cancer evolution, using chronic lymphocytic leukemia and human gliomas as models. Dr. Gaiti is now developing and applying computational and experimental single-cell genomics and epigenomics methodologies to answer the fundamental question of how malignant cellular states in brain cancers are jointly determined by genetic and non-genetic alterations.

Congratulations CPIN Trainee



Wenfu Bao completed his PhD in Rehabilitation Sciences (Speech-Language Pathology, supervised by Dr. Monika Molnar) and a Collaborative Program in Neuroscience in December 2024. His doctoral research focused on neurophysiological measures of spoken language processing in monolinguals and bilinguals, contributing valuable insights to the fields of speech and hearing sciences, psycholinguistics, and neuroscience. During his PhD, Wenfu generated five first-authored publications, with two published and three under review or in submission. His research has been widely presented in international conferences, including the *Society for Neurobiology of Language*, *American Speech-Language-Hearing Association*, and *Cognitive Neuroscience Society*.

Beyond research, Wenfu has shown a strong commitment to professional development and community engagement. He completed the *Advanced University Teaching Preparation* and *Teaching in Higher Education* Certificates, advancing his pedagogical skills. Passionate about equity, diversity, and inclusion, he has been actively involved in student and community initiatives. Notably, he co-founded a network connecting international and domestic students across faculties, organized language talk series featuring international early-career women scholars, and co-organized multiple language research day conferences.

In recognition of his achievements, Wenfu received many departmental and university awards, including the 2024 University of Toronto Student Leadership Award.

Toronto Brain Bee 2025

The Brain Bee is a written knowledge based competition for high school students. It tests the knowledge of the students in neuroscience. The original contest format was derived from the traditional Spelling Bee.

The **Toronto Brain Bee** is a local competition for high school students in the GTA region. The champion will compete in the National Brain Bee.

Find more information [here](#).

Call for Volunteers

Toronto Brain Bee is one of the high school outreach programs that the CPIN has sponsored and organized, to encourage early education in neuroscience and teens' awareness of brain health, as well as to provide the volunteer opportunity for the CPIN members supporting the community activities/professional development.

The volunteer form is now available for all CPIN members.

Trainees and faculty members interested in getting involved with the 2025 Toronto Brain Bee as a part of the preparation group (event planning, creative team for contesting questions etc) and/or competition moderators and scorers on the day of the competition, as well as faculty members that are interested in serving as competition judges, please fill out the [volunteer form](#). Please contact CPIN office at p.neuroscience@utoronto.ca, if you have any questions.

Share Your News With Us

We would love to hear from you!

CPIN Trainees and Faculty are encouraged to submit news about publications, awards, and other achievements and activities to be featured on the CPIN website and newsletter. Please submit your news using the form [here](#).

Reminders

Applying to CPIN

Interested in a CPIN membership? We welcome you to visit the [CPIN website](#) and fill out the application forms.

For students: [student application form](#)

For postdoctoral fellows: [postdoctoral membership form](#)

For faculty members: [faculty membership form](#)

CPIN 2024-2025 Distinguished Lecturer Nominations

CPIN trainee & faculty members are welcome to [nominate potential speakers for the 2024-2025 Neuroscience Distinguished Lectureship Series](#).

Nominations will be reviewed by the CPIN

CPIN Student Completion Form

CPIN graduate students who have completed both their home department and CPIN trainee requirements must fill in the [online completion form](#).

Committee for approval. We would like again to emphasize the importance of EDI in the CPIN community and particularly encourage and welcome nominees and/or nominators that include visible minority groups, women, Aboriginal persons, persons with disabilities, members of sexual minority groups, and others.

Published by

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