

Meet the First Authors

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Open Software to Quantify Cardiac Contraction (p e5)

Dr Luca Sala earned his BSc (2009) and MSc (2011) in Biotechnology at the University of Milano - Bicocca, Italy. He earned his PhD in 2014 at the University of Milano-Bicocca, specializing in Translational and Molecular Medicine in Antonio Zaza's group, where he explored the electrophysiological properties of adult cardiomyocytes and human induced pluripotent stem cell-derived cardiomyocytes (hiPSC-CMs) to model cardiac arrhythmias. In 2015, he moved to the Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands to work with Christine Mummery's group to improve current in vitro technologies to integrate or replace animal models in disease modelling, drug screening, and drug development with human cells. In 2018, he moved back to Italy to join Peter J. Schwartz's group at IRCCS Istituto Auxologico Italiano to study cardiac channelopathies with hiPSC-CMs and to improve the translational aspects of this promising technology in pursuit of precision medicine. He is in love with science and technology and believes that the strong influence of computers and automation on basic science practice can help scientists solve problems faster, more efficiently, and with tremendous advantages in terms of reproducibility, data sharing, and collaborations. Outside the lab, he loves to hike and bike in the beautiful woods and mountains of Northern Italy.



Open Software to Quantify Cardiac Contraction (p e5)

Berend van Meer earned his BSc and MSc in Electrical Engineering at Delft University of Technology, where he specialized in Microelectrical Engineering and graduated on a Skin-on-Chip device. In 2014, he started his PhD in Christine Mummery's group to work on Organ-on-Chips and the development of measurement methods for quantifying human pluripotent stem cell-derived cardiomyocytes in response to drugs and disease. He expects to receive his PhD in June 2018. Although the transition from engineer to biologist might seem a bit farfetched, working at the intersection of these disciplines is what he enjoys most. He is a strong believer that combining the expertise of different areas makes complex challenges easier to solve, and that collaboration within research areas speeds up the progress of the field. In his view, collaboration, together with the right (software) tools and knowledge being open and available for everyone, will greatly benefit science. In his free time, Berend enjoys running and playing field hockey.



Npr2 Deficiency Promotes Aortic Valve Disease (p 405)

Dr Mark Blaser earned his BS in Chemical Engineering from McGill University, but then promptly saw the light and transitioned to a career in biomedical science. He obtained his PhD in Biomedical Engineering in Dr Craig Simmons's lab at the University of Toronto, and is currently a postdoctoral fellow with Dr Elena Aikawa at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School. Mark works at the interface of biology and engineering, where he studies the effects of mechanobiology on the pathophysiology and driving mechanisms of valvular heart disease. He is always energized by the truly interdisciplinary nature of his field, and is grateful for the opportunities he has had to work on everything from in silico simulations, in vitro bioreactors, genetic mouse models, human tissue omics, and clinical imaging while tackling this disease. Outside of the lab, Mark is a rabid tech enthusiast, loves playing volleyball (though he has moved into a "wily veteran" phase since he can't jump quite as high as he used to), and is the proud new father of a 4-month-old baby.

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MiR-100 Suppresses Chronic Vascular Inflammation (p 417)

Dr Franziska Pankratz is currently working as a postdoctoral fellow in Dr Grundmann's lab at the University Heart Center in Freiburg, Germany, where she also earned her PhD in 2015. Her research focuses on small RNAs, especially microRNAs, and their role in the cardiovascular system. In particular, the research group is interested in the identification of new regulatory mechanism of cardiac diseases, such as arteriosclerosis or myocardial infarction, with the long-term goal of identifying new treatment options. Franziska received her MSc at the Ernst-Moritz-Arndt-University in Greifswald in the very north of Germany under the supervision of Dr Broeker. Away from work, she loves to spend time with her 1-year-old son and her husband, and in the little remaining time, she enjoys yoga and sewing.



IP5 Regulates HIF-1 α Degradation (p 457)

Dr Chenglai Fu earned his MD from Jilin University in Changchun, China. He then pursued his PhD at Peking University, where he was mentored by Dr Yi Zhu and introduced to cardiovascular research. He started to work on inositol phosphates in 2013 after joining Dr Solomon H. Snyder's lab at Johns Hopkins University. He hopes to unravel the mechanisms of inositol phosphates in physiological and disease processes. Outside of the lab, Chenglai enjoys spending time with family and watching movies.



Late Ca²⁺ Sparks and Ripples in Heart (p 473)

Dr Ewan D. Fowler earned his BS in Sport Science from the University of Glasgow in 2010. This was followed by an MS and PhD at the University of Leeds in the laboratory of Dr Ed White, where he studied the energetic basis for excitation-contraction coupling abnormalities in heart failure. He was awarded a travel scholarship from Boehringer Ingelheim to conduct part of his PhD research at the Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam, where he investigated diastolic dysfunction by stretching intact cardiac myocytes under dynamic load. He currently works as a Research Associate in the laboratory of Dr Mark B. Cannell at the University of Bristol. His research investigates the interaction between the electrical properties and calcium handling of cardiac myocytes. He is particularly interested in the causes of calcium-induced arrhythmias in pathology. Outside of science, Ewan enjoys learning electronics, programming, competing in triathlons, and the occasional craft beer.



Long-Term MRI Follow-Up of MVO After Cell Therapy (p 479)

Dr Jay Traverse earned a BS in Chemical Engineering from the University of Notre Dame and an ME in Biomedical Engineering from The University of Virginia. Following graduation from medical school at Case Western Reserve University, he completed his residency and cardiology fellowship at the University of Minnesota with Dr Robert Bache, studying the regulation of coronary blood flow during exercise and in the failing heart. During this time, he was supported by a Scientist Development Grant from the American Heart Association. He is currently an Associate Professor of Medicine in the Cardiovascular Division at the University of Minnesota and interventional cardiologist and Director of Research at the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation at Abbott Northwestern Hospital. His current research interest involves the mitigation of infarct size and the delivery of biomaterials and stem cells following myocardial infarction. He is a Co-PI of the NHLBI-sponsored Cardiovascular Cell Therapy Research Network (CCTR). Outside of work, he enjoys traveling with his wife and two children and playing golf and hockey, as all Minnesotans do.

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