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Physical Therapy Program

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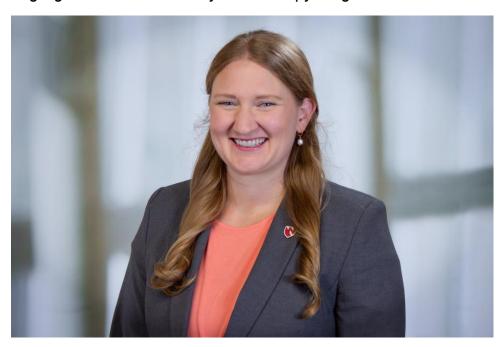
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Joint Connections

Fall 2025

Highlights from UNMC's Physical Therapy Program



Assistant Professor Anne Woodruff Jameson, PT, DPT

New Faculty and Staff Introduced: Anne Woodruff Jameson, PT, DPT

The University of Nebraska Medical Center's Physical Therapy Program is pleased to introduce the newest member of its faculty team.

On July 8, 2025, Anne Woodruff Jameson, PT, DPT, began as an assistant professor in the physical therapy program in Omaha. As such, she will be teaching part of the Practice Management series, Seminar 2, and assisting in a variety of labs. She also has time dedicated to clinical work, service, and research.

Dr. Woodruff is also a PhD candidate in UNMC's Medical Sciences Interdepartmental Area program.

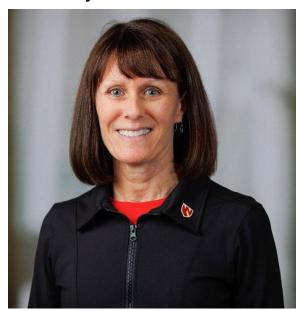
Dr. Woodruff is an Omaha native and a 2015 graduate of UNMC's physical therapy program.

Upon graduation, she worked as a traveling PT in Michigan and North Carolina before returning in 2016 to work at UNMC's Munroe Meyer Institute. In that role, she led the outpatient team and worked on projects related to systemic issues affecting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

continued on page 2.

New Faculty and Staff Introduced continued

New Faculty and Staff Introduced: Deb Norman, MPA



Deb Norman, MPA

Deb Norman is the new Education Program Coordinator II in the physical therapy program. She joined UNMC following three years at the University of Nebraska Omaha. Prior to this, she worked at Louisiana State University (Geaux Tigers!). Ms. Norman is originally from Delaware. Her BA and MPA are from the University of Delaware making her a proud Fighting Blue Hen.

Deb has two sons and is also a cat mom. She enjoys walking, attending sporting events, and watching the bear cams on Explore.org. Deb loves learning and is working on another certificate from UNO. She also became a Nebraska Master Naturalist last year. She has also completed a marathon and notes she "did not get hooked like some people. Glad I did it, but one was enough!"

New Faculty and Staff Introduced: Dr. Jameson, continued from page 1.

Dr. Woodruff Jameson states, "I am excited to join the College of Allied Health Professions.

"Most of my clinical experience has been in pediatrics, along with pelvic health and home health. My work with young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities seeking competitive wage employment and access to women's health services compelled me to pursue my PhD to examine physical therapists' potential to help improve these access issues.

"Throughout my career, I have loved working with PT students as a clinical instructor. My more recent experiences guest lecturing for UNMC's PT program were energizing, which

made me consider taking on a greater role in education. I am excited to work with students, coordinate courses, and teach as a greater part of my time while still engaging in some clinical and research work. Some of my greatest teachers and mentors came from the PT program at UNMC, and it is humbling to be a part of this group."

In addition to being a new faculty member, Dr. Woodruff Jameson is also a mom, a wife, and the oldest of four sisters. In her spare time, she enjoys playing board games, watching movies with her family, reading for her book clubs, and listening to podcasts while walking her dog.

Students



The University of Nebraska Medical Center Physical Therapy Class of 2025

Convocation 2025

The Class of 2025 was celebrated at the College of Allied Health Professions Convocation ceremony on Friday, May 9, at the Liberty

First Credit Union Arena and at the UNMC Commencement ceremony on Saturday, May 10, at the Baxter Arena.

Congratulations, Class of 2025!

Caleb Ackles Abigail Aplaca Alysa Biggs Grace Blusys Chailey Bollens Koeby Bonner Jessica Braun Jordyn Brester Thomas Childers Carly Christensen Benjamin Clinch Cassandra Collins Carter Corlett Khalid Cray Liam Diesing Hannah Diez Alicia Dittmar MacKenzie Doescher Benjamin Dorsey Grace Duncan Alexis Heller Rebecca Higgins

Brooke Horner Abigail Johnson Kael Juelfs Jenna Junker Allison Keisel Tyler Keller Edwar Khayat Max Knipping Calli Krebs Bryson Krull Justin Larson Jacob Laville Josslyn Linse Jorre Luther Decker Mattimoe Jameson McGinness Sydney McLaren Stanford Meradith Samuel Messbarger Jackson Meyer Ben Moxness Jacob Olsen

Kyle Ott Émma Peters Justin Pettit Emma Plucknett Lukas Pohlmann Morgan Satterlee Joanna Shaw Felicia Sheil Mackenzie Sorenson Grace Spieker Madison Stipsits Ryan Swenson Aiwa Temme Lauren Thompson Joshua Trede Kailey Weichel Samantha Wonder Yao Yao Carsyn Zumpfe Kaden Zwiener

Faculty

Dr. Becker receives University award



Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD and University of Nebraska System President Jeffrey P. Gold, MD on August 14.

On Thursday, August 14, in a public session of the University of Nebraska Board of Regents, Betsy J. Becker, PT, DPT, PhD received the 2025 President's Excellence Award, Outstanding Teaching and Instructional Creativity.

"Outstanding faculty are at the heart of a great university," said University of Nebraska System

President Jeffrey P. Gold, MD. "Their dedication to teaching, discovery, innovation and service uplifts students, grows our economy and strengthens Nebraska's communities. These awardees are helping drive the University of Nebraska toward an extraordinary future."

In a subsequent message to Dr. Becker, Dr. Gold stated, "I wish to express on behalf of the entire system, all of our Regents, and the communities that we serve, our deep gratitude for your hard work, dedication, and loyalty... I hope that you and your family enjoy this recognition as it is unquestionably the highest level of recognition that this University system bestows."

Recipients of these awards are selected by system-wide committees of their peers and community leaders. They represent a wide range of disciplines and bring to their work not only academic rigor, but also vision, creativity and a drive to make a difference.

Dr. Venema receives Excellence in Research Award

On May 9, 2025, Associate professor Dawn Venema, PT, PhD received the College of Allied Health Professions 2025 Excellence in Research for Distinguished Faculty Award in recognition of her well-established and productive research career.

Award criteria include funded research completed within the preceding five years that adds "significant knowledge to the scientific, clinical and/or educational community."

As highlighted by her nominators, Dr. Venema's impressive portfolio of research and scholarly activity within the last five years "has significantly advanced our understanding of improving mobility and reducing fall risk for older adults in both inpatient and outpatient settings." Her portfolio includes 17 invited presentations for regional or national audiences, 14 peer-reviewed presentations at regional or national conferences, 5 peer-reviewed published abstracts and preliminary communications, 3 peer-reviewed published research studies, and 3 additional peer-reviewed publications currently under review.

Her nominators note further, "Dr. Venema's work has provided valuable insights and has been instrumental in shaping current scientific, clinical, and educational practices improving mobility and reducing fall risk for older adults in both inpatient and outpatient settings. For example, her most recent lead-author publication described patient and organizational factors that contributed to falls among patients hospitalized with COVID-19, and subsequent recommendations for managing fall risk in patients hospitalized with COVID-19 including consideration of respiratory function as a fall risk factor that is typically not included in currently available fall risk assessment tools."



Dawn Venema, PT, PhD

Dr. Cochran receives 2025 Distinguished Educator award



Teresa M. Cochran, DPT, PhD

UNMC's Interprofessional Academy of Educators has named member Teresa Cochran, DPT, PhD, one of its two 2025 Distinguished Educators.

The Interprofessional Academy of Educators is comprised of nearly 300 faculty, staff and learners across Nebraska, with members from all five UNMC campuses, seven colleges and three partner organizations. Their mission is to

cultivate a community across professions that connects educators with like interests to drive collaboration, innovation and scholarship.

The Distinguished Educator Award is the academy's highest honor, given to faculty members who consistently demonstrate excellence in teaching and peer mentoring to promote the development of the next generation of effective and innovative teachers.

Dr. Cochran is an associate professor and board-certified clinical specialist emerita in geriatric physical therapy in the UNMC College of Allied Health Professions at the Douglas A. Kristensen Rural Health Education Complex in Kearney. She joined the Physical Therapy Program as an associate professor in 2017, and in 2018 accepted the appointment as CAHP assistant dean in Kearney. In 2020, she was awarded the CQuence Distinguished Professorship for Innovation in Health Care.

One of Dr. Cochran's nominators said she exemplifies the visionary spirit celebrated by the Distinguished Educator designation. "Dr. Cochran is not only an exceptional educator but also a transformational one. She fosters a culture of teaching and learning that empowers others, improves outcomes and elevates the field."

Dr. Cochran was recognized at the Interprofessional Academy of Educators' InnovatED Symposium, held on September 30. The Distinguished Educator is an active designation, according to the IAE. Distinguished Educators must engage in at least three teaching or mentoring activities per year and complete a renewal process every five years to maintain the designation.

New podcast announced for the APTA-Nebraska organization



Brad Dexter, PT, DPT

In his role as the membership committee chair for the American Physical Therapy Association-Nebraska, assistant professor Brad Dexter, PT, DPT and Board-Certified Clinical Specialist in Neurologic Physical Therapy, started a podcast in April 2025 called the APTA Nebraska

podcast. The goal of the podcast is to create a sense of community among physical therapists in the state of Nebraska. This is accomplished by sharing updates in practice and advocacy opportunities, highlighting the work of committees within APTA-Nebraska, and giving a voice to members throughout the state. A new episode is released every two weeks.

Dr. Dexter notes, "We really just wanted to create another way that our members in APTA-Nebraska could get information from us and feel more connected to the organization and one another in the process. There are many PT's and PTA's throughout our state that are excellent representatives of our profession and serving their communities well. And I also just love playing with technology and having good conversations, so it was a nice excuse to do that as part of my service efforts."

The podcast is available here. It is also available wherever podcasts are found by searching "APTA Nebraska Podcast."

Alumni

Class of 2015 Reunion



The UNMC PT Class of 2015's ten-year reunion took place this summer with newly added faculty member Anne Woodruff Jameson, PT, DPT taking the lead on planning. It was held at Trucks and Taps in Omaha in July 2025. Pictured (I-r): Ryan Mettler, Derek Watson, Suzi Grotelueschen, Tasha Dekok, Melanne Weekly, Anne Woodruff Jameson, and Lucus Jameson

Program Update

PT and OT International Visiting Scholars



Pictured I-r: Joseph Siu, PhD, Ms. Xi Yang, and Stacy Smallfield, DrOT, OTR/L, BCG, FAOTA

In July 2025, Ms. Xi Yang and Ms. Xianghsan Wei joined the Global Health Opportunities Program (GHOP) as international visiting scholars for two weeks. Ms. Yang is an associate chief physical therapist from Zhongda Hospital at Southeast University in China. Ms. Wei is an occupational therapist at the same institution.

During their time as visiting scholars, Ms. Yang and Ms. Wei observed selected summer courses in both the PT and OT programs and participated in clinical observations at Nebraska Medicine and other local clinics.

In addition, Ms. Yang worked with Dr. Joseph Siu, GHOP chair, to plan her learning experience in the PT program. She learned

about the DPT coursework and lab sessions during her visit. Ms. Wei worked with Stacy Smallfied, DrOT, OTR/L, BCG, FAOTA, interim program director of the OT program, to observe OT coursework, clinical education and community activities during her visit.

Ms. Yang and Ms. Wei also gave a presentation about their experience and work in China.

The purpose of the GHOP visiting scholar program is to provide opportunities for international therapists or instructors in rehabilitation sciences to learn about PT and OT education at UNMC and build collaborations with faculty in the UNMC Department of Rehabilitation Sciences.



Ms. Xianghsan Wei and Joseph Siu, PhD

Summer PT program gives visitors experience to take home



Megan Frazee, PT, DPT, associate professor in the UNMC Department of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences, leads a lesson in the UNMC Summer Experiential Education Program in physical therapy.

Ten students from three universities in Asia participated in this summer's UNMC Summer Experiential EDucation (SEED) Program. They learned two important professional skills – problem-solving and empathy.

Designed for international physical therapy and rehabilitation students, the SEED program is a three-week, in-person experience at UNMC.

Administered by the UNMC Office of Global Engagement and delivered by the UNMC Physical Therapy Program, the program offers a comprehensive approach to learning. Students gain hands-on experience through research lab practice, see real-world applications during clinical observations, interact with UNMC doctorate in physical therapy students, and attend lectures and group discussions.

"The most important thing I learned is how to integrate evidence-based practice with advanced clinical techniques like blood flow restriction training and manual therapy," participant Zhaojie "Chelsea" Wang said. "I observed how therapists at UNMC use clinical reasoning to choose the right intervention and adjust it in real-time based on patient response."

Wang said the approach helped her realize "that physical therapy is not just about applying techniques, but about understanding the 'why' behind each decision."

Said participant Hsiang "Adam" Hu: "Many of the courses allowed me to step into the patient's shoes and truly understand their experiences. It gave me a deeper sense of empathy and reminded me that patients are more than just case studies or textbook examples."

Hannah Tong, executive director of academic partnerships in the UNMC Office of Global Engagement, said the program, in its eighth year, provides international students with a unique opportunity to gain a global perspective on rehabilitation and physical therapy in the U.S. and take this knowledge back to their home universities.

Joseph Siu, PhD, professor for the UNMC Physical Therapy Program and chair of global health opportunities program, said the students left UNMC with a greater sense of problemsolving and empathy in care. "These skills are essential for providing compassionate and effective care in a complex and ever-changing field of physical therapy," Dr. Siu said.

Scholarly Activity

From ACLs to Huskers: Global Perspectives in Sports Medicine Research



Pictured (I-r): Manuel Romero-Padron, MD; Obinna Chinweze, MD; and Leonardo Almeida

Step into the ACL Research Lab at UNMC, and you'll find more than data and devices — you'll discover stories of ambition, collaboration, and global connection. This year, our lab welcomed three exceptional international trainees who brought unique perspectives to our work in sports medicine: Manuel Romero-Padron, MD; Obinna Chinweze, MD; and Leonardo Almeida, a fourth-year physiotherapy student from Brazil.

A Fellowship Built for Future Leaders

Drs. Romero-Padron and Chinweze joined UNMC as Sports Medicine Research Fellows — a year-long immersive experience designed to deepen clinical research expertise and prepare them for orthopaedic surgery residency. Hosted by the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and Rehabilitation and the Physical Therapy Program, the fellowship blends biomechanics, imaging, and rehabilitation science with mentorship and clinical exposure.

"Our fellows are not just here to do research," says Dr. Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD, associate professor in Physical Therapy. "They are here to grow into well-rounded future physicians, contributing meaningfully to musculoskeletal health."

Driven by Curiosity, Grounded in Purpose

Originally from Tampico, Mexico, Dr. Romero-Padron focused his research on ACL reconstruction, exploring how body weight changes and rehabilitation progress affect surgical outcomes. He also led a project on a knee sleeve device that tracks motion patterns — an exciting fusion of technology and clinical care.

Dr. Chinweze, who has studied in Germany, the UK, and Belarus, brought a relentless curiosity to his work. He investigated post-operative outcomes in ACL patients, including the impact

of joint effusion and psychological factors on recovery. "Research lets me ask 'why not?' just as much as 'why?'" he says.

Welcoming a New Perspective

Joining the lab for a three-month internship in winter 2025, Leonardo Almeida brought fresh energy and insight from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, where he is completing his five-year physiotherapy degree. Inspired by his older brother's research journey, Leonardo sought out opportunities to engage in sports medicine and biomechanics, making UNMC's lab a perfect fit.

During his internship, Leonardo contributed to the Knee Arthroplasty Activity Trial (KArAT), supported biomechanical data processing, and participated in literature reviews and device testing. "This experience helped me bridge the gap between theory and practice," he shared. "I gained a clearer understanding of how clinical knowledge and scientific research go hand in hand."

Leonardo also attended the APTA Nebraska Physical Therapy Association conference, his first physical therapy conference outside of Brazil, which he described as "truly unforgettable."

Mentorship and Community

All three trainees emphasized the value of mentorship and the welcoming culture at UNMC. Fellows worked closely with faculty including Dr. Wellsandt and Dr. Matthew Tao, medical director of the Sports Medicine Program. Leonardo noted the impact of observing Dr. Wellsandt's empathetic patient care, saying, "It reminded me of the kind of professional I aspire to be."

From collaborative research to cheering at their first Huskers game, each trainee found a sense of belonging in Omaha. "Everyone has been incredibly supportive," said Dr. Romero-Padron. "There is a real commitment to quality and detail here."

Looking Ahead

Dr. Wellsandt reflects, "There is no better feeling than seeing our trainees reach their goals."

Their advice to future trainees? Set goals, ask questions, work smart, and embrace the journey — weather swings and all.

Physical Therapy Program faculty are actively disseminating research and scholarly work on a variety of topics. Below is a list of publications, presentations and grants since the last Joint Connections newsletter in Spring 2025. Names in bold are faculty members in the Physical Therapy Program.

Publications

Alonso WW, **Bills SE**, Lundgren SW, et al. HEART Camp Connect—Promoting adherence to exercise in adults with heart failure with preserved ejection fraction. ESC Heart Fail. Published online June 18, 2025. doi:10.1002/ehf2.15341.

Bennell KL, Nelligan RK, Pardo JJ, Stratulate S, Holden MA, Lawford BJ, Thoma LM, White DK, **Wellsandt E**, Master H, Larsen JB, Button K, Collins NJ, Skou ST, Henrotin Y, Hinman RS. Research priorities for physical activity and exercise management of people with knee and hip osteoarthritis: A multi-stage international priority-setting study from the OARSI Rehabilitation Discussion Group. Osteoarthritis Cartilage. 2025 Jul 10:S1063-4584(25)01071-4. doi: 10.1016/j.joca.2025.07.006. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 40651796.

Chineze R, Weldon N, Tao M, Manzer M, **Wellsandt E**. Reliability of T2-weighted MRI Volumetric Measurements for Knee Effusion Assessment Following ACL Injury: An Intra-rater and Inter-rater Study - Poster Presentation. International Society of Orthopaedic Surgery and Traumatology Orthopaedic World Congress; Madrid, Spain. 2025 Sep.

Cochran TM, Harp K and Hanson C (2025) Urinary metabolites as biomarkers of dietary intake: a systematic review. Front Nutr 12:1596543. doi: 10.3389/fnut.2025.1596543.

Hao J, Yao Y, **Siu KC**. Artificial Intelligence in Physical Therapy Education: Evaluating Clinical Reasoning Performance in Musculoskeletal Care using ChatGPT. Musculoskeletal Care 2025, 23(3): e70177. http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/msc.70177.

Manning J, Heselton HJ, **Venema DM**, Boron JB, Yentes JM. Defining the concept of physical resilience and quantifying recovery during standing balance in middle-aged and older adults. Sci Rep. 2025;15(1):7988. doi:10.1038/s41598-025-92746-7.

Mohammadzadeh A, Fallahtafti F, Heselton J, Myers SA, **Siu KC**, Boron JB. Modeling Dual-Task Performance: Identifying Key Predictors Using Artificial Neural Networks. Biomimetics 2025, 10, 351. https://doi.org/10.3390/biomimetics10060351.

Romero Padron MA, Jorgensen A, Werner DM, Tao MA, **Wellsandt E**. Knee Loading Asymmetries During Descent and Ascent Phases of Squatting After ACL Reconstruction. Appl Sci. 2025 Jul;15(14):7780. doi: 10.3390/app15147780. Online ahead of print.

Romero-Padron MA,* Fuentes-Rivera L, Jorgensen A, Tao MA, **Wellsandt EA**. The Association Between Body Weight Changes and Physical Activity after Anterior Cruciate Ligament Reconstruction. J Athl Train. Published online August 12, 2025. doi: 10.4085/1062-6050-0124.25.

Venema DM, Christensen SML, Nyhoff M, Skinner A, Kennel V. Safe patient mobilization training: A cross-sectional survey of nursing and rehabilitation professionals. Rehabil Nurs. Published online June 2, 2025. doi:10.1097/RNJ.000000000000503.

Wellsandt MJ, Weldon N, Werner DM, McManigal ML, Tao MA, **Rosenthal MD**, Sajja BR, Wichman CS, Baker A, Johnson C, Specht Z, Weaver BA, Knarr B, Nabower C, **Wellsandt E**. Efficacy of a Squat Visual Biofeedback Program After ACL Reconstruction: Protocol for a Prospective, Parallel, Randomized Controlled Trial. Int J Sports Phys Ther. 2025 Sep 2;20(9):1364-1376. doi: 10.26603/001c.142879. PMID: 40904719; PMCID: PMC12404589.

Werner DM, Arveeva L, Golightly YM, Sajja BR, **Rosenthal MD**, Tao M, **Wellsandt E**. Sedentary Behavior Patterns after ACL Reconstruction. Int J Exerc Sci. 2025 Jul;18(4):636-658.

Werner DM, Golightly YM, **Rosenthal MD**, Sajja B, Wichman C, Manzer M, Tao M, **Wellsandt E**. Relationship Between Changes in Physical Activity and Knee Health 18 months after ACL Reconstruction. Med Sci Sports Exerc. 2025 Jun 16. doi: 10.1249/MSS.0000000000003787. Online ahead of print. PMID: 40523235.

Werner D, Howell M, Golightly YM, **Rosenthal MD**, Tao MA, **Wellsandt E**. Feasibility and Acceptability of Implementing a Progressive Walking Program after ACL Reconstruction: A Mixed Methods Study. J Athl Train. 2025 Apr 16. doi: 10.4085/1062-6050-0430.24. Online ahead of print. PMID: 40235177.

Presentations

Christensen S, Kinnison R. Innovative Tech & IPE: Enhancing Stroke Care for Women in Rural Communities. Virtual Podium Presentation, 2025 Heartland Innovations in Interprofessional Practice and Education (HIIPE) Summit, July 18, 2025.

Presentations continued

Christian E, DeBruin C, Gonzalez L, Montemarano S, **Woodruff Jameson, A**. Self-Advocates as Sexual Health Educators: Benefits and Challenges. Platform presentation at the Seeking Opportunities for an Advocacy Revolution Regional Conference. Omaha, NE. October 4, 2025.

Cochran TM, Jensen L, Kennel VL, McKelvey M. Promoting Participation: Outcomes of an Immersive, Interprofessional Tele-team Program with Health Science Students and Survivors of Stroke. Platform presentation, Collaborating Across Borders IX, Omaha, NE, May 28, 2025.

Dexter B. Rebooting the System: Understanding Functional Neurological Disorder. Webinar for Nurse Case Managers and Healthcare Professionals, Quality Living, Inc., online. August 20, 2025.

Minchow A, Tao M, Sajja B, Manzer M, **Wellsandt E**. Correlation Between Serum Biomarkers and Early Articular Cartilage Degradation Reported By Magnetic Resonance Imaging Following ACL Reconstruction - Oral Presentation. International Society of Arthroscopy, Knee Surgery and Orthopaedic Sports Medicine Biennial Congress; Munich, Germany. June 9, 2025.

Somers KS, **Cochran TM**, Jensen L, Jensen GM. Strategies for Building a Moral Commons: An Interprofessional Imperative. Workshop, Collaborating Across Borders IX, Omaha, NE, May 29, 2025.

Wellsandt E, An Update on the Management of Osteoarthritis in 2025, Midwest Regional Radiation Oncology Symposium, Omaha, NE, August 22, 2025.

Wellsandt E, Current Concepts in Rehabilitation After ACL Revision, International Society of Arthroscopy, Knee Surgery and Orthopaedic Sports Medicine Biennial Congress, Munich, Germany, June 9, 2025.

Grants

PI: Primary Investigator Co-PI: Co-Primary Investigator Co-I: Co-Investigator

Brad Dexter, PT, DPT (Co-PI)

Funding Source: NU Collaboration Initiative

Title: Mechanics of underwater treadmill walking for individuals with subacute stroke

PI: Knarr

Dates: 2025-2026

Joseph Siu, PhD (Co-PI)

Funding Source: NU Collaboration Initiative.

Title: Evidence-Based Design of Wobble Boards to Enhance Postural Long-Latency Reflexes in Fall-Prone

Older Adults. PI: Mangalam Dates: 2025-2026

Joseph Siu, PhD (Co-PI)

Funding Source: NU Collaboration Initiative.

Title: Naturalistic Social Interaction Analysis Between Dementia Care Recipients and Caregivers with Data-Driven Machine Learning Models.

PI: Youn

Dates: 2025-2026

Joint Connections Contributors: Lenal Bottoms, MA | Brad Dexter, PT, DPT | Deb Norman, MPA | Joseph Siu, PT, PhD | Elizabeth Wellsandt, PT, DPT, PhD | Anne Woodruff Jameson, PT, DPT | Alexis Zgud, MA

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