



2026 Spring Update

Craniofacial Biology Group Newsletter

Message from the President

Dear Colleagues,

It is my great honor to serve as President of the IADR Craniofacial Biology Research Group and to share this newsletter with our community. Our group represents a vibrant, interdisciplinary network of scientists dedicated to advancing fundamental, discovery-driven, and translational research in craniofacial biology, including development, disease, and regeneration.

Over the past year, our membership has showcased outstanding science and translational innovation. Our symposia and scientific sessions have highlighted the power of interdisciplinary collaboration, while our networking events have created meaningful opportunities for connection across career stages and have fostered mentorship, inclusion, and global engagement.

This newsletter features highlights from the 2025 AADOCR and IADR meetings, member achievements, student and trainee spotlights, and updates on upcoming symposia and networking opportunities. As we look ahead, we remain committed to encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration, supporting emerging scientists, and promoting excellence in craniofacial biology research and education.

I invite you to stay involved and collaborate actively with our group—whether by sharing your research, mentoring future leaders, participating in our sessions at upcoming AADOCR/IADR/CADR meetings, or serving as an officer within the group.

Your expertise, energy, and commitment are what make the Craniofacial Biology Research Group a dynamic and impactful scientific home within IADR.

I look forward to seeing you in San Diego.

Sincerely,

Ariadne Letra, DDS, MS, PhD

President, Craniofacial Biology Group
International Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial
Research



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Craniofacial Biology Group

The primary purpose of the Craniofacial Biology Group (CBG) is to promote excellence in clinical, translational, and basic science research focused on the craniofacial complex.

Members of our group come from a broad range of research backgrounds including anatomy and neurobiology; cellular and molecular biology; developmental biology; dental materials; genetics; general dentistry; mineralized tissue; orthodontics; oral facial pain; oral and maxillary surgery; pathology; pediatric dentistry; periodontology; radiology; restorative dentistry and restorative medicine.

We believe that this purposeful diversity of interests and training among our members helps to foster such things as the cross-pollination of information between specialties, the generation of collaborative research, the creation of mentoring opportunities, and the discussion of new and innovative ways to study oral health and disease.

The CBG supports and provides a forum for research including, but not limited to, molecular and biochemical control of dental and craniofacial growth and development; etiology, diagnosis, and treatment of craniofacial anomalies; etiology, diagnosis, and treatment of malocclusion; three-dimensional imaging of craniofacial structures; temporomandibular joint disorders; development of biomarkers of health and disease, animal models of craniofacial development and more.

2025 IADR and AADOCR/CADR General Sessions in Review

The CBG sponsored or co-sponsored the following sessions:

- *Advancing Dentistry Through Tissue Engineering and 3D Printing*
- *Regenerative Dentistry*
- *Salute to Terrie Cowley: An Indefatigable Leader for TMJ Research*
- *Women in Science Network — Bridging the GAP!*

Special thanks to our CBG members who served as abstract reviewers for the meetings!

Updates from the AADOCR and IADR Council Meetings

In addition to leadership nominations and additional sections, the following policy updates were approved by the IADR and AADOCR Councils in 2025:

- *Updated [IADR/AADOCR Code of Ethics](#)*
- *Policy Statement on Antimicrobial Resistance*
- *Dental Amalgam Policy and Position Statement*
- *Tobacco and Nicotine Products Position Statement*
- *Oral Diseases within the NCD Agenda Policy Statement*
- *AADOCR Community Water Fluoridation Position Statement*
- *AADOCR Topical Fluoride Position Statement*

More information on these policy updates, as well as requests for further comments and information, can be found at:

- <https://www.iadr.org/IADR-science-policy>
- <https://www.aadocr.org/science-policy>

Craniofacial Biology Group Awards Competitions

These awards recognize original and outstanding research on craniofacial growth and development. Each awardee receives a plaque/certificate and monetary prize. Each applicant must be the primary author and presenter of a poster accepted for presentation at the IADR General Session. It is not necessary to send additional documentation of student status. **Applicants are responsible for determining eligibility for and application to a single award category.** Ineligible, multiple, incomplete, or late applications will not be considered and applicants may be excluded from future competitions. Award recipients are selected by a committee appointed by the CBG Vice President. The awards are presented for the best abstracts and student presentations from among those entered in each competition. Finalists and winners are recognized by the CBG at the IADR meeting where the competition takes place.

Please see the Awards and Fellowships page for more details: <https://www.iadr.org/awards>



Applicants must pre-register for the meeting as a student, be a member of both IADR and CBG, and apply to a single category to be eligible for these awards

Bernard G. Sarnat Award

- Senior Category (PhD students and postdoctoral fellows)
- US \$500 award
- This award is supported by interest from a \$10,000 endowed donation by Dr. Bernard G. Sarnat to the Craniofacial Biology Group and by the membership of the Craniofacial Biology Group.

Craniofacial Biology Award

- Junior Category (MS and dental students or residents in certificate programs)
- US \$300 award
- This award is supported by DENTAID and the membership of the Craniofacial Biology Group.

Orthodontic & Craniofacial Clinical and Translational Research Award

- Open to residents in a Certificate and/or MS-degree program, PhD students, and postdoctoral fellows.
 - **Additional documents are required to apply.** Full details can be found at: <https://www.iadr.org/awards/orthodontic-craniofacial-clinical-and-translational-research-award>
- US \$700 award
- This award is sponsored by John Wiley and Sons, Ltd., and the membership of the Craniofacial Biology Group.

Award Sponsors

CBG Membership

Dr. Bernard G. Sarnat Endowment

John Wiley and Sons, Ltd.



Thank you for your continued support!

Dr. Bernard G. Sarnat Award Finalists

Sanjaya Thapa (WINNER)
Texas A&M College of Dentistry
A Novel GTPase Regulator Governs the Tissue Turnover and Regenerative Capacity of Murine Incisors

Tian Chen
Sichuan University
Association of Dysplastic Coronoid Process with Long-Face Morphology

Chuyi Han
Sichuan University
Mitochondrial DNA G-quadruplexes Deteriorates Immunocytes-DPSCs Interaction through Driving Immuno-aging

Yixuan Huang
West China Hospital of Stomatology, Sichuan University
Neural crest-derived MSC orchestrates craniofacial muscle fibrosis via Myostatin

Maria Pacheco Vergara
University of Southern California
Identifying Injury-Responsive Mechanisms in Anterior Disc Displacement Murine Model

Xinyu Yan
University of Hong Kong
Role of FTO in Bone Formation during Aging



Changhao Yu
West China Hospital of Stomatology, Sichuan University
The Stem Cell Basis of Platelets-fueled Adult Bone Regeneration and Therapies

Tao Zhou
Sichuan University
Synergistic Functions of Gli2 and Gli3 in Coordinating Tooth Root Morphogenesis.

Craniofacial Biology Group Award Finalists

Hao Sui (WINNER)
West China Hospital of Stomatology, Sichuan University
Nanomaterial-Mediated Reprogramming of Macrophages to Inhibit Orofacial Muscle Fibrosis

Xinmei Du
West China Hospital of Stomatology, Sichuan University
TGF- β 3 Mediates Temporomandibular Joint Cartilage Lipid Metabolism Through P-Erk1/2 Pathway

Wenwen Hu
University of Barcelona
Characterizing the Oral-Craniofacial Phenotype of Turner Syndrome: Preliminary Results

Shengnan Liao
West China Hospital of Stomatology, Sichuan University
A Bioswitchable siRNA delivery system for mandibular bone defect repair

Jeremy Oliver Pina
University of Maryland
Single Cell Spatial Transcriptomics Reveals ECM Aberrations in Cleft Palate



Pictured left to right: Xinmei Du, Wenwen Hu, Jeremy Oliver Pena, Shengnan Liao, Hao Sui (WINNER), and Xiaofang Wang



Upcoming Talks and Sessions at IADR/ AADOCR/CADR

Symposia

- March 25 | 15:15 — 16:45
Move AHEAD for Early Detection and Diagnosis of Pre- and Malignant Oral Lesions
 Zhong Chen, Yu Leo Lei, Jason Wan, Wendy Wang, Simon Young
- March 26 | 08:00 — 09:30
Ethics in AI Times: Impact on Research Spectrum from Protocol to Publication
 Yong-Hee Chun, Joana Cunha-Cruz, Isadora Martini Garcia, Christina Godoy,
 Dorota Kopycka-Kedzierawski, Jill M. Kramer, Steven R. Singer, Livia Tenuta
- March 26 | 14:00 — 15:30
Bridging Animal Models and Human Genetic Advances in Tooth Development
 Ariadne Letra, Rena D'Souza, Joy Richman
- March 27 | 08:00 — 09:30
Chewing Functions for Full Brain Potential in Vulnerable Populations
 Maria Grazia Piacino
- March 27 | 14:00 — 15:30
Updates to NIH's Extramural Research Project Grant Policies and Processes
 Gabriela Hidalgo, Amanda Melillo, Sanoj Suneja
- March 28 | 08:00 — 09:30
Birth of a Discipline: Honoring Hal Slavkin's Contribution to Craniofacial Biology
 Yang Chai, Dushanka V. Kleinman
- March 28 | 14:00 — 15:30
A New Look at Regeneration of the Oral Mucosa
 Benjamin P.J. Fournier, Ophir Klein

Upcoming Meetings

2026 IADR/AADOCR/CADR Annual Meeting and Exhibition

104th General Session & Exhibition of the IADR

55th Annual Meeting & Exhibition of the AADOCR

50th Annual Meeting of the CADR

- March 25-28, 2026
- San Diego, CA

Upcoming CBG Meeting Events

2026 IADR/AADOCR/CADR

CBG Business Meeting

- ◆ March 26, 2026
- ◆ 17:30 — 18:30
- ◆ Room 30A

Joint Reception with the Mineralized Tissue, Pulp Biology and Regeneration, and Stem Cell Biology Groups

- ◆ March 26, 2026
- ◆ 18:30 — 20:30

IADR/AADOCR/CADR Sponsored Oral and Poster Presentations

Oral Sessions

- March 25 | 15:15 — 16:45
Craniofacial Bone Regeneration
- March 26 | 14:00 — 15:30
Mechanisms of Craniofacial Tissue Regulation
- March 27 | 14:00 — 15:30
Therapeutic Approaches to Craniofacial Pathologies
- March 28 | 08:30 — 09:30
Mechanistic Insight into Craniofacial Structures via -Omics Approaches
- March 28 | 14:00 — 15:30
Mechanistic Advances in Tooth Development

Poster Sessions

- March 26 | 15:45 — 17:00
Palate Development and Cleft Pathology
- March 27 | 11:00 — 12:15
Regenerative Approaches in Craniofacial Tissues
- March 27 | 15:45 — 17:00
Mechanisms of Craniofacial Anomalies
- March 28 | 11:00 — 12:15
Pathologies in the Craniofacial Complex and Therapeutic Approaches
TMJ Development, Pathology, and Regenerative Approaches
- March 28 | 15:15 — 17:15
Development and Growth in the Craniofacial Complex

IADR, AADOCR, and CBG Elections

Dr. Chenshuang (Monica) Li was elected to serve as the Craniofacial Biology Group Vice President beginning in March 2026. Dr. Li is an Associate Professor, and the Clinical Director of the Orthodontic Clinic in the Department of Orthodontics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine.



Please Vote in Upcoming Elections

Make sure that you take the time to vote in you local and group elections. The CBG will be electing a Secretary/Treasurer and Directors in Fall 2026.



Voting is a membership responsibility and empowers you to elect the IADR and AADOCR leadership and to help shape the organizations' future. As an IADR member, you may vote annually for the candidates of your choice for IADR Vice-president as well as for any IADR Constitutional Amendments recommended by the Board and Council.

All members of the IADR will receive an email containing an individual link to vote in the next election in the Fall of 2026. If you experience problems accessing the online voting system, please email the IADR Global Headquarters at membervote@iadr.org. There are no paper ballots, so please vote online. You may only vote once. The deadline to receive all votes will be announced by IADR closer to the election.

For Those Interested in Serving in the Future

Vice President

The Vice President is elected to a four-year cycle that includes one year successively in each of the following offices: Vice-President, President-Elect, President, Immediate Past-President. This leadership position entails administration of the Sarnat and Craniofacial Biology Awards competitions (year 1), assigning or functioning as the group program chair for IADR/AADOCR annual meeting (s) (year 2), arranging symposia, lunch & learn sessions, and submit the President's Report (year 3), oversee the Orthodontic & Craniofacial Clinical Translational Research Award and assist with advisory functions (year 4). You **must** have previously served as Director, Councilor, or Secretary-Treasurer for one term to qualify to run for Vice-President.

Secretary/Treasurer

The Secretary is elected to a three-year cycle. Responsibilities include providing IADR with updates for the website, keeping minutes of meetings, making logistical arrangements for CBG meetings at the annual AADR/IADR meeting(s), collaborating with IADR headquarters to coordinate annual elections, and maintaining records. As treasurer, responsibilities include making requisitions and requesting invoices through the IADR Headquarters staff, arranging expenses at the annual IADR/AADR meeting(s), and annually preparing budget reports.

Councilor

The Councilor attends IADR Council meetings and votes in a manner that is representative of the group. In addition to reporting events arising from the Council either via email or at the annual CBG business meeting, the Councilor will also act as the liaison between the CBG and IADR Headquarters on any science policy issues.

Director

Two Directors are elected annually in the Fall. Directors aid with drafting the groups newsletter, reviewing abstracts, and serve as a sounding board to the CBG Executive Board.

CBG Member Spotlight

Dr. Ariadne Letra awarded [Pennsylvania Dental Association Recognition Award](#).

The Annual Awards Committee of the Pennsylvania Dental Association (PDA) selected Dr. Ariadne Letra, DDS, MS, PhD, as the recipient of the 2026 PDA Recognition Award, for her contributions to original research and significant achievements in advancing the science and art of dentistry. Dr. Letra's research bridges basic science and clinical dentistry and spans gene discovery, translational dental research, and the integration of oral health with systemic health. Her work has significantly advanced understanding of the genetic and molecular basis of craniofacial anomalies and dental diseases.

Congratulations Ariadne!



Please contact CBG leadership if you are interested in being featured in the Member Spotlight

Dr. Lucia Cevidanes recently joined the University of North Carolina Adams School of Dentistry as the [William R. Proffit Professor and Chair of the Department of Orthodontics](#), a role she embraces as an opportunity to rebuild and reinvigorate a vision of craniofacial biology research spanning the full translational spectrum, from T0 basic science discovery through T4 population-level impact on personalized patient care. Inspired by the legacy of Dr. William Proffit, she is advancing AI-driven 3D imaging, temporomandibular joint biology, and machine learning tools that bridge the bench and the clinic. Her recently renewed and transferred NIH NIDCR R01 on integrative predictors of temporomandibular degenerative joint disease anchors this translational mission, complemented by an active portfolio of 2025–2026 publications spanning clear aligner outcomes, airway analysis, and craniofacial diagnostics. In addition to her departmental leadership, she continues to serve the Craniofacial Biology Group as Vice President and coordinates the Junior Investigator, Orthodontics, Craniofacial Biology, and Bernard Sarnat award competitions.

Congratulations Lucia!



2025-2026 Officers

President

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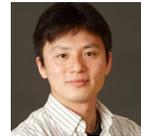
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Dr. Abigail Tucker

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See you at the meetings next year!

AADOCR/CADR Annual Meeting & Exhibition

56th Annual Meeting of the AADOCR
51st Annual Meeting of the CADR

- March 17-20, 2027
- Minneapolis, MN



IADR/APR General Session & Exhibition

105th General Session of the IADR
7th Annual Meeting of the IADR Asia/Pacific Region

- June 23-26, 2027
- Melbourne, Australia



Shared Resource Highlight



FaceBase is a collaborative NIDCR-funded consortium to generate data in support of advancing research into craniofacial development and malformation.

For more information: <https://www.facebase.org/about>

Have a resource, meeting/symposium, funding, or employment opportunity to share? Contact CBG leadership to be featured in the next newsletter.



American Association of Orthodontists Foundation

For more information: <https://www.aaofoundation.net/awards-program/about-the-aaof-awards-program>