



AADOOCR
American Association for Dental,
Oral, and Craniofacial Research

NSRG National Student
Research Group

AADOOCR NSRG Member-at-large/Regional Rep Application

Candidate Name : Merna Gress

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Graduation Date: April 2028

Position Sought: Regional Representative

Reasons for Running (250 word limit)

I am interested in serving within the AADOOCR NSRG because I am passionate about student research, mentorship, and building meaningful connections between students and academic institutions. As a fourth-year PhD candidate in Oral Health Sciences at the University of Michigan, my research and leadership experiences have shown me the importance of creating supportive environments that encourage students to become involved in research and professional development opportunities.

Throughout my academic journey, I have been actively involved in student leadership, research mentorship, and international collaboration through dental student organizations and academic initiatives. These experiences strengthened my communication, organizational, and networking skills while allowing me to work with students and professionals from diverse backgrounds. I particularly enjoy helping students feel connected to research communities and encouraging participation in conferences, mentorship opportunities, and collaborative activities.

Across my leadership roles—as President of DSSA-Egypt, Vice President of Afro-DSA, Chairperson in the International Association of Dental Students, and currently Mentor Co-Chair in GRIN and Fundraising Chair in the Michigan SRG—I've supported students through building mentorship programs, research networks, and cross-institutional initiatives that span countries and training levels. I envision an NSRG where every student—regardless of background or institutional resources—has access to mentorship, funding, and collaborative opportunities.

I am highly motivated to contribute to the mission of the NSRG in a role where I can be helpful, reliable, and effective. I believe my background would allow me to support regional engagement, promote communication between student research groups, and contribute ideas to strengthen student involvement in AADOOCR. I would be honored to serve as either a Regional Representative or Member-at-Large and contribute positively to the NSRG Board through collaboration, outreach, and advocacy for student researchers.

Research Conducted *(Include top five bullet points; 200 word limit)*

- PhD researcher at the University of Michigan investigating oral mesenchymal stem cells, exosome-mediated immunomodulation, and dental pulp biology.
 - Master's thesis at New York University examining mutagenic and genotoxic effects of E-cigarette aerosol and benzo(a)pyrene in Big Blue® mouse oral tissues.
 - Additional research on NiTi endodontic file performance, dental materials behavior, and undergraduate projects involving dental pulp stem cells, whitening agents, toxicology, and epidemiology-based oral health surveys.
 - Presented an oral presentation at AADOCR 2023, the Society of Toxicology, NYU Research Day, and multiple international scientific platforms.
 - Awards include: ADA Foundation Leadership Award & Crest/Oral-B Promising Researcher Award (2025); Rackham Precandidate Research Grant (2025); Graduate Student Best Abstract—SOT Arab Specialty Group (2023); Toxicologists of African Origin Travel Award (2023); NYU Dean's Conference & GSAS Travel Awards (2023); Fulbright Foreign Student Grant (2021–2023).
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Student Activities *(Include top five bullet points; 200 word limit)*

- GRIN Mentor Co-Chair and Michigan SRG Fundraising Chair; led mentorship programs, workshops, and student development initiatives.
- Member, International Center Student Council (2024–2026).
- LeaderShape Cohort 2025, University of Michigan.
- ISICL Interprofessional Leadership Program Participant (2025–2026).
- Participant, Student Leadership in Global Oral Health Program (2021–2022); presented Preventive Oral Health Community Project at AADMD Orlando.
- Former President of DSSA-Egypt; Vice President of Afro-DSA; Chairperson of the Voluntary Committee and Head of Educational Internship, IADS.
- Extensive oral health outreach in Tanzania, South Africa, Jamaica, Egypt, and the United States.

Academic Honors *(Include top five bullet points; 200 word limit)*

- ADA Foundation Leadership Award & Crest + Oral-B Promising Researcher Award (2025).
- Rackham Precandidate Graduate Student Research Grant, University of Michigan (2025).
- Fulbright Foreign Student Scholarship for Master's Degree at New York University (2021–2023).
- Graduate Student Best Abstract Award, Society of Toxicology (SOT) Arab Specialty Group (2023).
- Toxicologists of African Origin Travel Award and NYU Dean's/GSAS Research Travel Awards (2023).
- Membership of the Joint Dental Faculties (MJDF) and Licentiate in Dental Surgery (LDS), Royal College of Surgeons of England.

All information should be carefully proofread. The information you submit will not be re-typed and will be provided to the board exactly as you submit it.

Please include a headshot color photo of yourself as an attachment in addition to this candidate form. The photo should be in .jpg or .png format and be no more than 500x500 pixels.

Please save this document as “2026-2027 AADOCR NSRG <MAL and or RR> - <INSERT NAME HERE>”. Then email it as an attachment along with your photo to nsrg@aadocr.org by the April deadline.
