

September 2026

Karin Konnects: Message from the Chair

As summer begins to wind down, the ORS Spine Section is already looking ahead to a busy and exciting fall - and, before we know it, another ORS Annual Meeting.

Coming up shortly is the [ORS PSRS 8th International Spine Research Symposium](#) at Skytop, PA from November 1–5, 2026. If you have never attended PSRS, I strongly encourage you to consider it. It brings together outstanding spine science in a setting that makes discussion, exchange, and networking particularly easy which is exactly the kind of meeting where conversations continue long after the scientific sessions end.

Just a short while later there is the [2027 ORS Annual Meeting](#) in San Francisco, California from February 19-23, 2027. Planning is well underway, including our two-hour Spine Section session. The program spans some of the most exciting areas of spine research, with speakers from across our community and beyond. And, as your German Chair, I will admit to being especially pleased that the program will feature several members of the German Spine Society.

We are also introducing a new 3-Minute Research Elevator Pitch during the Spine Section session, complete with cash prizes for First and Second Place. Additional details will be communicated soon.

And, of course, no Spine Section Annual Meeting would be complete without our Section Reception. This year, we are planning a memorable evening for the Spine community on the Sunday of Annual Meeting. We will provide additional details in the next newsletter so please Save the Date!

There is much more to come over the next several months, including additional details about the scientific program, awards, and networking opportunities. For now, enjoy the last stretch of summer, get those abstracts ready, and mark your calendars.

I look forward to seeing many of you at Skytop - and even more of you in San Francisco!

Karin Wuertz-Kozak, MBA, PhD
Rochester Institute of Technology





Make Your Voice Heard!

Volunteering with ORS is an opportunity to grow as a leader while giving back to the orthopaedic research community.

General Call for Volunteers

[Learn More](#)

The ORS Publication Advisory Committee (PAC) is seeking engaged members to contribute their expertise and perspectives. This is a great opportunity to bring the voice of the spine research community to ORS-wide publication initiatives, connect with researchers across disciplines, and contribute to the future direction of ORS publications. We encourage you to apply if you have an interest in publications, scientific communication, or advancing orthopaedic research.

Each Section contains its core Section Officer executive committee. For the Spine Section, the future structure of the executive committee encompasses Section Chair, Section Chair-Elect, Section Past Chair, Section Secretary, Section Research Chair, Section Education Chair, Section Communication Chair, and Section Membership Chair.

Section Call for Volunteers

[Learn More](#)

ORS PSRS 8th International Spine Research Symposium

November 1-5, 2026 | Skytop, Pennsylvania



Schedule

[View Agenda](#)

Registration

[Register Now](#)

Speaker Lineup

[Learn More](#)

Travel Information

[Read More](#)

We look forward to sharing the latest advances in spine research and are thrilled about our outstanding lineup of invited speakers, along with exciting BACPAC and Rising Star sessions. View the invited speaker lineup above.

Beyond the science, we are especially looking forward to reconnecting with colleagues and friends for engaging discussions, networking, and fun social events at the beautiful Skytop Lodge.

For questions or inquiries, please contact the conference organizers: [James C. Iatridis, PhD](#), [Sarah Gullbrand, PhD](#), [Lachlan Smith, PhD](#), and [Nilsson Holguin, PhD](#).



The countdown to the [2027 ORS Annual Meeting](#) is on and we have several exciting things planned for our Spine Section community.

ORS Spine Section Scientific Session - Saturday, February 20, 2027

Join colleagues, collaborators, and leaders in spine research for a dynamic session highlighting the latest scientific advances and innovative discoveries in the field.

NEW! 3 Minute Research Elevator Pitch Competition - Held during the Spine Section Scientific Session

🎤 3 Minutes. One Big Idea. One Opportunity to Shine.

🏆 Compete for **cash prizes** and bragging rights

🤝 Connect with fellow trainees and build new collaborations

This fast-paced event challenges participants to clearly and compellingly present their research to a broad audience in only three minutes. Details coming soon!

ORS Spine Section Reception - Sunday, February 21, 2027

Registration is required. More details will be shared in our next newsletter.

Please note that dates communicated above are subject to change.

Early Career Investigator Spotlights



Nazir M. Khan, PhD

Assistant Professor, Department of Orthopaedics
Emory Musculoskeletal Institute, Emory University School of Medicine
Research Health Science Specialist, Atlanta VA Medical Center

"My interest in orthopaedic research grew from a fascination with how musculoskeletal tissues maintain function for decades despite constant mechanical, inflammatory, and metabolic stress. Cartilage, in particular, is a remarkable tissue because it has limited intrinsic repair capacity, yet it must withstand a highly demanding environment throughout life."

Meet Nazir

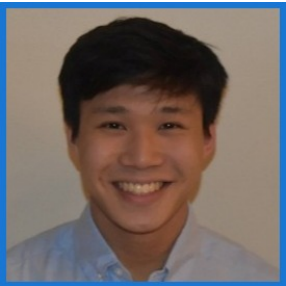
David N. Paglia, PhD
Assistant Professor, Orthopaedic Surgery
Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

"As a graduate student, I remember reading the Bone Biomechanics Handbook. I poured through the chapters written by established PIs and ORS members. I took note of their fantastic research contributions and how much room Orthopaedic research had to grow as a field. The opportunity to do research in the growing spine research field led me to my research direction."



Meet David

Member Spotlights



Jonathan (JJ) Huang
Medical Student
Department of Orthopaedics
Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai

"I look forward to assessing spinal deformity and curvature following injury in animal models to better understand the structural changes that occur during disease progression and recovery."

Meet JJ

Johannes Hasler
PhD Candidate
Department of Biomedical Engineering
Rochester Institute of Technology

"My research focuses on mechanobiology and intervertebral disc degeneration of the annulus fibrosus. I am very interested in understanding how cells sense and respond to mechanical cues through mechanosensitive ion channels such as TRPV4, and how we can connect the underlying mechanisms to disc health and disease."



Meet Johannes

Celebrating Spine Section Achievements

Exciting to see this thoughtful editorial published in the European Spine Journal, [*The Researcher Is Not an Afterthought*](#), led by ORS Spine Research Section Past Chair **Dino Samartzis, DSc** and co-authored by current Chair **Karin Wuertz-Kozak, MBA, PhD**. The editorial highlights the essential role researchers play in driving discovery, advancing innovation, mentoring the next generation, and shaping the future of academic medicine. It offers an important perspective on why investing in researchers ultimately strengthens both scientific progress and patient care.

Makarand V. Risbud, PhD, FORS, FIOR
2026 HUMBOLDT RESEARCH AWARD RECIPIENT

Awarded by Germany's Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, this internationally recognized honor celebrates researchers whose discoveries have made a lasting impact on their fields. Dr. Risbud's pioneering work in spine biology and intervertebral disc degeneration has advanced our understanding of the molecular mechanisms behind painful spine disorders and opened new avenues for treatment.



Join us in congratulating **Makarand V. Risbud, PhD**, on receiving the prestigious 2026 Humboldt Research Award! To commemorate this, Dr Risbud was invited to write a perspective review on this body of work for JOR Spine. Click the image below and read more!

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REVIEW ARTICLE

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My Love Story With HIFs in the Disc: A Journey to the Humboldt Research Award

Makarand V. Risbud

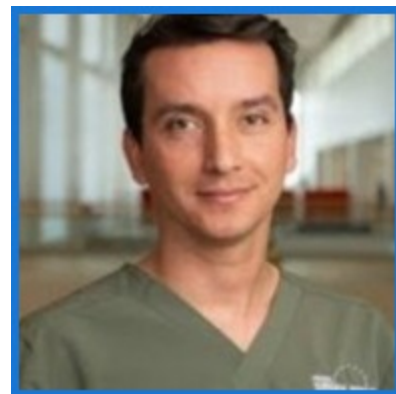
First published: 02 September 2026 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/jsp2.70218> | [VIEW METRICS](#)



Congratulations to **Neharika Bhadouria, PhD** for receiving the Young Investigator Award 2026 from American Society of Bone Research (ASBMR) for her PhD work.



Congratulations to **Sade Williams Clayton, PhD**, for receiving the NIH K99/R00 grant and the Loan Repayment Program award from the National Institute on Aging (NIA).



Congratulations to **Andres Bonilla, PhD** for being recognized in the [North American Spine Society Spine Line's 2026 40 Under 40 list!](#)



THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE LUMBAR SPINE

Apply for the 2027 ISSLS Prize Program

Applications are now being accepted for the [2027 ISSLS Prize Program](#), sponsored by the European Spine Journal and Springer Nature. The program recognizes outstanding lumbar spine research in Basic Science, Bioengineering Science, and Clinical Science, awarding up to three prizes of \$20,000 each.

Winning manuscripts will be published in the European Spine Journal, and recipients will have the opportunity to present their research at the [2027 ISSLS Annual Meeting](#) during SpineWeek in Montréal, Canada.

The application deadline is October 15, 2026. Visit the [ISSLS Prize Program website](#) for eligibility requirements, submission instructions, and additional details.

Share with Us!

If you have suggestions for Section Member Spotlight interviews, contributions to the ORS Annual Meeting, or any other news for our section, please contact [Neharika Bhadouria, PhD](#) or [Derek Rosenzweig, PhD](#). For publications showing your latest work, please send a Word document including the following: Full reference, link to the original paper, and a 100 word digest of the study. A graphical abstract is optional but highly encouraged.



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