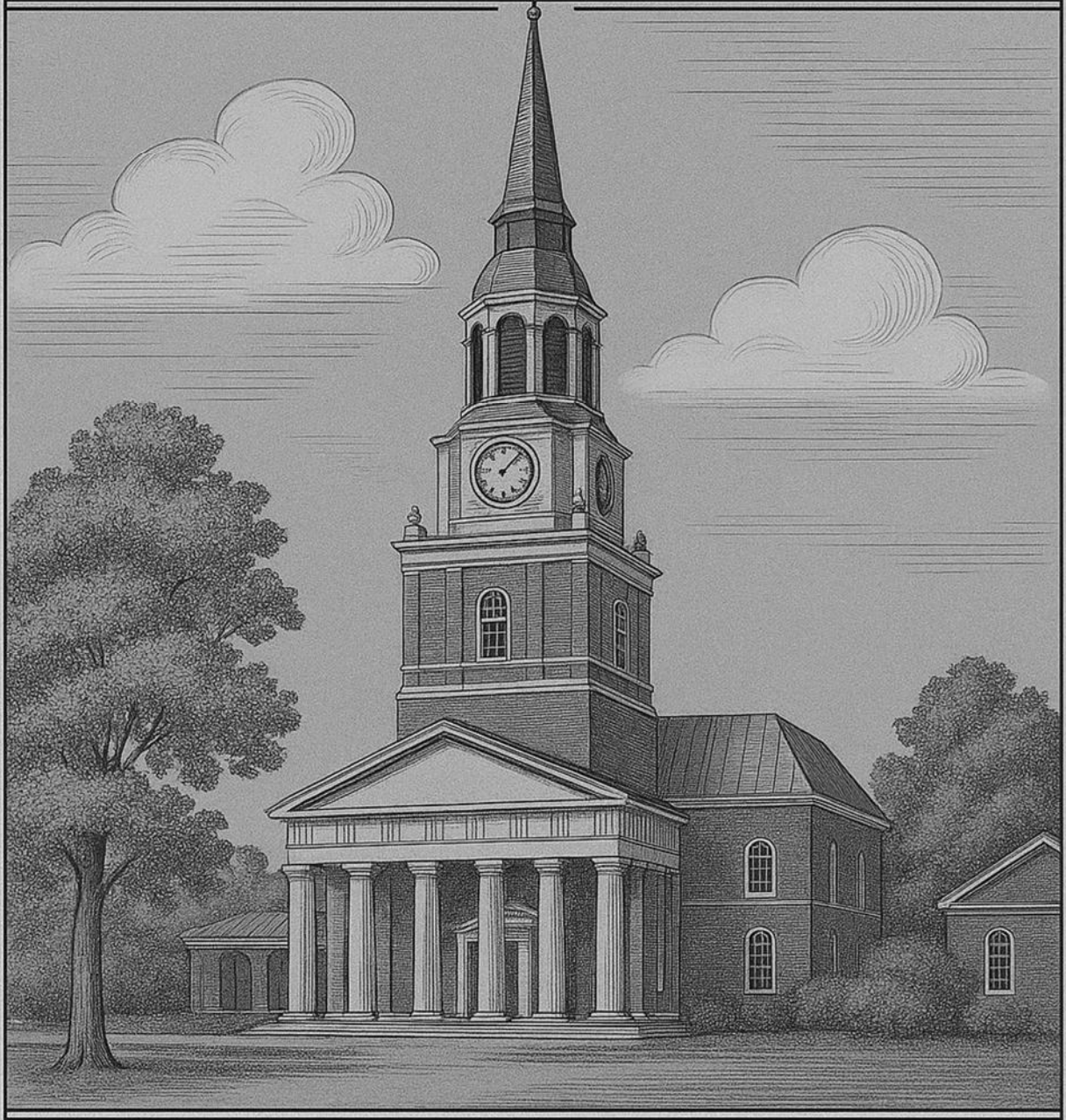
WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY



Interventional Pain Medicine

Pain Report June 2025

Articles of Interest:

1. “Diagnostic Precision in Lumbar Radiculopathy: Impact of Transitional Vertebrae on Treatment Level Selection and Outcomes.” Pain Medicine (https://doi.org/10.1093/pm/pnaf061)

This study investigates the influence of lumbar transitional vertebrae on the diagnostic accuracy and treatment outcomes in patients with lumbar radiculopathy. It highlights how anatomical variations can complicate the identification of the correct nerve root compression level, potentially leading to suboptimal surgical targeting. The authors demonstrate that careful imaging and clinical correlation are essential to improve precision in treatment level selection. Ultimately, recognizing transitional vertebrae significantly enhances therapeutic outcomes and reduces the risk of treatment failure.

2. “Herpes zoster prevalence following epidural steroid injections: a retrospective review.” Interventional Pain Medicine (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.inpm.2025.100597)

This retrospective review examines the prevalence of herpes zoster reactivation following epidural steroid injections (ESIs). The study identifies a measurable, albeit low, risk of herpes zoster development post-ESI, particularly in patients with immunocompromising conditions or advanced age. Findings highlight the need for vigilant monitoring and consideration of patient risk factors when administering ESIs. These results underscore the importance of balancing therapeutic benefits with potential infectious complications in clinical decision-making.

3. “Sacroiliac Joint Fusion: Incidence, Timing, and Risk Factors for Contralateral Fusion.” NASSJ (https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xnsj.2025.100614)

This study analyzes the incidence, timing, and risk factors associated with contralateral sacroiliac joint fusion following unilateral sacroiliac joint fusion procedures. The findings reveal a notable incidence of subsequent contralateral fusion, often occurring within a defined postoperative timeframe. Key risk factors identified include patient demographics, biomechanical stressors, and preexisting joint pathology. These insights emphasize the need for careful patient selection and longitudinal monitoring to optimize outcomes and anticipate bilateral disease progression.

Leading the Future of Interventional Pain – Visit to Medtronic HQ, Minneapolis

We're proud to share that **Drs. Bintrim, Hamsher, and Patel** were invited to participate in the Medtronic Innovation Forum, representing the forefront of expertise and dedication in our field. This premier forum brought together neuromodulation experts to explore cutting-edge technologies, share the latest best practices, and collaborate on advancing patient care. It's inspiring to see such innovation and leadership driving the future of interventional pain treatment.

Driving Change: Dr. Steven Abriola's Impactful Advocacy in Washington, D.C.

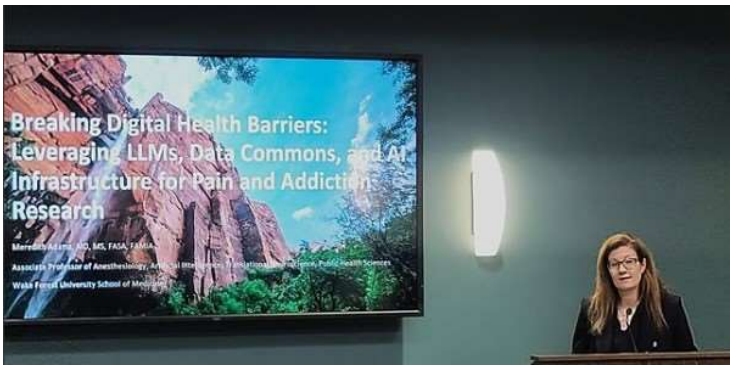
Dr. Steven Abriola recently served as a key representative of our specialty at the ASA advocacy event in Washington, D.C., where he engaged directly with policymakers to address critical and emerging issues impacting anesthesiology. His advocacy centered on educating decision makers, influencing policy development, and reinforcing the imperative of physician-led care as the cornerstone of the specialty.

Wake Forest Anesthesiology Research Day

The event was a great success, showcasing groundbreaking work and advancing the field of anesthesiology and pain medicine. We're proud to highlight **Dr. Meredith Adams and Dr. Robert Hurley** for sharing their impactful research in pain medicine, contributing valuable insights to improve patient care.

Special recognition to **Ankith Laichetty, MS-3**, and **Dr. Steven Abriola** for their impressive poster presentations, both mentored by **Dr. Enrique Galang.**

Thank you to everyone who participated and supported this inspiring day of discovery and collaboration!



Volunteer Opportunities

The Department of Anesthesiology Academic Environment and Experience (formerly Community & Belonging) Committee and CEAL are hosting another outreach event with **Imprints Cares** on **July 24th** to introduce elementary students to medical professions. They are anticipating 30 participants in each group, ~60 total, and need several volunteers (any level of training from student to faculty) to assist with the stations. The event will take place at the **downtown medical school** and there are two separate time slots: 10a-12p & 1-3p. Lunch will be provided for the volunteers 12-1p. If you can volunteer this year, please email Rebecca at rmarcinc@wakehealth.edu.

Congratulations to the 2025 Pain Medicine Fellows!

Congratulations to the Wake Forest University School of Medicine Interventional Pain Fellowship Class of 2025! We are incredibly proud of your hard work, dedication, and commitment to excellence in patient care and advanced pain management. As you close this important chapter and step into the next phase of your professional journey, we wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

Steven Thomas Abriola, MD
Wake Forest University School of Medicine
Winston-Salem, NC

Janelle McNeil-Masuka, MD
Excel Spine and Pain, Winnie Palmer Hospital
Tampa, FL

David Sami Shbeeb, DO
Northeast Anesthesia & Pain Specialists
Concord, NC

Alexander Blair Szczukowski, MD
Tidewater Anesthesia Associates
Easton, MD

Christopher Austin Trower, DO
Commonwealth Pain and Spine
Charlotte, NC

Alexander Yuri Varzari, MD
Emerge Ortho
Wilmington, NC

Save the Dates

The American Society of Pain and Neuroscience (ASPN) Annual Conference: July 17-20, 2025 | Miami, Florida

North American Spine Society (NASS) International Annual Meeting: July 21-26, 2025 | Taipei, Taiwan

PAINWeek Annual Conference: September: 2-5, 2025 | Las Vegas Nevada

American Society of Anesthesiologists - ANESTHESIOLOGY 2025: October 10-14, 2025 | San Antonio, Texas
American Academy of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation – AAPMR25: October 22-25, 2025 | Salt Lake City, Utah

Stay Connected with Wake Forest Pain Medicine

Discover the latest advancements in pain medicine through Wake Forest University's Pain Outcomes Lab. Our team is dedicated to improving patient care and advancing the field of pain management.

Explore Our Research:
Visit the Pain Outcomes Lab to learn more about our ongoing projects and breakthroughs:
🔗 Pain Outcomes Lab
https://school.wakehealth.edu/research/labs/pain-outcomes-lab

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Join us in our mission to enhance pain management and improve patient outcomes.