

Usher Syndrome in Louisiana 4th Symposium

Speaker Biographies: Educational Sessions

Jennifer J. Lentz, PhD **Professor**

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Jennifer J. Lentz, PhD, is a Professor of Otorhinolaryngology & Biocommunications, Ophthalmology and Genetics, and a member of the Neuroscience Center of Excellence at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. The goals of her research are to develop therapeutic approaches to prevent or cure the deafness, imbalance, and blindness associated with Usher syndrome, and to develop novel tests in the clinic that can be used to determine whether a new therapy is working.

Jason Kim, MS **MD/PhD Student**

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Jason Kim, MS, started his medical and graduate school training with Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans in 2021. After finishing his first two years of medical training in 2023, he joined Dr. Lentz's laboratory for graduate training. The focus of his graduate work is developing gene and gene-editing therapeutics to treat retinitis pigmentosa associated with Usher syndrome type 1C.

Robert K. Koenekoop, MD, PhD, FARVO **Professor**

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Robert K. Koenekoop, MD, PhD, FARVO is a Professor of Pediatric Surgery, Human Genetics, and Ophthalmology at McGill University and Director of the McGill Ocular Genetics Laboratory and Clinic in Montreal, Canada. He has developed a genetic eye disease center for inherited retinal dystrophies (IRD) and sees patients with retinitis pigmentosa, Usher syndrome, and many other IRDs daily. The goals of his research are to find the genetic causes and develop new treatments for childhood blindness.

Maria Reinoso, MD

Associate Professor

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Maria Reinoso, MD, is an Associate Professor of Ophthalmology and Residency Program Director at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center in New Orleans, Louisiana. She specializes in vitreo-retinal surgery and sees patients with retinitis pigmentosa, Usher syndrome, and many other blinding retinal diseases daily. The goal of her research is to find ways to improve teaching in Ophthalmology residency, improve visual outcomes in patients with diabetic retinopathy and retinitis pigmentosa.

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Nancy O'Donnell

Professor

Director of Outreach

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Nancy O'Donnell has been the Director of Outreach at the Usher Syndrome Coalition since 2015. In her position, she works with youth and adults with Usher syndrome and their families around the world. Prior to her work with the Coalition, she worked at the Helen Keller National Center in NY. Nancy is fluent in American Sign Language and a longtime advocate in her local community.

Jean Bennett, MD, PhD

F. M. Kirby Professor Emeritus

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Jean Bennett, MD, PhD, is the F. M. Kirby Professor Emeritus of Ophthalmology in the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. Her research focuses on gene therapy for retinal diseases. Her laboratory developed the first FDA approved gene therapy for use in humans, which treats a rare form of blindness. Although she formally retired in June 2023, she continues to move promising laboratory findings to the clinic, develop novel outcome measures (including testing of functional vision using virtual reality technology) and to mentor and train the next generation of translational investigators.

Elena Aleman

Clinical Coordinator

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Elena Aleman is a part-time Clinical Coordinator in Ophthalmology in the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania while she completes her undergraduate education at the Holy Family University. She has been involved in clinical research since her high school days and has helped pioneer virtual reality testing for inherited retinal degenerations.

Katherine Maguire
Clinical Coordinator

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Katherine Maguire is a part-time Clinical Coordinator in Ophthalmology in the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania and spends her remaining work hours as a designer (website, video, graphic, media and UX), technology specialist and teacher. Katie received her B.A. in Film and Television at New York University Tisch School and her M.A. at Parson's The New School for Design.