

# FACULTY Q&A

## SHARING PERSONAL & PROFESSIONAL PATHS

WHILE THE PENN DENTAL Medicine community may know the School's faculty by the courses they teach or the research they conduct, this Q&A faculty spotlight aims to get a bit more personal glimpse of them as individuals.

This issue, we talked with Dr. Kelly Jordan-Sciutto, Professor and Chair, Department of Pathology. Dr. Jordan-Sciutto has been a member of the faculty for 14 years, taking on the leadership role of Interim Chair in 2011 and appointed Chair in 2012.

### What do you view as your greatest professional accomplishment?

As a mid-career faculty member, I believe the best is yet to come. Of my accomplishments to date, I am particularly thrilled by my contribution to understanding novel roles for the cell cycle regulatory protein, E2F1, in neurons. We have recently shown that this protein, which is well characterized for its roles in regulating cellular proliferation, is uniquely localized to neuronal synapses, the specialized component of the neuron which carries out communication between these cells. Interestingly, mutation of this protein in neurons leads to age-dependent memory loss in mice. These findings suggest that this protein has a unique function in this cell population. I am hopeful that my team can find out what this unique function is as I move forward in my career.

### What drew your interest to your particular field and what do you enjoy most about it?

I received my PhD in Molecular Biology and Biochemistry, which provided excellent tools to approach scientific questions; however, my thesis advisor, Dr. David Hall, told me that it was important to have a biologic system in which to use these tools to understand biology. Because I had a long-standing interest in understanding how the brain worked, I decided to pursue my postdoctoral work in Neuropathology, where I became highly interested in the processes that lead to neurodegeneration, particularly oxidative stress and inflammation.



## Q&A with Kelly Jordan-Sciutto Professor & Chair, Department of Pathology

What I enjoy most about this work is the ability to do cutting edge basic science, where one can make new discoveries that advance our basic understanding of how neurons function, while at the same time being able to make discoveries that have potential clinical impact in treating patients with diseases that involve neuroinflammation, such as HIV-associated neurocognitive disorders, Alzheimer's disease, or Parkinson's disease.

### What advice from a mentor have you carried with you in your career?

What has been truly helpful in weathering the ups and downs of scientific discovery is to remind myself to see the opportunity in the results we get in the lab and "follow the data." It likely leads somewhere new and unexpected, which is what makes research discoveries fun. This is something I learned from my thesis advisor, but it has been reiterated by many of my mentors and colleagues over the years.

### What have you found most rewarding about being a member of the Penn faculty?

Working in a rich, collaborative research environment with brilliant faculty and students. I feel very fortunate to have been able to work with such amazing people who truly elevate research to the most exciting level.

### What excites you most about Penn Dental today?

The increasingly rich research environment and the implementation of the new curriculum. With regard to the former, I am thrilled that we continue to build on our research strengths in virology and immunology, while adding new avenues of research such as wound healing and stem cells. With regard to the new curriculum, I am hopeful it will increase student engagement in their education and spur innovation into best practices for conveying the vast amounts of information needed to be a dentist today.

### Schools/degrees:

Villanova University: BS  
Thomas Jefferson University: PhD

### If you could have dinner with anyone who would it be? And why?

Christopher Moore. He is my favorite author and I would love to learn about how he immerses himself in so many different disciplines, to create fantastical, and wildly entertaining stories.

### Hobbies?

Running, cooking, and whatever my kids like to do; this week it is Japanese ink brush painting.

### Favorite vacation destination?

Kaua'i

### Best book you've read recently?

I do not have a lot of time to read for pleasure, but I am an avid audiobook fan. The best book I have listened to recently was "Under Heaven" by Guy Gariel Kay, an historical fiction that evokes life in China during the Tang Dynasty. ■