Brayn conference

CATANIA 2026

30 SEPTEMBER • 2 OCTOBER

SCIENTIFIC PROGRAM



9th BRAINSTORMING RESEARCH ASSEMBLY FOR YOUNG NEUROSCIENTISTS

UNIVERSITÀ DI CATANIA - DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE UMANISTICHE (DISUM)
AULA MAGNA MONASTERO DEI BENEDETTINI • PIAZZA DANTE 32, CATANIA

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Riccardo Alessandro	University of Palermo (Italy)
Filippo Brighina	University of Palermo (Italy)
Martin Chalfie	Nobel Laureate • Department of Biological Sciences, Columbia University, New York (USA)
Paola Dugo	University of Messina (Italy)
Michela Fagiolini	CNR Istituto di Neuroscienze (Italy); Boston Children's Hospital Harvard Medical School (USA)
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Antonio Uccelli	University of Genova (Italy)
Mario Zappia	University of Catania (Italy)

INVITED SPEAKERS

Clara Grazia Chisari	Department of Scienze mediche, chirurgiche e tecnologie avanzate «G.F. Ingrassia», University of Catania (Italy)
Gaetano Gargiulo	Molecular Oncology Max-Delbrück-Center for Molecular Medicine (MDC) Berlin (Germany)
Takao Hensch	Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology, Harvard University, Cambridge MA (USA); International Research Center for Neurointelligence | The University of Tokyo | Institutes for Advanced Study
Soyon Hong	Dementia Research Institute, University College London (UK)
Andrea Malaspina	UCL BRC Queen Square MND Centre, Institute of Neurology London (UK)
Emanuela Pasciuto	VIB-UAntwerp Center for Molecular Neurology Antwerp (Belgium)

Luca Peruzzotti-Jametti	Department of Clinical Neurosciences and Cambridge Centre for Myelin Repair (CCMR) at the University of Cambridge (UK)
Morgane Thion	Institut Pasteur, Paris (France)
Vincent van de Ven	Department of Cognitive Neuroscience, Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience, Maastricht University (The Netherlands)

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Ingrid Battistella	Institute for Biomedicine, Eurac Research, Bolzano (Italy)
Elisabetta Battocchio	Università degli Studi di Milano, Milano; Istituto Nazionale di Genetica Molecolare «Romeo ed Enrica Invernizzi», Milano, (Italy)
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Noemi Marino	Istituto Romagnolo per lo Studio dei Tumori (IRST) and University of Bologna (Italy)
Valentina Pieri	Humanitas Research Hospital, Rozzano (Milan, Italy)
Erica Tagliatti	IRCCS Humanitas Research Hospital, Rozzano (Italy); University College London, London (UK)

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Marta Ibáñez Navarro	CNIO, Madrid (Spain)
Antonio Masone	Taub Institute - Columbia University (USA)
Elisabetta Mori	Medical University of Vienna (Austria)
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BRAYN SCIENTIFIC SESSIONS

NEUROIMAGING & CLINICAL NEUROLOGY is a comprehensive scientific session exploring the intersection of advanced neuroimaging techniques and clinical neurology applications. This session delves into the utilization of various neuroimaging methodologies to probe the structure, function, and physiology of the nervous system, alongside the translational aspects of clinical neurology. The session covers two primary neuroimaging approaches: structural imaging, which aids in the diagnosis of large-scale intracranial diseases and injuries, and functional imaging, crucial for diagnosing metabolic diseases like Alzheimer's and facilitating neurological and cognitive psychology research. Techniques such as Computed Tomography (CT), Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI), Electroencephalography (EEG), and Positron Emission Tomography (PET) will be discussed in the context of their applications alone or in combination to investigate neurological diseases. Moreover, the session emphasizes the integration of neuroscience data and basic research with clinical neurology to enhance understanding and treatment of nervous system disorders.

NEUROINFLAMMATION is a scientific session focused on exploring the mechanisms of the inflammatory response initiated in the central nervous system (CNS) by resident cells or triggered by infiltrating immune cells, which causes the neuronal dysfunctions observed in inflammatory and neurodegenerative disease of the CNS. The NI session mainly focuses on basic and clinical research in multiple sclerosis (MS), Neuromyelitis Optica Spectrum Disorder (NMOSD), Myasthenia gravis (MG) and other inflammatory diseases of the CNS that have a significant impact on the lives of young adults. Although the scientific discoveries of recent decades have improved the therapeutic approaches used for the treatment of such pathologies, many questions still remain unanswered. The NI session aims to discuss the basic pathogenic mechanisms governing CNS inflammation, the role of immune system in CNS autoimmunity, and the importance of genetic and environmental factors in the development of neuroinflammatory diseases, with a patient-centered focus.

NEURODEGENERATION is a scientific session focused on key aspects of a large number of diseases characterized by progressive damage of the nervous system that leads to irreversible neuronal death. The ND session will update on the more recent advances in the field. Specifically, the session will mainly focus on Parkinson's disease (PD), a slowly progressive syndrome that begins insidiously, gradually worsens in severity, and usually affects one side of the body before spreading to involve the other side, and Alzheimer's disease (AD), the most common type of dementia and an irreversible, neurodegenerative and progressive central nervous system disorder that slowly destroys memory and thinking skills, and, eventually, other mental abilities. Other neurodegenerative diseases, such as tauopathies, narcolepsy, depression and psychiatric disorders, will be also discussed in this session.

NEURO-ONCOLOGY is a scientific session focused on tumors of the central nervous system, addressing the biological mechanisms that drive their initiation, progression, and therapeutic resistance. Positioned at the interface between neurobiology and oncology, this session explores how brain tumors interact with and remodel the neural microenvironment to sustain growth, invasion, and survival. Particular attention will be given to neuron–tumor communication, circuit and synaptic alterations, and the contribution of glial and immune components within the brain tumor niche. The session will also include brain metastases and the mechanisms that regulate adaptation and growth within the central nervous system. By integrating mechanistic insights from neuroscience with translational neuro-oncology, this session aims to highlight brain-specific vulnerabilities and support the development of innovative therapeutic strategies for tumors of the nervous system.

NEUROPHYSIOLOGY AND NEURAL PLASTICITY session will cover the molecular mechanisms underlying the function of the nervous system and the capacity of the nervous system to modify itself, functionally and structurally, in response to experience and injury. All levels of function and plasticity changes will be discussed, from receptors and cellular physiology to systems and behaviour. This session will delve into approaches such as molecular and cellular neurobiology, functional neuroanatomy, neurochemistry, neuropharmacology, electrophysiology, and behavioural analysis, in both in-vivo, ex-vivo and in-vitro models in invertebrate or vertebrate species, including humans.

NEURODEVELOPMENT session will cover the mechanisms and the genetics underlying human and animal brain development in health and disease. This session will focus on neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism spectrum disorder, intellectual disability, and epilepsy. The session will also discuss about the contribution of both genetic and environmental factors, as well as the role of neuronal and non-neuronal cells in the etiopathology of these disorders. This session will delve into the genetics and the molecular and cellular neurobiology underlying brain development. In this session we will also discuss on the implementation of novel therapeutic strategies to tackle neurodevelopmental disorders.

COGNITIVE NEUROSCIENCE AND NEUROTECHNOLOGIES session will explore how emerging and established neurotechnologies are transforming the investigation of human cognition. Advances in tools such as non-invasive brain stimulation, electroencephalography (EEG), neuroimaging, and multimodal approaches are enabling researchers to move beyond descriptive accounts of brain function and toward a mechanistic and causal understanding of cognitive processes. This session will focus on core domains of cognitive neuroscience, including attention, memory, executive functions, perception, and decision-making, highlighting how neurotechnological approaches can be used to probe and modulate brain activity at different spatial and temporal scales. Particular emphasis will be placed on the integration of experimental paradigms with advanced methodologies to investigate brain dynamics, network-level interactions, and mechanisms of neural plasticity. The session will also address translational and applied perspectives, discussing how neurotechnologies can contribute to the understanding and modulation of cognitive dysfunctions in neurological and psychiatric conditions. By bridging basic research, methodological innovation, and clinical applications, this session aims to provide a comprehensive overview of current advances and future directions in cognitive neuroscience. This session is co-organized and endorsed by the Italian Society of Psychophysiology and Cognitive Neurosciences – Società Italiana di Psicofisiologia e Neuroscienze Cognitive.

Day 1 • SEPTEMBER 30

09:30 Registration

10:15 Opening Ceremony (Chairpersons: G. Ferrara, G. Calabrese, N. Iraci, G. Giglia)

BRAYN STARTING GRANT SESSION

Chairpersons: V. Chiurchiù, M. Catalano, P. Infante

10:45 Starting Grant 2025 Winner | **Francesca Dragoni**
Promoter and 5'UTR Methylation profile of MAP1B and TARDBP in sporadic Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis: A Longitudinal Study across Bulbar and Spinal Phenotypes.

11:00 Lectio Magistralis | **Takao Hensch** (Chairwoman: E. Vannini)
Unlocking critical periods of brain development.

12:00 Lunch Break

SESSION 1 • NEURODEVELOPMENT
ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chairpersons: E. Tagliatti, A. Borreca, E.S. Maftei

13:00 Lecture | **Morgane Thion** (Chairwoman: E. Tagliatti)
From Colonization to Vascular Guardians: Microglia in Early Brain Development.

13:30 **Veronica Krenn** • *Modelling Neuroimmune Interactions During Human Brain Development Using Brain Organoids.*

13:45 **Francesca Puleo** • *Targeted mitochondrial modulation in different cell-types rescues cognitive deficits in prenatal THC-exposed rats.*

14:00 **Chiara Calabretta** • *Spatial Molecular Profiling by MALDI-MSI to Support Histopathological Diagnosis in Drug-Resistant Epilepsy.*

14:15 SpeedTalk | **Vanessa Aragona** • *Unlocking the guardian of the brain: Choroid Plexus and neurodevelopmental insights.*

14:20 SpeedTalk | **Lorenzo Cifarelli** • *Brain-wide mapping of perineuronal nets and parvalbumin-expressing neurons across postnatal development identifies age- and sex-dependent circuit alterations in behaviorally characterized Fmr1 KO mice.*

14:25 SpeedTalk | **Aurora D'Alessio** • *Early butyrate rescues mucus barrier dysfunction in a preclinical model of autism spectrum disorder.*

14:30 SpeedTalk | **Mariagrazia Longo** • *RENKCTD11 loss drives cerebellar dysfunction and behavioral deficits in neurodevelopmental disorders.*

SESSION 2 • NEURO-ONCOLOGY
ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chairpersons: E. Vannini, E. Stanzani, M. Velasco, B.F. Tremonti

14:35 Lecture | **Gaetano Gargiulo** (Chairwoman: E. Vannini)
(Targeting) cell states in glioblastoma.

15:05 **Xingzi Lin** • *Rewiring anti-tumor immunity: fecal microbiota transplantation activates NK cells to control glioma in a mouse model.*

15:20 **Pablo Blanco Carlón** • *The mechanical landscape of GBM: How Piezo1 converts force into cancer.*

15:35 **Marta Scalera** • *Reinforcing peritumoral GABAergic inhibition modulates Glioblastoma progression and enhances immunotherapy efficacy.*

15:50 **Alessandra Maria Vitale** • *From Multimodal AI to Biological Twins: Integrating Deep Learning on Magnetic Resonance Imaging and Histological Data with Patient-Derived 3D Glioblastoma Models for Precision Medicine.*

16:05 **Daniele De Pasquale** • *Biomimetic Fluidic Model of the Glioblastoma-Affected Neurovascular Unit as an Advanced In Vitro Platform.*

16:20 SpeedTalk | **Arianna Ioni** • *Modulation of Extracellular Vesicles release targeting A2A Adenosine Receptor in Glioblastoma.*

16:25 SpeedTalk | **Elisa De Santis** • *The FLASH Effect: Assessing Survival and Functional Brain Integrity.*

16:30 SpeedTalk | **Oliviero Leonardi** • *Fluorescence-traced spatial profiling of tumor-neuron interactions in glioma-like assembloids.*

16:35 SpeedTalk | **Antonella Lettieri** • *Unraveling STAG2-Driven Neuro-Oncogenesis in Medulloblastoma for new therapeutic targeting.*

16:40 SpeedTalk | **Nicoletta Palermo** • *Targeted Temozolomide delivery by Hyaluronic Acid-gold nanoparticle–liposome enhances antitumor activity in 2D and 3D models of Glioblastoma.*

16:45 SpeedTalk | **Sebastian Andres Garcia Mena** • *Investigating non-genetic drivers of intra-clonal competition in PDGF-driven glioma using a multiomic barcoding strategy.*

16:50 Coffee Break

SESSION 3 • COGNITIVE NEUROSCIENCE AND NEUROTECHNOLOGIES
ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chairpersons: G. Giglia, G. Gambino, V.F. Dattola

17:30	Lecture | **Vincent Van De Ven** (Chairman: G. Giglia) *A Network Perspective of Non Invasive Brain Stimulation.*
18:00	**Sean Arthur Cully** • *Divergence between MP2RAGE and MPRAGE for detecting learning-induced structural brain changes.*
18:15	**Umberto Quartetti** • *a-tDCS Over Ventral Premotor Cortex Selectively Enhances Processing Of Goal-Oriented Biological Motion.*
18:30	SpeedTalk | **Aurora Meli** • *Modulation of executive functions in healthy humans through Opuntia ficus-indica fruit consumption and non-invasive brain stimulation.*
18:35	SpeedTalk | **Anthony Faiola** • *Investigating the Feasibility and Efficacy of a Virtual Reality Cognitive Training Platform for Post-Stroke Patients with Mild Cognitive Impairment.*
18:40	Poster Session 1 & Social Networking
20:40	Closing remarks

Day 2 • OCTOBER 1

SESSION 4 • NEURODEGENERATION
ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chairpersons: M. Medelin, E. Battocchio, G. Pollaci

09:00 Lecture | **Soyon Hong** (Chairwoman: E. Battocchio)
Neuro-glia-immune mechanisms of synapse loss.

09:30 **Ilaria Tagliabue** • *Chronic GCase inhibition induces lipid remodeling and neurodegenerative alterations in human midbrain organoids.*

09:45 **Irene Giustolisi** • *Preclinical development of an optimized bicistronic lentiviral vector enabling effective HSC Gene therapy for GM2 gangliosidoses.*

10:00 **Raluca Elena Abalai** • *Progressive Sensory Dysfunction Driven by Altered Skin-Nerve Remodeling in the Flvcr1 P221S Mouse Model.*

10:15 **Michelle Brilka** • *TWIK2 as an immunomodulatory factor in EAE.*

10:30 **Cecilia Delprete** • *Cutaneous phosphorylated alpha-synuclein topography across synucleinopathies: a distal gradient and MSA-specific compartment signature.*

10:45 **Federica Carrillo** • *Rare variant combinations drive convergent lipid-mitochondrial dysfunction in Parkinson's disease patient-derived dopaminergic neurons.*

11:00 **Martina D'Assoro** • *Targeting hyperphosphorylated Tau with intrabodies to inhibit pathological Tau aggregation.*

11:15 BraYn Educational Symposium ▶ **BD Biosciences**
Giusy Capuano • *Unveiling the Hidden Biology: a new-to the world Spectral Technology with Real-Time Imaging to reveal new dimensions in Flow Cytometry.*

11:30 SpeedTalk | **Diana Ioana Boiangiu** • *Niclosamide improves neuroprotective pathways in a C9orf72 mouse model of ALS/FTD.*

11:35 SpeedTalk | **Martina Milani** • *Early microglial dysfunction is associated with altered cerebellar synaptic development in Friedreich's Ataxia.*

11:40 SpeedTalk | **Elisabetta Pasella** • *Plasma and CSF Biomarker Profiling in Cerebral Amyloid Angiopathy: Correlations with Clinical and Neuroradiological Features.*

11:45 SpeedTalk | **Merve Begüm Bacınoğlu** • *Prion detection in the urine of individuals at genetic risk for fatal familial insomnia.*

11:50 SpeedTalk | **Marta Di Fabrizio** • *Unraveling myelin abnormalities in synucleinopathies.*

11:55 SpeedTalk | **Giuseppe Caruso** • *Development of an in vitro human brain-based 3D system to study the modulation of neuroinflammatory mechanisms and carnosine neuroprotective activity.*

12:00 Poster Session 2 & Lunch Break

SESSION 5 • NEUROINFLAMMATION
ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chairpersons: M. Bottero, A. Baldassarro, M. Rasile, G. Carrera

14:30	Lecture | **Emanuela Pasciuto** (Chairman: V. Chiurchiù) *Harnessing the therapeutic potential of brain resident T cells to reduce neuroinflammation.*
15:00	**Veronica Ceci** • *The Choroid Plexus as a hub of defective resolution mechanisms in Multiple Sclerosis.*
15:15	**Valentina Salari** • *Selective inhibition of the p2x7 receptor in microglia as a novel therapeutic strategy for epilepsy.*
15:30	BraYn Educational Symposium ▶ **Beckman Coulter** **Valerio Chiurchiù** • *Decoding inflammation-resolution failure by high-dimensional flow cytometry in Parkinson's disease.*
15:45	BraYn Educational Symposium ▶ **Beckman Coulter** **Marta Pirronello** • *High-parameter flow cytometry uncovers Marginal Zone–Like B cells as Cladribine's main target in Multiple Sclerosis.*
16:00	**Antonella Iaconis** • *Chronic CMIT/MIT Inhalation Disrupts the Lung–Brain Axis and Promotes α-Synuclein-Associated Dopaminergic Neurotoxicity.*
16:15	**Giulia Rossi** • *Neuroinflammatory modulation as a strategy to target neuronal pathogenic mechanisms in Huntington's Disease.*
16:30	Lecture | **Clara Grazia Chisari** (Chairmen: V. Chiurchiù, G. Ferrara) *Role of Immunomodulation in Immune-Mediated Demyelinating Disease: Current Perspectives.*
16:45	BraYn Educational Symposium ▶ **Revvity** **Carmen Marangoni** • *Simplifying Neurodegenerative and Neuroinflammatory Biomarker Quantification with HTRF and AlphaLISA assays.*
17:00	SpeedTalk | **Gemma Gorla** • *NGAL and VCAM-1 Are Upregulated in Cervical Arterial Dissection: A Plasma Biomarker Study.*
17:05	SpeedTalk | **Lucrezia Floro** • *Crosstalk between APOE ε4 Genotype, PPARγ, and Astrocyte Reactivity in Alzheimer's Disease Progression.*
17:10	SpeedTalk | **Su-Chun Huang** • *Longitudinal Characterization of Visual Pathway Involvement in Two Novel OSP- and MOBP-induced Experimental Autoimmune Encephalomyelitis Models.*

17:15 Closing remarks

Day 3 • OCTOBER 2

SESSION 6 • NEUROPHYSIOLOGY & NEURAL PLASTICITY
ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chairpersons: G. Calabrese, E. Boda, V. Castagnola

09:30 **Massimo Addesse** • *Dissecting Foxg1 Dependent Engram Regulation Through Genetic Manipulation and Network Profiling.*

09:45 **Francesca De Chirico** • *Bacteriophage M13 as a Precision Nanoplatform for Crossing the Blood–Brain Barrier.*

10:00 **Ester Bruno** • *Mapping histamine release sites: a 3D computational analysis of histaminergic dendritic varicosities.*

10:15 **Sebastiano Alfio Torrisi** • *Memantine prevents acute stress-induced memory deficits by reversing sex-dependent glutamatergic alterations in the dorsal hippocampus.*

10:30 Lecture | **Luca Peruzzotti-Jametti** (Chairman: M. Cambiaghi)
The Immunometabolic Landscape: How Microglial Metabolism Shapes CNS Inflammation.

11:00 Coffee Break

11:30 SpeedTalk | **Silvia Pascarella** • *Early-Life Stress Shapes Cerebellar Circuits Associated with Opioid Use Disorder Vulnerability.*

11:35 SpeedTalk | **Sarah Grippi** • *From Hyperexcitability to Drug Resistance: integrating behavioral and electrophysiological biomarkers in a longitudinal pilocarpine model of Temporal Lobe Epilepsy.*

11:40 SpeedTalk | **Giuseppe Chiantia** • *Alterations of GABAergic transmission in models of neurotoxicity and neurodevelopmental disorders: molecular, synaptic, and functional mechanisms.*

11:45 SpeedTalk | **Giacomo Mazzoni** • *Selective upregulation of Nav1.6 underlies PRRT2-linked cerebellar dysfunction.*

11:50 SpeedTalk | **Maria Ciuro** • *Smoothened modulation affects disease progression in SOD1G93A mouse model of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.*

SESSION 7 • NEUROIMAGING & CLINICAL NEUROLOGY
ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chairpersons: V. Pieri, A. Bombaci, U. Manera, S. Tafaro

11:55 SpeedTalk | **Giulia Vasirani** • *Early cladribine administration prevents connectomic and molecular changes in experimental multiple sclerosis.*

12:10 SpeedTalk | **Jinlong Liu** • *Functional Network Reorganization Following VIM-MRgFUS for Parkinson's Disease.*

12:15 SpeedTalk | **Mahan Shafie** • *Network-Level Genetic Organization of Human Cortical Folding.*

12:20 Poster Session 3 & Lunch Break

14:30 Lecture | **Andrea Malaspina** (Chairman: U. Manera)
New treatments and biomarkers for MND.

15:00 **Sara Cabras** • *Brain metabolic correlates of plasma biomarkers in Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis.*

15:15 **Giuseppe Ciullo** • *Differential recruitment of the thalamic ventral intermediate nucleus during observation and execution of goal-directed grasping actions.*

15:30 **Gemma Gorla** • *Biomarker Discovery in Sneddon Syndrome: an Exploratory Plasma Proteomic Study.*

15:45 Closing remarks & BraYn Awards (Chairpersons: G. Ferrara, M. Romeo, G. Calabrese, N. Iraci, G. Giglia, M. Catalano)

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