

THE 2ND
CUENCA
CONFERENCE



BRIDGES FOR HEALTH IN OLD AGE

*BUILDING COMMON GROUND
ACROSS PROFESSIONS
AND STAKEHOLDERS*

31-5-26

The Steinhardt Museum
of Natural History
Tel Aviv University,
12 Klausner St. Tel Aviv

Program

08:15-09:00	Registration & Breakfast
09:00-09:15	Opening Remarks
09:15-09:30	Prof. Rachel Dankner The Functional Assessment Toolkit in Older Adults - Who Needs It?
09:30-09:50	Prof. Karen Avraham Hearing Loss and Aging: Insights from Genetics and Biological Pathways
09:50-10:20	Prof. Nathan Herrmann Cognitive Assessment in the Elderly: To Screen, or Not to Screen?
10:20-10:40	Dr. Vered Hermush Functional Decline in the Elderly
10:40-11:00	<i>Coffee Break & Poster Session</i>
11:00-11:15	Dr. Avishai Reisner Longevity - Don't Leave the Teeth Out
11:15-11:35	Dr. Efrat Gil Function First: "Meitav" in Geriatric Hospital Care
11:35-11:55	Dr. Shai Brill Health Care of the Elderly at Clalit Health Services
11:55-12:10	<i>Coffee Break & Poster Session</i>
12:10-12:25	Dr. Violetta Rozani Geriatric Education Beyond the Curriculum: Translating Knowledge into Practice

- 
- 12:25-12:40** **Mr. Evyatar Miller**
Not Just to Survive – The Story of Aging with Dignity in Times of Emergency
- 12:40-13:00** **Prof. Dan Greenberg**
Economic Incentives and Optimal Aging: Implications for Health and Social Policy
- 13:00-13:30** **Mr. Yossi Heymann**
The National Indicators Program for Optimal Aging in Israel
- 13:30-14:20** *Lunch Break*
- 14:20-15:00** **Panel:** Addressing Unmet Needs in the Health of the Elderly:
Dreams & Plans to Achieve Them
Moderator: Prof. Tali Cukierman-Yaffe
Panelists:
- > **Dr. Efrat Gil**
 - > **Mr. Evyatar Miller**
 - > **Dr. Shai Brill**
 - > **Prof. Dan Justo**
 - > **Prof. Dan Greenberg**
- 15:00-15:10** **Closing Remarks**
- 15:10-15:30** Cuenca Excellence Scholarship Ceremony

Welcome

Dear colleagues, friends, and distinguished guests,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you to the 2nd Conference of the Cuenca Research Institute for Treatment Approaches to Age-Related Diseases at Tel Aviv University.

Our inaugural conference, “Building a Healthier Future for Older Adults,” held in September 2025, was dedicated to the memory of Prof. Yoram Maaravi, whose vision helped shape the Institute’s mission: to approach aging through a gerontological framework that recognizes it as a multidimensional process influenced by medical, functional, emotional, social, familial, and economic factors.

Since then, the Cuenca Research Institute has continued to advance this vision through research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and partnerships across the healthcare system, public sector, and community, including the Ministry of Health and the Tel Aviv-Yafo Municipality.

This year’s conference, “Bridges for Health in Old Age – Building Common Ground Across Professions and Stakeholders,” reflects our commitment to fostering a shared language and developing practical tools across disciplines. A central focus of today’s meeting, emerging from the working groups convened during our first conference, is the need to develop a common toolkit for assessing function and needs in older adults. This represents a critical step toward more accurate, equitable, and coordinated care.

As in our first conference, we are proud to support and recognize outstanding early-career researchers whose work contributes to advancing the field of aging.

I invite you to take an active part in today’s discussions, to share your perspectives, and to help us continue building bridges between research, practice, and policy.

I wish us all a meaningful and productive conference.



Prof. Rachel Dankner

Head of the Cuenca Research Institute

Albert and Alba Cuenca

Albert and Alba Cuenca, prominent businesspeople and philanthropists from Argentina, dedicated their lives and resources to strengthening the State of Israel and supporting its institutions. They became exemplary figures of devotion, generosity, and love for the country. As active members of



the Argentine Friends Association of Tel Aviv University, they combined business success with a deep commitment to the values of solidarity, education, and humanism.

Their generosity was particularly evident in their longstanding and significant support of Tel Aviv University. Thanks to their contributions, the university was able to promote innovative research initiatives, especially in the fields of medicine and aging, thereby positively impacting the well-being of society in Israel and around the world.

Beyond academia, Albert and Alba Cuenca supported and were involved in numerous social and educational projects across Israel, including inclusion programs for children with special needs, children with diverse abilities, and children on the autism spectrum. Their active involvement in the Friends Association also helped strengthen the bonds of friendship and partnership between Argentina and Israel.

At Tel Aviv University, the Cuenca Research Institute for Treatment Approaches to Age-Related Diseases is now operating in their name. This institute is part of the university's network of research foundations and represents a meaningful contribution to scientific research in this important field. In Jerusalem, the Cuenca name is associated with the Albert and Alba Cuenca Elementary School (Efrata), located in the Baka neighborhood. Since 1986, the couple supported the school through renovations, development of educational infrastructure, the establishment of innovative facilities, and the promotion of inclusive education.

Cuenca Research Institute

Board of Directors



Prof. Rachel Dankner, M.D., M.P.H., Dipl. Sports Med, is the Director of the Research Center for Public Health and Chief Epidemiologist of the Gertner Institute for Epidemiology and Health Policy Research, Sheba Medical Center, as well as the Director of the Reuth Institute for Research, Development and Innovation at the Reuth Tel-Aviv Rehabilitation and Geriatric Hospital.

She is a Full Professor in Epidemiology at the Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine, School of Public Health, Gray Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, Tel Aviv University. Prof. Dankner specialized in Public Health and is the former Head of the public health residency examinations committee.

Prof. Dankner graduated in medicine at the Hebrew University and earned her M.P.H. degree at the Johns Hopkins School of Hygiene and Public Health. She holds a Diploma in Sports Medicine from the Tel Aviv Continuing Education program and is a certified sports and marine physician.

Prof. Dankner's research focuses on risk factors and prevention of cardiovascular diseases, type-2 diabetes, stroke and obesity, with an emphasis on lifestyle modifications. She established several cohorts of heart patients, stroke survivors, and diabetic patients, which serve in her longitudinal epidemiologic studies of adult and elderly populations.



Dr. Sharon Stein Merkin is the Research Director for the National Network of Trauma Treatment at Sheba Medical Center, Senior Researcher at the Gertner Institute of Epidemiology and Health Policy Research at Sheba, and Adjunct Professor at the Division of Geriatrics at the UCLA Geffen School of Medicine.

Her research focuses on the role of social determinants of health in shaping population health disparities, with a particular interest in how psychosocial and socioeconomic factors influence the biological processes underlying disease risk and aging. Recently, Dr. Merkin has launched a project along with colleagues at Gertner to assess how civic engagement may buffer the harmful health effects of war-related trauma in Israel. Dr. Merkin is also leading the research program for a network of clinics in Israel providing treatment for psychological trauma to service members and their families.

Dr. Merkin's work bridges disciplines, contributing to the development of evidence-based strategies aimed at reducing health disparities and improving outcomes for vulnerable populations.



Prof. Ramit Ravona-Springer is a geriatric psychiatrist and Associate Professor of Psychiatry at Tel Aviv University. She leads a multidisciplinary clinical unit at Sheba Medical Center dedicated to diagnosing, treating, and managing cognitive, emotional, and behavioral symptoms in dementia and neurodegenerative disorders, utilizing state-of-the-art diagnostic tools and advanced treatments for Alzheimer's disease.

Her research focuses on identifying risk factors and mechanisms underlying cognitive decline and dementia. She directs two major longitudinal studies: the Israel Registry for Alzheimer's Prevention (IRAP), examining offspring of Alzheimer's patients, and the Israel Diabetes and Cognitive Decline (IDCD) study, which explores dementia risk in older adults with type 2 diabetes.

In recent years, Prof. Ravona-Springer has expanded her work to investigate non-cognitive aspects of aging and dementia, with an emphasis on behavioral and emotional symptoms such as apathy. She is committed to improving measurement tools, understanding the cognitive and neurological bases of these symptoms, and developing early disease markers and targeted therapeutic strategies.



Prof. Tali Cukierman-Yaffe is an endocrinologist and clinical epidemiologist. She heads the Centre for Successful Aging with Diabetes and the Endocrinology and Diabetes Service for Women & Pregnancy at the Division of Endocrinology & Diabetes, Sheba Medical Center. She is an Associate Professor in the Department of Epidemiology at the Gray Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, Tel Aviv University, a member of the Herczeg Institute on Aging, the scientific lead of the International Geriatric Diabetes Society and a Senior International Fellow at PHRI, McMaster University.

Her research addresses the challenges of managing diabetes in older adults. She has authored numerous publications, presented her work internationally, and contributed to local and global guidelines on the subject. Prof. Cukierman-Yaffe has served as Principal Investigator and led cognitive sub-studies in major cardiovascular trials involving people with diabetes.

In recent years, her work has expanded to develop technological solutions for improving care in older adults with diabetes. This includes creating machine learning models to assess cognitive and physical health agility. She currently leads several trials, including the evaluation of an automated insulin delivery system in older adults with type 1 diabetes, prevention of sarcopenia in new GLP-1 receptor agonist users, and a BIRAX-funded study advancing a machine learning platform for physical health agility assessment.



Dr. Violetta Rozani is a registered nurse holding a BSc and an MSc in Nursing Sciences and a PhD in Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine from Tel Aviv University. She is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Nursing Sciences at the Gray Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, where she conducts applied research focusing on aging populations and the challenges of managing chronic illness within healthcare systems.

Her research centers on quality of life, resilience, and self-care among older adults, as well as the well-being of family caregivers supporting individuals with complex chronic conditions. She examines a broad range of factors, including healthcare utilization, continuity of care, caregiver burden, health literacy, social support, and coping processes, and evaluates interventions designed to enhance functioning, independence, and overall well-being across the aging trajectory.

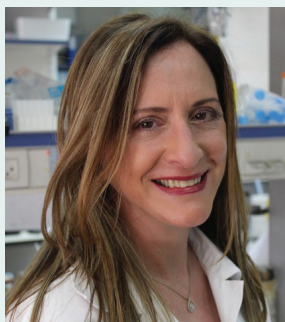
In parallel, Dr. Rozani is committed to advancing the professional role of nurses in healthcare systems. Her work explores professional autonomy, advanced clinical competencies, and evidence-based leadership, with a focus on education, empowerment, and workforce development. She investigates how expanded nursing roles contribute to enhancing care quality and promoting health outcomes across both hospital and community settings.



Prof. Omri Wurtzel is a faculty member in the School of Neurobiology, Biochemistry and Biophysics at Tel Aviv University. He heads a research laboratory focused on organismal regeneration and the regulation of stem cell activity, using animal models to study tissue growth and renewal. He also leads the Biochemistry Research Program at the George S. Wise Faculty of Life Sciences and serves on the board of the Israeli Society for Developmental Biology.

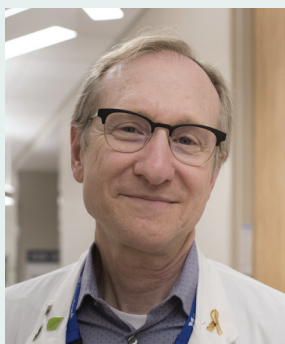
His research explores the mechanisms that regulate gene expression in response to injury during tissue growth, as well as the molecular memory transferred to newly formed tissues. Combining molecular, genomic, and computational approaches, his work seeks to uncover regenerative processes at both the tissue level and the single-cell level.

Invited Speakers



Prof. Karen Avraham is the Dean of the Gray Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences at Tel Aviv University and holds the Drs. Sarah and Felix Dumont Chair for Research of Hearing Disorders. She leads the Laboratory of Neural and Sensory Genomics, focusing on gene discovery, epigenomics, and therapies for hearing loss, as well as epilepsy, developmental delay, and respiratory disorders. Internationally recognized as a leader in the genetics of hearing loss, she has developed gene therapies in models of human deafness.

She has received major honors including the FISEB STAR Award for Scientific Excellence and Leadership and the CORLAS Shambaugh Prize in Otology Research. Prof. Avraham is a founding member of the International Society for Inner Ear Therapeutics and an advisor to the Lancet Commission on Global Hearing Loss. She has held continuous NIH R01 funding since 2011, alongside major national and international grants, mentored over 150 trainees, and published more than 200 scientific papers.



Dr. Nathan Herrmann is Director of Psychopharmacology Services at Merchavim Center for Brain and Mental Health in Be'er Yaacov, Israel, and a visiting professor at Tel Aviv University. He is a Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto and formerly, the Richard Lewar Chair in Geriatric Psychiatry at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre and the University of Toronto. He was Head of the Division of Geriatric Psychiatry at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre

from 1991-2019 and was Head of the Division of Geriatric Psychiatry at the University of Toronto from 1994-2005.

BRIDGES FOR HEALTH IN OLD AGE

Dr. Herrmann's research focuses on Alzheimer's disease and related disorders pharmacotherapy, studying treatments for cognition and neuropsychiatric symptoms. He has over 900 publications and has held over 170 research grants including grants from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the National Institute of Health, Alzheimer's Association, Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation, Alzheimer's Society of Canada, Brain Canada, and the Heart and Stroke Foundation. He has won the Award for Outstanding Achievements in Geriatric Psychiatry from The Canadian Academy of Geriatric Psychiatry, and the International Psychogeriatric Association's Distinguished Service Award.



Dr. Vered Hermush is a specialist in Internal Medicine and Geriatrics, and a leading figure in geriatric medicine in Israel. She serves as President of the Israel Geriatric Society and as Medical Director of the Geriatric Division at Laniado Medical Center, where she also heads the Helsinki Committee and previously led the hospital's research authority. A graduate of the Sackler Faculty of Medicine at Tel Aviv University, she completed her geriatrics training with distinction and later specialized in internal medicine. Alongside her

clinical leadership, she teaches at Ariel University's Faculty of Medicine and is actively involved in clinical and academic research in aging and dementia care.



Dr. Avishai Reisner is a highly experienced dentist with more than 36 years of clinical practice. He holds D.M.D. degrees from Tel Aviv University and the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, as well as an M.H.A. with a specialization in gerontology. Over the years, he has dedicated his work to geriatric dentistry, providing care for older adults, including patients living with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. He operates fully accessible clinics within senior living facilities, alongside a mobile dental

clinic that delivers care directly to patients in their homes. Dr. Reisner is also well versed in cutting-edge digital technologies, including intraoral scanning, digital planning, and 3D printing. He is known for his compassionate, patient-centered approach and regularly lectures to students, healthcare professionals, and the wider community. He sees his work not only as a profession, but as a true calling.



Dr. Efrat Gil is a specialist in Internal Medicine, Geriatrics, and Medical Management, currently serving as the head of the Geriatrics Division at the Ministry of Health. She worked for many years as a specialist in internal medicine and geriatrics at Bnei Zion Hospital, where she established the hospital's geriatrics unit.

Following that, Dr. Gil managed the geriatric department in the Haifa and Western Galilee district of Clalit Health Services and later served as the deputy director of the Emek Hospital. Throughout her career, Dr. Gil

has been deeply involved in education and training, having held the positions of head of the Geriatrics Department at the Faculty of Medicine at the Technion, and a member of the Israeli Geriatric Association Committee.

BRIDGES FOR HEALTH IN OLD AGE



Dr. Shai Brill is a specialist in Internal Medicine and Geriatric Medicine and currently serves as Chief of Geriatrics at Clalit Health Services.

He earned his MD Magna Cum Laude from the Sackler Faculty of Medicine at Tel Aviv University, where he served for 12 years as Co-Director of the Minerva Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of End of Life.

Dr. Brill previously served as the Director General of the Beit Rivka Medical Geriatric Center from 1990 to 2019 and chaired the Israel Society for Geriatric Medicine. His research focuses on aging, rehabilitation, functional decline, and health policy in older adults.



Mr. Evyatar Miller, MSW, holds a bachelor's degree with a specialization in Stress, Trauma, and Resilience from Tel-Hai Academic College, and a master's degree in the Social Policy and Rights track from Tel Aviv University. He has worked for over a decade in the Social Services Administration of the Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality in a variety of roles, and currently serves as Head of the Senior Citizens Division and as the Mayor's Advisor on this issue. He has been involved in implementing a poverty-aware practice approach

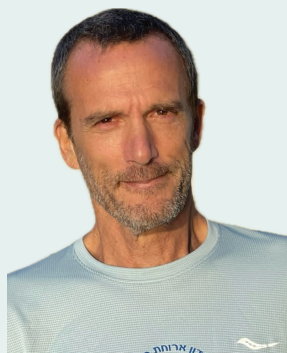
across the city and in establishing the Rights Exhaustion Centers. He is also a social activist and serves on the boards of several social nonprofit organizations.



Prof. Dan Greenberg is Professor of Health Policy and Management and Associate Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He previously served as Chair of the Department of Health Policy and Management. He earned his PhD from Ben-Gurion University in 2001 and subsequently completed a three-year postdoctoral fellowship at the Harvard Clinical Research Institute and the Cardiovascular Division of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School.

He was a Visiting Scientist at the Harvard School of Public Health from 2003 to 2006, and from 2008 to 2021 was affiliated with the Center for the Evaluation of Value and Risk in Health (CEVR) at Tufts Medical Center, where he also served as adjunct faculty at Tufts University School of Medicine.

His research focuses on the economic evaluation of healthcare technologies, health technology policy, diffusion of innovation, medical decision-making, and outcomes research. He has authored or co-authored more than 130 peer-reviewed publications and book chapters in leading medical and health policy journals. He currently serves as Editor-in-Chief of Health Policy Open, as an Associate Editor of the Journal of Market Access and Health Policy, and as a Section Editor (Pharmacoeconomics and Health Economics) for the Israeli Journal of Health Policy Research.



Mr. Yossi Heymann is the Director of Joint-Eshel, Israel's leading agency for the development and dissemination of programs that promote healthy aging and support older adults. Since 2014, he has led Eshel's strategic direction in partnership with the Israeli government, overseeing a team of 70 professionals and an annual budget of approximately 70 million NIS. Under his leadership, Eshel has advanced national initiatives aimed at improving care for older persons, expanding community-based aging services,

and strengthening social and health systems to meet the needs of Israel's aging population.

Among his most significant achievements are the establishment of the inter-ministerial roundtable for healthy aging in Israel and the initiation of a national resolution to incorporate aging-related indicators into government policy and data systems. Heymann also chairs the national committee on palliative and end-of-life care for the Ministry of Health.

Before joining Joint-Eshel, Mr. Heymann served as Director General of the Jerusalem Municipality, where he managed a complex urban system and led social policy development for vulnerable groups, including Holocaust survivors, at-risk youth, and minority communities. He previously held senior leadership positions in the Israel Defense Forces, concluding his military service as Head of Strategic Planning. Heymann holds an M.A. in Political Science from the University of Haifa and a B.A. in Economics and Management from the Technion, Israel Institute of Technology.



Prof. Dan Justo is a senior physician and healthcare leader specializing in internal medicine, geriatrics, rehabilitation, and medical administration. A graduate of the Technion Faculty of Medicine (2002), he began his career as a military physician before completing his residency in Internal Medicine and Geriatrics at Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center (Ichilov). Over the years, he has held a range of senior clinical and managerial positions at Sheba Medical Center, including Head of Geriatric-Internal Medicine, Head of

Geriatric Rehabilitation, and later Director of the Division of Geriatric Medicine. Alongside his clinical leadership, he serves as a Clinical Associate Professor at Tel Aviv University and formerly chaired the medical school's final thesis committee.

Recipients of the 2026 Cuenca Excellence Scholarship



Orit Shdeour

Top-down and Bottom-up Processes in Visual Exploration Across the Lifespan

Orit Shdeour is a Ph.D. candidate at the Sagol School of Neuroscience, Tel Aviv University, and an Ariane de Rothschild Doctoral Fellow. Her research, supervised by Prof. Shlomit Yuval-Greenberg, investigates top-down and bottom-up processes in visual exploration across the lifespan, and specifically how age modulates memory and semantic effects on gaze patterns. Orit's work is driven by over a decade of clinical experience as a senior occupational therapist in geriatric and neurological rehabilitation. By bridging basic science with her clinical background, she aims to uncover the mechanisms of age-related brain changes to better understand and mitigate functional and cognitive decline.



Tal Yahalom-Peri

Exercise and nutritional intervention to reduce the risk of sarcopenia in older adults with type 2 diabetes and obesity treated with Semaglutide: The "STAY-STRONG" randomized controlled trial

Tal Yahalom-Peri is a PhD student at the Gray Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, Tel Aviv University. With over 25 years of experience as a physical activity specialist, she serves as a lecturer for undergraduate physical education students and fitness professionals. Her research evaluates the effect of a combined exercise and nutritional intervention on muscle mass, strength, and function in older adults with T2D and obesity treated with Semaglutide. Tal has authored several peer-reviewed publications focusing on movement patterns, physical function and metabolic health in aging populations with T2D.

Poster Presentations

Saar Ashri*

Multiple Environmental Exposures and Acute Coronary Syndrome and Mortality

Itay Cohen*

Screening for Cognitive Dysfunction in Older Adults with Type 1 Diabetes

Shvat Eilat*

The Sign and the Match: Subjectivity, agency, and the social life of forgetting before diagnosis

Liri Sophia Guz

Evaluating NAP as an alternative to hormonal therapy for preventing tauopathy and protecting cognitive, motor, and bone health

Ahmad Marzooq*

Cardiovascular Health Assessed by Life's Essential 8 in Israeli Adults Aged ≥65 Years and Its Association with Long-Term Cancer Incidence

Yael Yarovitsky*

Adherence to Colorectal Cancer Screening: Examining Personal, Medical, and Environmental Predictors

Amir Zag

Time Trends and Demographic Disparities in Blindness Incidence Among Diabetic Patients in Israel, 2012-2024 - a Nationwide Population-Based Study

Yuval Even Zahav

The Impact of Aging on Spatial Frequency Processing in Naturalistic Scenes and Its Relation to Oculomotor Behavior - Preliminary Results

* Recipients of the 2026 Cuenca Research Scholarship

Notes

[illegible]

[illegible]



Albert and Alba Cuenca Research Institute for Treatment Approaches to Age-Related Diseases

The Albert and Alba Cuenca Research Institute for Treatment Approaches to Age-Related Diseases was founded with a broad and innovative vision of gerontology, one that sees aging as a complex, multidimensional, and inspiring process shaped by physical, psychological, social, familial, and economic factors. The Institute examines the contexts in which diseases emerge and interact, aiming to promote optimal aging, so that old age can be a healthy, active, and meaningful period of life.

We recognize that healthy aging depends not only on measurable biomedical indicators but also on less tangible factors such as loneliness, emotional hardship, functional decline, and financial strain. Addressing these challenging factors is central to our mission, both in research and in practice.

The Institute aims to serve as a coordinating hub for aging-related activities across Tel Aviv University, consolidating knowledge, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, and sparking dialogue among fields ranging from medicine and health sciences to social sciences. These connections deepen our understanding of aging and inspire innovative therapeutic solutions.

To bridge the gap between emerging research and real-world application, the Institute seeks to initiate processes that advance academic, clinical, and practical excellence in gerontology and geriatrics, guided by appropriate methodological standards. We are also committed to nurturing the next generation of professionals, encouraging them to dedicate their expertise to this vital field, and recognizing its profound impact on individuals, families, and society at large.

Dr. Lior Moskovich, M.D.
Manager of Research Projects
and Academic Activities
cuenca@tauex.tau.ac.il

Visit us at



Content editor: Lior Moskovich
Graphic design: Tamari Zor