



Women in IR Newsletter

Winter 2026

Women Research Mentorship Grant Recipients

Congratulations to both research teams selected for the SIR Foundation Women’s Research Mentorship Grant! This award was made in collaboration between the SIR Foundation and the SIR Women in IR Governing Council.

- **Xiao Wu, MD, and Ryan Kohlbrenner, MD** for their project, *“Pulsed Electric Field Ablation as an Immune Stimulator in Breast Cancer.”*
- **Abinaya Ramakrishnan, MD, and Jessica Stewart, MD** for their project, *“Pilot Study of Lumbar Artery Embolization in a Swine Model of Facet Arthropathy.”*

Their innovative work reflects the spirit of mentorship and advancement in IR research, and it’s exciting to see these projects recognized. Learn more about this grant: <https://www.sirfoundation.org/get-funded/womens-research-mentorship-grant/>



Mentorship & Self Advocacy in Residency

Featuring Dr. Bridget Kowalczyk (PGY3) and Sajel Dutt (MS4)

This mentoring conversation features an open and inspiring dialogue between Dr. Bridget Kowalczyk, integrated IR resident at University of Texas Health Science Center Houston, and Sajel Dutt, medical student at the University of Minnesota.

The Power of Mentorship:

Kowalczyk reminds us that mentorship is not just about career guidance. It’s about community, belonging and being seen. The best mentors don’t just advise; they advocate, connect and inspire confidence when the path feels uncertain. Her advice? Seek out mentors who reflect the kind of physician—and person—you want to become. Stay in touch, even when life gets busy. And when it’s your turn, pay it forward. She says, “You can’t do residency without help. The IR community is full of people who want to see you succeed.”

Advocacy and Boundaries:

One of the most powerful takeaway from Kowalczyk’s story is the courage it takes to speak up for your needs. “It can be scary to advocate for yourself, but you have to look out for your health and well-being.” Her journey highlights an important truth: setting boundaries is not a weakness but an act of self-respect and sustainability. Whether it’s saying no to an extra project, asking for accommodations or simply admitting you need a break, it’s okay to prioritize yourself. She also encourages trainees to ask the right questions during the match and beyond: “What kind of support does your program offer? How do they treat their residents? How is the community?”

Building Connection and Finding your People:

Both Kowalczyk and Dutt reflect on how connection fuels growth in IR. From local mentorship to national organizations like SIR RFS and WIR, they emphasize how community opens doors that talent alone cannot. Getting involved early, whether through research, committees or mentorship programs, helps you find your voice and your people. As Dutt puts it, “All it takes is one person to bring you into the fold, then you’re at a conference meeting five more.” Their message is simple: Lean in, reach out and don’t be afraid to show up. The more connected you become, the stronger the field grows for everyone.

Their stories call every woman in IR to action: Intentionally seek community, advocate for yourself always, and lift others as you rise.

To hear the full conversation click on this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pD5Hk-giBIM&list=RDpD5Hk-giBIM&start_radio=1

SIR WIR RFS Contributor: Lynsey Claus, PGY6

Resources and upcoming events

Pregnancy in Residency - How do you manage?

When is the best time to get pregnant in training? Truth be told, there is no perfect time, and most cannot plan exactly when they will get pregnant. Take a listen to this honest open conversation on Kinked Wire (Episode 73) with Drs. Lei Yu and Esha Kothekar on their experiences becoming pregnant in training. Listen to their experience disclosing positive pregnancy, managing radiation exposure, and continuing the road to IR.

- **YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jNmGo1q8MU>
- **Kinked Wire Podcast:** <https://irg.sirweb.org/kinkedwire/episode-73/>
- **Pregnancy Toolkit:** sirweb.org/toolkits/ir-pregnancy-toolkit/

Research, Grants and Lab Leadership Webinar

The current Medical Student Chair of the RFS WIR Committee is coordinating with SIR’s WIR Governing Council to coordinate a March 2 webinar about research, grants and lab leadership. You can learn more via the link:

<https://www.sirweb.org/education/events/women-leading-ir-research-grants-and-lab-leadership/>

WIR sessions and events at SIR 2026

See the list of sessions and events that are being planned by the WIR Section onsite at the April SIR Annual Scientific Meeting. Thank you to our coordinators, panelists and speakers who are helping to lead discussions about mentorship, public speaking, leadership and more! Check out the official link:

<https://www.sirmeeting.org/SearchByBucket.asp?pfp=Track&bm=WIR>

