

CONNECTING YOUNG MINDS  
WITH THE FRONTIERS OF NEUROSCIENCE

As part of the Horizon Europe-funded **GEMSTONE Project**, Acıbadem Mehmet Ali Aydınlar University (ACU) is proud to host its inaugural neuroscience day, **ACU NeuroConnect**. This one-day outreach and dissemination event is specially designed to inspire the future neuroscientists by opening a window into the exciting and rapidly evolving world of brain science.

Organized in collaboration with **ACU Medical School Scientific Research Society**, **ACU Neuroscience Student Club**, **ACU Department of Neuroscience**, and **ACU Neuroscience Student Research Group**, the event aims to engage youth audiences while showcasing ACU's strengths in neuroscience, the GEMSTONE Project's goals of research excellence, innovation, and outreach, and its commitment to capacity building in the research of neurodevelopmental disorders as well as institutional research support services.

| DATE   | VENUE   | FOLLOW  |
|--|---|---|
| Saturday<br><b>15 November 2025</b><br>08:00–18:00 | Conference Hall<br><b>ACU Kerem Aydınlar Campus</b><br>İçerenköy Mah. Kayışdağı Cad. No: 32<br>34752 Ataşehir, İstanbul | For updates, please follow us<br>on social media:<br>Instagram <a href="https://www.instagram.com/acu_neuroconnect">@acu_neuroconnect</a><br>LinkedIn <a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/acu-neuroconnect">@acu-neuroconnect</a> |

NOTES

- Event materials will be distributed at the registration desk. Stocks are limited.
- All participants will be provided with refreshments and lunch during the event.
- Registration starts at 08:00. Please ensure punctuality to help us keep the event on schedule.
- Poster presenters should arrive at 08:00 sharp to place their posters.
- For any questions or problems, please contact: [acuneuroconnect@gmail.com](mailto:acuneuroconnect@gmail.com)

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

| GEMSTONE Project      | ACUTBAT            | ACU Neuroscience Student Club | ACU Neuroscience PhD Students | ACU Neuroscience Student Research Group |
|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Prof. Filiz Onat      | Sonnur Kaya        | Berrin Kater                  | Berk Can Kantarcı             | Ömer Şaka                               |
| Prof. Levent Altıntaş | Doğukan Türkkan    | İrem Keçeci                   | İrem Keçeci                   | Bekir Arda Yıldırım                     |
| Dr. Oğuzhan Altinkoz  | Deniz Alp Reçber   | Betül İrem Göksu              | Semih Doğukan Ağır            | Ömer Demir                              |
| Cem Öztürk            | Berke Can Dağdelen | Elif Demir                    | Ahmet Şanlı                   | Ada Deniz Engin                         |
| Merve Çavuş           | Aslı Burcu Gül     | Azra Nisa Çınar               | Fatma Şahin                   | Murat Aydin                             |
|                       | Kerem Akar         | Azra Özkan                    | Ceren Çelik                   | Pelin İpekoğlu                          |
|                       |                    |                               | Nursima Mutlu                 |   |



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## PROGRAMME

### WELCOME

08:00–09:00 **Registration**

60 min

09:00–09:20 **Opening Ceremony [In Turkish]**

20 min

Prof. Filiz Onat, GEMSTONE Primary Principal Investigator, Acıbadem University

Prof. Güldal Süyen, Vice-Rector & GEMSTONE Researcher, Acıbadem University

Prof. Ahmet Şahin, Rector, Acıbadem University

Hatice Seher Aydınlar, President, Kerem Aydınlar Foundation

### KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Chaired by: Prof. Beki Kan, GEMSTONE WP5 Leader, Acıbadem University

09:20–10:00 **Implementation of Binary Recombinase Systems for Conditional Gene Activation in the Midbrain Dopamine System**

40 min

Prof. Deniz Kırık, GEMSTONE Local Principal Investigator, Lund University

### FEATURED TALKS

Chaired by: Prof. Betül Baykan Baykal, İstanbul University

10:00–10:30 **Astrocyte Calcium Signalling as a Compensatory Mechanism against Neuroinflammation in Parkinson's Disease**

30 min

Assist. Prof. Evangelia Emmanouilidou, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

10:30–11:00 **Lessons Learned from Studying Rare Neurological Diseases**

30 min

Dr. Rauan Kaiyrzhanov, University College London

11:00–11:30 **Coffee Break: Refreshments & Side Activities**

30 min



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**LIGHTNING TALKS**

Co-chaired by: Prof. Çağdem Özkar, İstanbul University – Cerrahpaşa  
& Assoc. Prof. Ayşe Melike Şahiner, GEMSTONE WP4 Leader, Acıbadem University

11:30–11:50 **Parkin Gene Delivery and Alpha-Synuclein Pathology: An Animal Model to Study Parkinson's Disease**  
20 min Dr. Courtney J. Wright, GEMSTONE Researcher, Lund University

11:50–12:10 **Bidirectional Control of Generalized Absence Epilepsy Networks Using Optogenetics**  
20 min Olivér Nagy, PhD(c), University of Szeged

12:10–12:30 **Mitochondrial Alterations in Alzheimer's Disease: Linking Brain and Peripheral Blood in the 5xFAD Mouse**  
20 min Assist. Prof. Elif Nedret Keskinöz, GEMSTONE Researcher, Acıbadem University

12:30–12:50 **Investigating the Origin of Alpha-Synuclein in the Body Using Genetically Engineered Mice**  
20 min Talat Taygun Turan, MD, PhD(c), GEMSTONE Research Assistant, Acıbadem University

12:50–13:10 **Behavioural and Cognitive Functions of Zebrafish**  
20 min Ekin Döngel Dayanç, MD, PhD(c), Acıbadem University

13:10–14:10 **Group Photo & Lunch Break**  
60 min

**POSTER WALK**

14:10–15:00 **Poster Walk & Side Activities**  
50 min

**INSIGHT PANEL**

Co-chaired by: Prof. Devrim Öz Arslan, GEMSTONE Researcher, Acıbadem University  
& Assoc. Prof. My Andersson, GEMSTONE Researcher, Lund University

15:00–16:10 **Meet the Young Neuroscientists**  
70 min Merve Çavuş, Pharmacology PhD(c), GEMSTONE Research Assistant, Acıbadem University  
Nursima Mutlu, Neuroscience PhD Student, GEMSTONE Research Assistant, Acıbadem University  
Ömer Şaka, Medical School Year 4 Student, Acıbadem University  
Ömer Demir, Medical School Year 4 Student, Acıbadem University  
Bekir Arda Yıldırım, Medical School Year 4 Student, Acıbadem University  
Ceren Çelik, Neuroscience PhD Student, Acıbadem University



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16:10–16:30 **Coffee Break: Refreshments & Side Activities**

20 min

**CAREERS PANEL**

Co-chaired by: Prof. Filiz Onat, GEMSTONE Primary Principal Investigator, Acıbadem University & Assoc. Prof. Nihan Çarçak Yılmaz, GEMSTONE WP2 Leader, Acıbadem University & Assist. Prof. Tuğba Eryiğit Karamahmutoğlu, Marmara University

16:30–17:10 **Career Pathways in Neuroscience [In Turkish]**

40 min

Assoc. Prof. Mustafa Aykut Kural, Acıbadem Altunizade Hospital & Acıbadem University  
Assoc. Prof. Tuba Cerrahoğlu Şirin, Şişli Hamidiye Etfal Training and Research Hospital  
Assoc. Prof. Fatih Özdemir, Farmakon Research and Consultancy & Acıbadem University

**OPEN DISCUSSION**

Co-chaired by: Serena Cogoni, GEMSTONE Local Principal Investigator, ICONS & Cem Öztürk, GEMSTONE Project Manager, Acıbadem University

17:10–17:50 **Goals and Obstacles Facing Neuroscientists of Today**

40 min

Prof. Filiz Onat, Prof. Deniz Kırık, Assoc. Prof. Fatih Özdemir,  
Assoc. Prof. Mustafa Aykut Kural, Assoc. Prof. Tuba Cerrahoğlu Şirin,  
Assist. Prof. Evangelia Emmanouilidou, Dr. Rauan Kaiyrzhanov

**FAREWELL**

17:50–18:00 **Poster Award & Closing Ceremony**

10 min

**SIDE ACTIVITIES****POSTER WALK**

Viewed after the lunch in the Foyer, with peer-voted awards – voluntary summer internship opportunity at ACU Neuroepilepsy Lab under the supervision of Prof. Onat for the Best Poster

**INFO BOOTHS**

GEMSTONE Project, ACUTBAT, ACU Neuroscience Student Club, and ACU Neuroscience PhD Programme info desks, viewed during breaks in the Foyer

**BRAIN CANVAS**

“What does the brain mean to you?” – share your thoughts, feelings, and creativity on our Brain Canvas in the Foyer, turning collective reflections into a vibrant work of art

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