

**DEPARTMENT OF MICROBIOLOGY, BIOCHEMISTRY
AND MOLECULAR GENETICS @ NJMS**

“OUR INCLUSIVENESS IS INTENTIONAL BECAUSE EXCELLENCE REQUIRES A DIVERSE COMMUNITY...”

OFFICE FOR DIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Vivian Bellofatto, PhD

Professor and Interim Chair, Department of Microbiology, Biochemistry and Molecular Genetics

During my undergraduate work at Douglass College and graduate work at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, I was privileged to work with smart, focused, successful and creative female scientists. These women were my key mentors during my early career. When I joined New Jersey Medical School over 25 years ago, I was pleased with the number of female scientists that were in the basic sciences and befriended many of them. In my current role as principle investigator in a new NIH-funded project and as Interim Chair of the Department, my key missions are to train and mentor all, while continuing to promote inclusion and diversity in my department and community at Rutgers New Jersey Medical School.

Nikhat Parveen, PhD

Associate Professor



After completing my Masters Degree in Microbiology in India, I came to the United States and joined the University of Hawaii at Manoa for my PhD degree. I initiated my postdoctoral research at the University of Massachusetts Medical School where I started working on Lyme disease pathogenesis. I have always made concerted efforts to recruit underrepresented minorities in my research starting from their undergraduate studies because I believe that to have good representation of diverse

populations at the faculty level and leadership positions in the future, we have to start early. I continued this approach after joining New Jersey Medical School where opportunity to bring in more diverse students and postdoctoral fellows is higher. In fact, this year I received an NIH diversity supplement to support training a postdoctoral fellow in my laboratory. Additionally, I have trained several students including NERA students who are now in medical schools. It is very rewarding for me to see that almost all students who conducted research in my laboratory during their bachelors degree have entered either medical or dental schools or graduate programs around the country. I hope that people trained by me follow this trend and become a driving force for diversity and inclusion in the future workforce of the country, particularly in the STEM fields.



Katsunori Sugimoto, MD, PhD

Assistant Professor

I moved from Nagoya University, Japan to New Jersey Medical School as an Associate Professor in 2004. My experimental work is in basic research, which is likely to have important practical use not in the short term, but in the long term. Why do I do basic research? The answer lies in exploring our natural curiosities. For example, conducting basic research is akin to picking up a pebble on a beach that has caught one's eye and then discovering a heretofore unknown value in that pebble.

My first 'pebble turned gem' was my discovery of a brand new role of replication factor C (RFC) in the ATM and Rad3-related (ATR) pathway in eukaryotic cells in 1996. As is often the case, it was difficult to convince my peers and funding agencies of the value of our discovery. However I managed to do so, and fortunately I am still working on RFC and ATR with continuous NIH support. I do constantly ask myself if my work on RFC and ATR will show that these molecules and pathways will truly be shining gems years in 25 years or more from now. The best answer I can give now is "maybe" or "should be". At the present time, I am committed to showing high school students, undergraduates and graduate students that scientific research is fun. I have had the opportunity to interact with 15 post-docs at New Jersey Medical School, seven of which are now faculty at academic institutions.

About Rutgers New Jersey Medical School

Rutgers New Jersey Medical School (NJMS) is part of Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences, one of the country's largest academic health centers. NJMS is dedicated to excellence in education, research, clinical care, and community outreach. Some pertinent facts:

- NJMS has 20 academic departments and many world-renowned scientists and doctors.
- NJMS is located in Newark, NJ, where African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian/Pacific Islanders comprise more than 90 percent of the city's population and face many socioeconomic, educational, and health challenges.
- Underrepresented minorities made up 23 percent of the medical school's enrollment in 2017-2018.
- NJMS ranks in the 80th percentile for underrepresented minority graduates and 85th percentile for minority faculty, according to the 2017 AAMC Missions Management Tool.