



2026 ANNUAL NEUROLOGICAL SYMPOSIUM

Continuing Education Provider Packet

Living Well with a
Neurological Diagnosis:
Relationships, Resilience,
and Real-World Tools

November 17, 2026

Vestavia Hills Civic Center | Vestavia Hills, Alabama

Program Overview

The Tanner Foundation Annual Neurological Symposium is a single-day educational program for people living with neurological disease, care partners, and healthcare professionals. The professional audience includes physicians, nurses, rehabilitation professionals, social workers, mental health professionals, care coordinators, and allied health professionals. The program combines clinical neurology, interdisciplinary care, behavioral health, patient communication, advocacy, rehabilitation, and practical resources.

The symposium materials describe two afternoon tracks—one for self-advocates/care partners and one for healthcare professionals—with joint plenary sessions and a closing interdisciplinary panel.

SESSION DETAIL FOR CE REVIEW

Optimizing Outcomes for Individuals Living with Complex Neurological Conditions

Faculty: Emily Riser, MD

Schedule: 9:15–10:15 AM | 60 minutes | Joint plenary

Learning objectives

- Define the scope of neurological complexity.
- Discuss and review standards of care for neurological conditions.
- Explain the importance of advocacy in seeking optimal neurological care.
- Describe the importance of multidisciplinary care in neurological conditions.

Navigating a Neurological Condition: Living Your Values Through Planning, Communication, and Advocacy

Faculty: Beverly Thorn, PhD, ABPP

Schedule: 10:45–11:45 AM | 60 minutes | Joint plenary

Learning objectives

- Explain the importance of clarifying personal life values.
- Discuss practical planning as life and illness progress.
- Describe strategies for communicating wishes and identifying advocates.

Introducing Resources Available for Neurological Care and Best Practice Guidelines

Faculty: Emily Riser, MD

Schedule: 1:00–2:00 PM | 60 minutes | Healthcare professional breakout

Learning objectives

- Review problems specific to different neurological disease states.
- Discuss the role of specialty care and technology.
- Identify disease-specific support and advocacy resources.

Integrating Mental Health into Neurological Care

Faculty: Sylvia Huang, PhD

Schedule: 2:15–3:15 PM | 60 minutes | Healthcare professional breakout

Learning objectives

- Identify common psychological, behavioral, and psychosocial concerns that may arise in people living with neurological illness.
- Recognize emotional distress and adjustment challenges that may warrant additional assessment, intervention, or referral.
- Apply practical, person-centered communication strategies to support coping, emotional well-being, and engagement in care.
- Identify opportunities to integrate mental health screening, interdisciplinary collaboration, caregiver support, and appropriate referral pathways into neurological care.

What Comes Next: Turning Today's Lessons into Tomorrow's Care

Moderator: Emily Riser, MD

Panelists: Christopher Eckstein, MD, MSQM; Mark Dean, DO; Diane Tucker, PhD

Schedule: 3:30–4:15 PM | 45 minutes | Joint closing conversation

Learning objectives

- Discuss approaches to improving the patient-provider partnership.
- Identify emerging opportunities that may improve care for people with neurological disease.
- Discuss promising areas of scientific innovation in neurology.

Additional Patient/Care-Partner Track Sessions

These sessions are not part of the designated healthcare-professional afternoon track, but the provider may wish to review them if professionals will be permitted to attend and receive credit.

Move, Think, Speak: The Importance of Dual Tasking with Neurological Disorders

Faculty: Karen Hislop, OTR/L, ATP, CDRS, CLT

- Describe how neurological disorders affect automaticity, divided attention, dual tasking, and attention switching and how these changes affect mobility, safety, and daily function.
- Explain principles of neuroplasticity and their relationship to motor learning and functional recovery.
- Differentiate divided attention, dual tasking, multitasking, and attention switching and recognize their clinical significance in rehabilitation.
- Identify evidence-based PT, OT, and SLP interventions incorporating dual-task and attention-switching activities.
- Apply task-specific, repetitive, progressively challenging rehabilitation principles to functional treatment strategies.

Harnessing the Power Within Ourselves: Living with a Neurodegenerative Diagnosis

Faculty: Beverly Thorn, PhD, ABPP

- Discuss ways to balance realistic appraisal with hope.
- Identify personal stress responses and positive and negative coping strategies.
- Describe ways to collaborate with care partners, loved ones, and healthcare providers in self-advocacy.

FACULTY CREDENTIALS AND SHORT BIOS

Emily Riser, MD

Credentials/role: Board-certified neurologist; Director, Tanner Center for Multiple Sclerosis; Alabama Neurology Associates.

Dr. Emily Riser is a board-certified neurologist and Director of the Tanner Center for Multiple Sclerosis at Alabama Neurology Associates. She earned her BS from Vanderbilt University and MD from the University of Alabama at Birmingham, completed an internal medicine internship at the Medical University of South Carolina, neurology residency at UAB, and fellowship training in neuroimaging. She has longstanding experience in complex multiple sclerosis care and in building multidisciplinary models of neurological care. The Tanner Center is accredited as a Comprehensive Center for Excellence by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society and the Consortium of Multiple Sclerosis Centers.

Beverly E. Thorn, PhD, ABPP

Credentials/role: Board-certified Clinical Health Psychologist; Professor Emerita of Psychology, The University of Alabama.

Dr. Beverly Thorn is Professor Emerita of Psychology at The University of Alabama and is board certified in Clinical Health Psychology by the American Board of Professional Psychology. During 30 years on the UA faculty, she served 15 years as Director of the Clinical Psychology PhD program and five years as department chair. Her scholarship has focused on cognitive-behavioral treatment for chronic pain and living with chronic illness. She is a nationally recognized author and educator whose more recent work addresses aging, dementia caregiving, and end-of-life decision-making.

Karen A. Hislop, OTR/L, ATP, CDRS, CLT

Credentials/role: Occupational therapist; Assistive Technology Professional; Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist; Certified Lymphedema Therapist; Founder, Therapy Achievements.

Karen Hislop is an occupational therapist and founder of Therapy Achievements in Huntsville, Alabama, a multidisciplinary outpatient rehabilitation practice. She earned a BS in Occupational Therapy from the University of North Dakota and an MBA from Troy State University. Her clinical work includes neurological rehabilitation for stroke, brain and spinal cord injury, Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis, with advanced expertise in assistive technology, driver rehabilitation, lymphedema treatment, wheelchair mobility and functional life skills.

Sylvia Huang, PhD

Credentials/role: Clinical psychologist; Assistant Professor, UAB Division of Gerontology, Geriatrics and Palliative Care; Director of Psychology and Counseling Program, UAB Center for Palliative and Supportive Care.

Dr. Sylvia Huang is an Assistant Professor in UAB's Division of Gerontology, Geriatrics and Palliative Care and serves as Director of the Psychology and Counseling Program at the UAB Center for Palliative and Supportive Care. She earned her PhD in Clinical Psychology at The University of Alabama and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in Palliative Psychology and Psycho-oncology at UAB. She founded UAB's Psycho-Oncology Counseling Residency Program and works in interdisciplinary psychosocial care, education and training for people facing serious illness and their families.

Christopher Eckstein, MD, MSQM

Credentials/role: Board-certified neurologist; neuroimmunology and complex autoimmune neurologic disease; Alabama Neurology Associates.

Dr. Christopher Eckstein is a board-certified neurologist specializing in neuroimmunology and complex autoimmune neurologic disease. He completed undergraduate and medical training at UAB, neurology residency and chief residency at UAB, and a neuroimmunology fellowship at Johns Hopkins University. He previously held academic leadership roles at Duke University, including Division Chief of Neuroimmunology and Multiple Sclerosis, Neurology Residency Program Director, and Vice Chair of AI and Data Science. His clinical and research interests include multiple sclerosis, neuromyelitis optica, and inflammatory CNS disorders.

Mark Dean, DO

Credentials/role: Board-certified neurologist; fellowship-trained in Neuromuscular Medicine; Alabama Neurology Associates.

Dr. Mark Dean is a board-certified neurologist with fellowship training in Neuromuscular Medicine at UAB. He completed medical school at the Kentucky College of Osteopathic Medicine and neurology residency at UAB. He practices general neurology with particular clinical interests in myasthenia gravis, neuropathy, amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, myopathy and other neuromuscular disorders.

Diane Tucker, PhD

Credentials/role: Licensed clinical psychologist; Professor Emerita, UAB Department of Psychology; palliative/supportive care psychologist.

Dr. Diane Tucker is Professor Emerita in the UAB Department of Psychology and a licensed clinical psychologist with longstanding work in cancer survivorship, end-of-life issues and palliative care. She earned her PhD in Clinical and Developmental Psychology from the University of Iowa, completed her clinical internship at the University of Washington, and completed a postdoctoral fellowship in Developmental Neurobiology at Washington University. She has served as a psychologist with UAB supportive/palliative care programs and as a clinical training supervisor.

