

Neuro Recovery Symposium Agenda

Friday, May 8, 2026 • Sheltering Arms Institute • Richmond, VA

8 - 8:30 a.m.	Registration/Check In
8:30 - 9 a.m.	Opening Remarks Haily Cook, PT, DPT
9 - 9:50 a.m.	High-Intensity Physical Therapy in a Low-Tech Environment: Improving Function, Fatigue, and Quality of Life for Persons Living with Multiple Sclerosis Kelli Doern, PT, DPT, NCS
10-10:50 a.m.	From Push to Poise: Rehab Techniques That Bring Patients Back to Center Brad Hill, PT, DPT, NCS
11-11:50 a.m.	SCI Management and Rehabilitation Across the Continuum of Care Sarah Nockengost, PT, DPT, Cert. DN; Samantha White, OTD, OTR/L; Andrew Rolaf, PT, DPT
12-1:00 p.m.	LUNCH AND TOURS
1 - 1:50 p.m.	Vivistim (Paired Vagus Nerve Stimulation) for Upper Extremity Rehab Michaela Torraca, OTD, OTR/L; Dr. Joseph Bell, MD, PhD; Tara Gallagher, OTR/L; Matthew Snyder
2 - 2:50 p.m.	AphasiaGPT: Expanding Communication Possibilities Through AI Ali Holmes, M.S. CCC-SLP, CBIS, BCS-S; Stephen Albright
3 - 3:50 p.m.	FND Management: Transitioning Treatment Theory to Practice Ali Cadematori, PT, DPT, NCS, ATP, Cert. DN; Emma Dalton, PT, DPT, NCS, MSCS
4 - 4:50 p.m.	Closing Remarks Jacob Dowdell Jr.

Speaker Bios

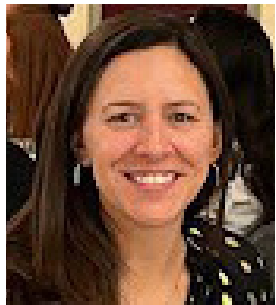
Haily Cook, PT, DPT



Haily Cook graduated from Virginia Tech with a Bachelor of Science in May 2016 and Radford University with a doctorate in physical therapy in May 2019. In her initial full time and PRN jobs, she gained experience in hospital-based outpatient, inpatient rehab, and acute care settings. Haily realized her passion for serving those with neurologic diagnoses early in her career and transitioned to Sheltering Arms Institute in March 2022. Since that time, she has served as a rotating physical therapist on the Brain Injury, Multi-Specialty, and Stroke units. She is now the Therapy Team Lead over the Stroke and Brain

Injury units, working to not only provide direct patient care but to facilitate the vision and growth of these programs. Outside of work, Haily enjoys spending time with family/friends (including her black lab!), being outdoors, reading, and traveling.

Kelli Doern PT, DPT, NCS



Kelli Doern graduated from the University of Iowa in 2003 with a BS in Biology and in 2005 with a Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT). In 2012 she became a board-certified specialist for Neurologic Physical Therapy (NCS). Kelli has practiced physical therapy in Midlothian, VA, since 2014, developing and leading the clinical program for persons with MS at SAI until 2024. She opened her own mobile PT practice in 2025, STRIDE Physical Therapy, delivering out-patient PT to persons living with MS in Midlothian area.

Brad Hill, PT, DPT, NCS



Brad Hill has been a Physical Therapist since 2015 and currently holds the position of Clinical Leader and Physical Therapist for the Neuro Unit at Sheltering Arms Institute. He has worked in outpatient setting and is currently working in inpatient rehabilitation. His clinical expertise is treating patients with Neurological diseases and injuries and is board-certified through the American Board of Physical Therapy Specialists as a Neurological Specialist. He has held educational adjunct positions at South University as well as formal mentoring for the VCU/SAI Physical Therapy Neurological Residency. He

presented For the Brain Association of America and Sheltering Arms Institute Stroke Symposiums. He has held the position of Clinical Scientist with SAI for the past 4 years looking into use of technology use in critically ill patients and presented findings at ACRM annual conference; as well as currently working as Subject Matter Expert on NIH grant funded study on transitions of care for stroke survivors. Brad holds degrees in Health-Science from Pensacola Christian College and Doctor of Physical Therapy from Touro University Nevada.

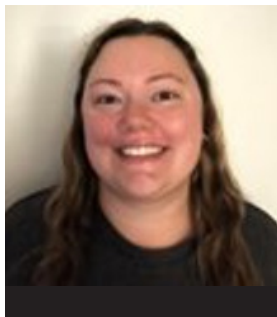
Speaker Bios cont.

Sarah Nockengost, PT, DPT, Cert. DN



Sarah Nockengost has over nine years of clinical experience as a physical therapist at Sheltering Arms Institute. She earned her Doctor of Physical Therapy degree from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2016 and her Bachelor's degree from Virginia Tech in 2012. Sarah's clinical background spans both inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation, with experience in orthopedics, concussion management, and neurorehabilitation, including stroke, traumatic brain injury, and spinal cord injury recovery. In recent years, her practice has focused primarily on spinal cord injury rehabilitation, with a particular interest in advancing locomotor training interventions. Currently, she serves as one of the clinical lead physical therapists on the spinal cord injury unit at the main inpatient hospital, where she is also a certified dry needling practitioner and a member of the Locomotor Recovery Specialist team.

Samantha White, OTD, OTR/L



Samantha White has four years of clinical experience as an occupational therapist with Sheltering Arms Institute after earning her Occupational Therapy Doctorate from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2022. Samantha's clinical background is primarily in inpatient rehabilitation with experience in orthopedics and neurorehabilitation with her practice primarily focused on spinal cord injury rehabilitation where key interests include recovery, interventions, and emerging research involving the upper extremity and neurogenic bowel and bladder. Currently she serves as an occupational therapist on the spinal cord injury unit in the inpatient hospital and is a member of the Clinician Scientist program and the Upper Extremity Recovery Specialist team.

Andrew Rolaf, PT, DPT



Andrew Rolaf went to Virginia Tech for undergrad and studied Human Nutrition, Food, and Exercise. He got his DPT from VCU and completed a year of specialty training through the VCU-Sheltering Arms neurologic PT residency program. Since working at SAI, Andrew has been able to apply his passion for working with those who have sustained spinal cord injuries to his clinical practice, and have more recently moved into the position of 'SCI PT Clinical Leader', working to continually advance the clinical practice of the SCI therapists and develop the SCI program as a whole.

Speaker Bios cont.

Michaela Torraca, OTD, OTR/L



Michaela Torraca, OTD, OTR/L, is an occupational therapist at Sheltering Arms Institute's Hanover outpatient center and the Outpatient Occupational Therapy Stroke & Brain Injury Clinical Leader. She works with a variety of patients experiencing neurological and orthopedic conditions and provides creative, evidence-based interventions focused on restoring function and occupational balance. Specialty areas include driving readiness, neurological rehab, and Vivistim, paired vagus nerve stimulation. Michaela is an alumna of VCU and received her doctorate from Mary Baldwin University. Michaela enjoys running, playing piano, cooking, and playing with her sweet dog, Honeybee.

Dr. Joseph Bell, MD, PhD



Dr. Joseph Bell is a neurosurgeon-scientist specializing in surgical neuromodulation, brain-computer interfaces, and brain injury. He received his MD and PhD in Neurobiology from Harvard Medical School and completed neurosurgery residency and fellowship training in functional neurosurgery, epilepsy surgery, and neurocritical care at UCLA. While at UCLA, he helped lead early feasibility studies of a brain implant to restore sight to blind patients. Dr. Bell is now an Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery at Virginia Commonwealth University, where his clinical practice bridges neuromodulation and neurocritical care. He directs a translational research program focused on using advanced ultrasound imaging to characterize

brain dysfunction after injury and guide personalized neuromodulation strategies. His work integrates real-time imaging, neurophysiology, and targeted stimulation to advance precision approaches to improving brain function.

Speaker Bios cont.

Tara Gallagher, OTR/L



Tara Gallagher, OTR/L is an occupational therapist with eight years of experience specializing in inpatient neurorehabilitation and trauma recovery. Originally from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Tara began her career working in high-acuity neuro settings and later expanded her clinical perspective as a travel therapist, serving diverse patient populations across multiple healthcare systems.

Throughout her clinical career, she worked closely with stroke survivors and their families, witnessing firsthand the profound physical, emotional, and functional impact stroke can have—not only on individuals, but on entire support systems. In 2024, Tara transitioned from traditional clinical practice to an Account Executive role aiming to expand access to innovative stroke recovery solutions beyond the hospital walls. Since joining Vivistim in October 2025 as a Therapy Development Specialist, she has focused on educating clinicians, patients, and caregivers about emerging options in chronic stroke recovery. Tara is deeply passionate about restoring hope to stroke survivors who believe they have exhausted their opportunities for improvement, and she is committed to advancing awareness and access to therapies that support meaningful upper extremity recovery.

Matthew Snyder



Matt Snyder is a seasoned medical technology sales professional with over 15 years of experience serving the Mid-Atlantic region. Throughout his career, he has represented innovative, market-disrupting therapies designed to meaningfully improve patients' lives.

Born and raised in Virginia, Matt has called Richmond home for more than 25 years. A proud University of Virginia football alumnus, he enjoys returning to Charlottesville with his wife and two young sons (ages 4 and 1) to cheer on the Cavaliers and share in the game-day tradition.

Since joining Vivistim in August 2025, Matt has focused on strengthening existing programs and launching new Vivistim initiatives across Virginia. He partners closely with healthcare leadership and neuro-focused physicians to strategically expand access, while also educating clinicians, patients, and caregivers about emerging treatment options in chronic stroke recovery.

Matt is deeply passionate about restoring hope to stroke survivors who feel they have exhausted their opportunities for improvement. He is committed to ensuring every eligible patient has a pathway to reclaim their recovery through Vivistim.

Speaker Bios cont.

Ali Holmes, M.S. CCC-SLP, CBIS, BCS-S



Ali Holmes, M.S. CCC-SLP, CBIS, BCS-S is the SLP Advisor for Sheltering Arms Institute. As a member of the clinical science team, she supports the SLP department in mentoring and student programs, knowledge translation, clinical practice guideline use and program development. Prior to that position, she was Speech Pathology Manager at Encompass Health. She has provided diagnostic and therapeutic services to inpatient, day and outpatient adult populations, as well as managed a team of speech pathologists. In her career, she has developed outpatient voice and swallowing programs, and other specialty programs in stroke rehabilitation, pulmonary rehabilitation, tracheostomy management and Parkinson's disease. Ali has presented to groups throughout the region and at statewide and national conferences for Speech Pathology as well as rehab medicine. She is a member of the Dysphagia Research Society. Ali graduated with BS and MS degrees from James Madison University and earned her board certification in swallowing and swallowing disorders in 2024.

Stephen Albright



Stephen Albright is the founder of AphasiaGPT, an AI-powered speech therapy platform for people with language disabilities. After a brain AVM rupture and two brain surgeries, Stephen lost his ability to read, write, speak, and understand language — along with half his vision from hemianopsia. He built the tools he wished existed during his own recovery. AphasiaGPT has grown to 653 users organically and is launching its SLP Portal to connect patients with clinicians through real-time AI-powered insights. Stephen is currently pursuing his MBA at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business.

Ali Cadematori, PT, DPT, NCS, ATP, Cert. DN



Alli Balderson, PT, DPT, NCS, ATP, Cert. DN is a physical therapist at the Bon Air SAI Location. She focuses primarily on improving independent management of chronic neurologic conditions. She is passionate about challenging stereotypes associated with FND, and supporting self-efficacy gains for people living with FND.

Speaker Bios cont.

Emma Dalton, PT, DPT, NCS, MSCS



Emma Dalton, PT, DPT, NCS, MSCS is a physical therapist at the Bon Air SAI location. She treats a variety of neurologic conditions and is passionate about research-informed care to optimize patient outcomes and quality of life.

Jacob Dowdell, Jr



Jacob Dowdell is author of *Big Jake's Stroke of Genius: The Road to 20/180*, an inspiring guide for stroke survivors, caregivers, and anyone striving for better health and resilience. Written by a decorated military veteran who survived four strokes and lives with epilepsy, this book offers a powerful blend of personal experiences, practical advice, and actionable steps to support your recovery journey.

Big Jake shares his story of resilience and transformation, providing readers with essential tools to navigate stroke recovery, from understanding the science behind strokes to setting achievable goals, strengthening cognitive function, and building a strong support network. Each chapter is filled with personal anecdotes, exercises, and strategies that empower you to take charge of your health, embrace new purpose, and live with clarity and strength.

Whether you're recovering from a stroke, supporting a loved one, or simply looking to improve your overall well-being, *Big Jake's Stroke of Genius* will guide you every step of the way."