Meet the North West Thames Regional Genetics Team

Consultants

Dr Angela Brady
Dr Birgitta Bernhard
Dr Virginia Clowes
Dr Jan Cobben (Lead Consultant)
Dr Fleur van Dijk
Dr Alice Gardham
Dr Neeti Ghali
Dr Jessica Radley

Clinical Genetics Registrars

Dr Tala Adoni
Dr Rhoda Akilapa
Dr Catherine Dennis
Dr Harry Leitch

Genetic Counsellors

Marion Bartlett (Cancer Lead GC)
Cheryl Berlin (Lead GC)
Demetra Georgiou (Principal GC in Service Development)
Natalie Ellery (Education Lead GC)
Juliette Harris
Catherine Hartigan
Sharon Jenkins
Monika Kosicka Slawinska (Prenatal Lead GC)
Lauren Limb
Nadia Peitner
Ravinder Sehra
Hannah Shipman

Genetic Counsellor Trainees

Ilana Weintroub
Madeleine Gale

Contact

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Rhoda Akilapa

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

General Genetics/Cancer Genetics/ Paediatrics & Dysmorphology / National EDS Service

Training and education

BMBS BMedSci

MRCPCH

Experience

Dr Rhoda Akilapa completed her core training in Paediatrics in the West Midlands. She began higher specialist training in Clinical Genetics at the Sheffield Regional Genetics Service in 2013. Dr Akilapa joined the North West Thames Regional Genetics Service to continue her training in 2017. She has an interest in paediatrics and dysmorphology, connective tissue disorders and skeletal dysplasias.

Research

Dr Akilapa has been involved in recruiting patients to the Deciphering developmental disorders project and the 100,000 genome project.

Marion Bartlett

Specialty

Clinical Genetics

Sub-specialty

Cancer Genetics

Training and education

BA in Natural Sciences (Genetics) from the University of Cambridge 2001

MSc in Genetic Counselling from Cardiff University in 2004

Experience

Marion is a member of the Association of Genetic Nurse Counsellors, British Society for Genetic Medicine and Cancer Genetics Group. She is registered with the Genetic Counsellor Registration Board (GCRB Registered 232). Marion has a broad range of genetic counselling experience in different settings including as genetic counsellor for a research group for inherited cardiac disease and in a service development role in primary care.

Marion joined the Kennedy Galton Centre in 2009 dividing her time between the National Ehlers-Danlos service and the regional genetics service.

In 2019 Marion was appointed Cancer Lead for the genetic counsellor team.

Cheryl Berlin

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Cancer Genetics

Training and education

BSc (Zoology and Genetics, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa

BSc (hons) Zoology, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa

Psychology I and II, University of South Africa

MSc Genetic Counselling, University of Witwatersrand, South Africa

Experience

Cheryl is a registered genetic counsellor with over 17 years of experience. She started her career at the South African Institute of Medical Research providing genetic counselling as well as working in the research setting. She moved to the UK in 2001 and worked as a research assistant before accepting her first genetic counselling post in 2003 at the North West Regional Genetics Service (NWTRGS) where she provided genetic counselling services in the prenatal, neurodevelopmental and cancer settings.

Her interest in cancer genetics led her to accept a post at NE Thames Regional Genetics Service as Cancer Lead Genetic Counsellor in 2009 where she specialised in cancer genetics seeing patients with or at-risk of inherited cancer syndrome, including attending specialist renal genetics clinics and setting up new clinics in the region to better accommodate patients. Cheryl is passionate about service development and worked with her colleagues to improve triage processes and referral pathways, providing appropriate patient information and organising patient events. In 2017, Chery returned to NWTRGS as Cancer Lead Genetic counsellor where, again her emphasis was on service development and improving patient experience. More recently Cheryl was appointed as Lead Genetic Counsellor where she continues to focus on service development.

Birgitta Bernhard

Specialty

Clinical Genetics & Paediatrics

Sub-specialty

Paediatric Genetics, Neurogenetics, Neurodevelopmental Pathology, Genomic Data Interpretation, Deep Phenotyping

Training and education

State Examination Medicine (Berlin/ Germany)

Specialist Training in Clinical Genetics and in Paediatric and Adolescent Medicine

Experience

Dr Bernhard is a paediatric Geneticist with dual accreditation. She works as a Consultant Clinical Geneticist in North West London and as a Paediatric Neurodisability Consultant in the Neurosciences Department at the Evelina Children's Hospital. She has > 20 years experience in the clinical and diagnostic work up of rare diseases, genetic conditions, complex neurodevelopmental disorders as well as in genomic data interpretation, phenotyping and genetic counselling.

Research

Prior to embarking on training in Clinical Genetics, Dr Bernhard was a research fellow at the Institute of Psychiatry (IOP)/ Kings College in London. She worked as part of a large team for the International Molecular Genetic Study of Autism Consortium (IMGSAC) working on identifying susceptibility genes for autism.

Angela F. Brady

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Cancer Genetics, Dysmorphology

Training and education

BMSc 1987 Dundee University and Medical School (First Class Honours)
MBChB 1990 Dundee University and Medical School
MRCP 1993
PhD 1998 University of London
FRCP 2004

Experience

Dr Angela Brady is a Consultant Clinical Geneticist and Honorary Senior Lecturer at Imperial College London. As a medical undergraduate she obtained a first class honours BMSc in Genetics and she graduated from Dundee University and Medical School in 1990. She obtained MRCP in 1993 and a PhD in Studies to Investigate the Pathogenesis of Noonan Syndrome from the University of London in 1998. She was a Specialist Registrar in Clinical Genetics at the North West Thames Regional Genetics Service and appointed as a Consultant in 2000. She was Clinical Lead for the Service from 2007 to 2010 and has been Cancer Lead since 2010. In 2015 she was interim Clinical Lead for the London based part of the National Ehlers Danlos Syndrome Diagnostic Service and was part of this service until 2019. She was Chair of the South East England Genetics Network from 2011 to 2013. She was a member of the Steering Group for the Cancer Genetic Group of the British Society for Genetic Medicine 2013-2019 and elected as Clinical Governance lead for the Clinical Genetics Society in May 2019. She was the Clinical Genetics Representative on the Scientific Advisory Committee for the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists 2015-19. She specialises in Cancer Genetics and Dysmorphology. She has set up a number of Cancer Genetic clinics in the NW Thames region and she runs a specialist Renal Cancer Genetic Clinic and a Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia Clinic at the Hammersmith Hospital.

Research

In 1998 Dr Brady obtained a PhD from the University of London entitled ‘Studies to Investigate the Pathogenesis of Noonan Syndrome’. She is Principal Investigator for a number of cancer genetic studies including the EMBRACE and IMPACT studies. She actively recruits patients to cancer studies and to general genetic studies such as the Deciphering Developmental Disorders Study and the 100K Genomes Project. She has had more than 20 publications in peer reviewed journals in the last 5 years.

Jan Cobben

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Paediatric genetics; prenatal diagnosis; genetic test results interpretation.

Training and education

MD, PhD

Experience

Dr Cobben joined the North West Thames regional Genetics Service in 2017 and is currently the clinical lead. Before, he worked a few years in St George's Hospital and before that, many years in the Emma Children's Hospital of the University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands. His work experience accumulates to almost 35 years of experience, seeing many 1000s of children and their parents with a wide array of different congenital and inherited conditions.

Research

Jan Cobben has authored or co-authored ~135 international research papers on various genetic subjects, mainly to do with genetic conditions in children. He has been involved in many research projects and presented work on many international scientific conferences.

Fleur S. van Dijk

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Inherited connective tissue disorders, in particular:

-Monogenic Ehlers Danlos (EDS) syndromes

-heritable thoracic aortic aneurysms and dissections

-Osteogenesis Imperfecta (OI)

Training and education

MD, University of Leiden, the Netherlands, 2005

PHD, Free University Medical Centre Amsterdam (currently Amsterdam UMC), the Netherlands, 2011

Experience

Dr Fleur van Dijk worked as a consultant geneticist in Amsterdam with expertise in heritable connective tissue disorders from 2012 and joined the Trust as a consultant in 2016 as clinical lead of the highly specialised EDS national diagnostic service. She also does inherited connective tissue clinics as part of the NW Thames Regional Genetics service and works part-time in the aortopathy service of the Royal Brompton Hospital. Since 2017 she is lead of the genetics portfolio of NW London Clinical Research Network and is PI of various genetic studies.

Research

Dr. Fleur van Dijk strives to combine her clinical work with clinical research to improve patient care In 2011 Dr. Fleur van Dijk obtained a PhD in clinical and genetic aspects of osteogenesis Imperfecta. She has presented her work on inherited connective tissue disorders at international conferences and she has obtained research grants for further investigations into OI and vascular EDS. She is on the medical advisory board of care4brittlebones and regularly supervises research projects and authors peer-reviewed publications. Currently, she has 25 international peer-reviewed publications as first or last author.

Madeline Gale

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Training and education

2014 BSc, Molecular Genetics, King's College London

2018, PhD in triple negative breast cancer cell migration, King's College London

2019 – Ongoing, MSc in Genomic Counselling through the NHS Scientist Training Programme

Experience

Madeline has previously taught undergraduate medical and biomedical students alongside her PhD and has worked as a healthcare assistant in a sexual health centre. In 2019 she joined the trust as a trainee genetic counsellor and is working towards her HCPC registration as part of the NHS Scientist Training Programme. During her training she will gain experience of cancer genetics, general genetics and prenatal genetic counselling.

Alice Gardham

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Training and education

Postgraduate Certificate in the Interpretation of Genomic Data (July 2016), St George's University of London

Royal College of Pathologists Certificate of Medical Genetics (May 2015)

MRCPCH (June 2010)

MBBS with distinction in clinical practice (2006)

The Birth Defects Foundation BSc in Medical Genetics - 1st class honours (2003)

Experience

Dr Gardham joined the trust as a specialist registrar in 2011 and has trained both here and at Great Ormond Street Hospital. Her clinical practice includes congenital malformations, intellectual disability, prenatal diagnosis and inherited cancer predisposition syndromes. Her specialist interest is in rare diseases.

Research

Dr Gardham has worked as at Genomics England as a Senior Clinical Fellow in Rare Disease Genomics and is involved with recruiting patients into many research studies.

Demetra Georgiou

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Hereditary gastrointestinal cancer // health technology

Training and education

BSc Biology

MSc Genetic Counselling

Experience

Demetra has been working within clinical genetics since 2010 and has subspecialised in cancer genetics and hereditary gastrointestinal disorders. She recently re-joined the Trust as a Principal Genetic Counsellor, focusing in genomic service integration within mainstream care. Demetra has been involved in the development of NICE guidance for screening of colorectal and endometrial tumours for Lynch Syndrome and has developed close links with charities such as Lynch Syndrome UK (medical advisor), Pancreatic Cancer Action (Trustee). As part of her role, she has clinical collaborations with various specialties and is working on development and improvement of care pathways. She is a registered genetic counsellor and is currently serving as a committee member of the yEHTG (European Hereditary Tumour Group) and is a member of the Care for CMMRD European consortium.

Research

Demetra was involved in the pilot stage of 100k genomes project. She subsequently published on the management of Lynch-like syndrome and has been involved in a number of multidisciplinary research groups.

Neeti Ghali

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS)

Syndromic Aortopathies

Training and education

MBChB, University of Manchester, 2000

MRCPCH, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, London, 2002

MD, University of London, 2008

Experience

Dr Ghali joined the Trust as a consultant in 2011 and covered paediatric and adult genetics by geographical location until 2019. Dr Ghali now sub-specialises in the genetic diagnosis of individuals with syndromic aortopathies and connective tissue disorders. She is involved in the clinical interpretation and significance of genetic test results. Since 2011, Dr Ghali also sees patients with rare EDS subtypes in the highly commissioned EDS National Diagnostic Service and has set up joint clinics with cardiology specialists in St. Bartholomew's Hospital and Great Ormond Street Hospital for patients with EDS that are at risk of cardiovascular events.

Research

In 2008, Dr Ghali obtained an MD in genetics of. She has subsequently maintained general genetics research and is involved as a clinician in recruiting to several research projects, such as DDD and 100K genome project. She is a member of the rare EDS types subcommittee and is involved in research in the rare types, vascular EDS and classical EDS. She is also on the Medical Advisory Committee for Annabelle's Challenge, the UK support group for families with vascular EDS.

Juliette Harris

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS), Syndromic Aortopathies

Training and education

BSc Human Genetics, University College London (1994)

PhD Human Genetics, Imperial College School of Medicine (1998)

MSc Genetic Counselling, Mount Sinai School of Medicine, New York (2000)

Experience

Juliette joined the Trust in 2018 as the dedicated Genetic Counsellor for the charity Jnetics, responsible for providing genetic counselling for adults and students participating in the Jnetics Ashkenazi Jewish Screening programme as well as working with the charity on service development. She was also the dedicated Genetic Counsellor for the NHS Tay Sachs carrier screening programme at Barnet Hospital. Her previous experience includes the provision of Genetic Counselling for patients with Movement Disorders such as Huntington's disease at the Department of Neurology, Columbia University, New York. She now specialises in the delivery of Genetic Counselling and support for people with rare genetic forms of Ehlers-Danlos syndrome through her work for the Ehlers-Danlos syndrome national diagnostic service. She is also the Genetic Counsellor at Harefield Hospital's specialist Aortopathy Clinic. She has previously worked as a Post-doctoral researcher, Science Communicator, Patient-Public Involvement Specialist and Patient Experience and Involvement Manager, and is an official STEM Ambassador.

Research

She has contributed to over 50 publications at the Department of Twin Research and Genetic Epidemiology (2006-18) and Division of Movement Disorders, Department of Neurology, Columbia University, New York (2000-05). She is currently involved in vascular and classical EDS research.

Catherine Hartigan

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Training and education

BSc in Medical Genetics from the University of Leicester 2003

MSc in Genetic Counselling from Cardiff University in 2007

Experience

Catherine is a Registered Genetic Counsellor providing General Genetic Counselling at the North West Thames Regional Genetics Service. Her interest in Cancer Genetics led her to specialise as a Cancer Genetic Counsellor at the University Hospitals of Leicester in 2007. In 2016 Catherine was appointed to a General Genetic Counsellor post at North West Thames Regional Genetics Service. Her role involves cancer genetics, general genetics and prenatal genetic counselling.

Catherine is the acting Pre-implantation Genetic Diagnosis point of contact for the Kennedy Galton Centre.

Registered Genetic Counsellor (GCRB 255)

Member of the Association of Genetic Nurse Counsellors and British Society for Genetic Medicine.

Rita M Ibitoye

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Dysmorphology, Adult Neurogenetics

Training and education

Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences (first class honours) - University of Southampton, UK, 2005

Bachelor of Medicine - University of Southampton, UK, 2006

Certificate of Completion of Training (CCT) in Clinical Genetics, UK, 2016

Experience

Dr Ibitoye joined the Trust as a consultant in 2017. She specialises in the genetic diagnosis and multidisciplinary management of people with congenital malformations, learning difficulties, and also specialises in the diagnosis of adult neurogenetic disorders. Dr Ibitoye additionally has in interest in the genetic diagnosis of orofacial clefting syndromes and the genetic causes of hearing loss. Her work includes clinical interpretation of comprehensive and complex genetic test results.

As a trainee, Dr Ibitoye was involved in research projects which provided her with further in-depth knowledge of orofacial clefting syndromes and the SATB2 syndrome.

Awards and prizes

Arnold Huddart Prize, Craniofacial Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 2012

Research

Dr Ibitoye has an on-going interest in general clinical genetics research and is involved in recruiting into several CRN approved research studies.

Sharon Jenkins

Specialty

Clinical Genetics

Sub-specialty

Cancer Genetics/ Cardiac Genetics/ Retinal Genetics

Training and education

1992 BSc Hons Biochemistry, University of Bath, U.K.

2000 MSc Genetic Counselling, Imperial College, London.

Experience

Sharon is a genetic counsellor with 19 years' experience following the completion of her MSc in genetic counselling at Imperial College in London in 2000. Since that time, Sharon has worked at specialist centres and has gained 10 years' experience working with inherited cardiac conditions (ICCs) as the lead genetic counsellor at the Heart Hospital at UCL. She also previously specialised for 6 years in inherited retinal disorders at Moorfields Eye Hospital. Sharon currently works at Northwick Park Hospital where she is involved in seeing families with a broad range of genetic conditions as well as families with inherited cancer syndromes. In addition, Sharon is also involved in clinical research, teaching students and other medical professionals, presenting at meetings, and has been an invited panellist at European conferences.

Monika Kosicka-Slawinska

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Prenatal genetics / endocrine genetics

Training and education

Biological Sciences BSc, King's College London

Science Media Production MSc, Imperial College

Genetic Counselling MSc, Cardiff University

Experience

Monika has worked as a genetic counsellor at the North West Thames Regional Genetics Service for the past 8 years. She has a mixed cancer, general genetics and prenatal caseload and is involved with the endocrine genetics clinic at the Hammersmith Hospital. She coordinates the prenatal referrals coming in to the department. She has recently taken the Bioinformatics and Pharmacogenetics modules on the Genomic Medicine MSc at Cambridge University to further her learning. She has presented at the Royal Society of Medicine (London, 2019) and the European Society of Human Genetics Conference (Milan, 2018). Monika has published on the topic of preimplantation genetic diagnosis and SDHB mutation. She attends monthly Fetal Medicine Unit meetings at Queen Charlotte's Hospital and Northwick Park Hospital.

Harry Leitch

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Training and education

BA 2007– University of Cambridge (First Class)

MA (Cantab) 2010 - University of Cambridge

PhD 2012 – University of Cambridge

MB/BChir 2014 – University of Cambridge

MRCPCH 2018

Experience

Dr Harry Leitch is an Academic Clinical Lecturer in Clinical Genetics at Imperial College London and a Specialist Trainee in Clinical Genetics at North West Thames Regional Genetics Service.

Research

Harry leads the Germline & Pluripotency group at the MRC London Institute of Medical Sciences (https://lms.mrc.ac.uk/research-group/germline-and-pluripotency/).

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Lauren Limb

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Cancer Genetics/ Prenatal genetics / Neurogenetics

Training and education

2007 BSc Hons Genetics, Manchester University

2013 MSc Genetic Counselling, Manchester University

Experience

Lauren gained experience working in the charity sector, while working at Genetic Alliance UK for two years before doing the MSc in Genetic Counselling. Lauren was first appointed as a genetic counsellor at Royal Marsden Hospital in 2013 where she subspecialised in cancer genetics. She later joined the North West Thames Regional Genetics Service. Lauren has since developed an interest in prenatal genetic counselling as well as neurogenetics and is involved in multidisciplinary clinics. She was also involved in the development of specialist clinics offering carrier screening to individuals within the Jewish community in North West Thames Region.

Nadia Preitner

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Cancer genetics, renal genetics, gastrointestinal cancer genetics, genomics

Training and education

BSc (hons) Genetics, Otago University, New Zealand

MSc Genetic Counselling, Aix-Marseille University, France

European Board of Medical Genetics Registered

Experience

Nadia Preitner previously worked as a genetic counsellor in France and Switzerland before joining the London North West Thames Regional Genetics Service in 2018. She has a mixed cancer, general genetics and prenatal caseload. She is involved in coordinating the renal genetics clinic at the Hammersmith Hospital and has a specialist joint gastrointestinal cancer at West Middlesex Hospital. Nadia also runs a weekly, urgent breast cancer clinic.

Jessica Radley

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Paediatric and adult genetics

Training and education

BSc

MSc

MBBS

MRCP(UK)

MSc

Experience

Dr Radley trained at St. George's, University of London (formerly St. George's Hospital Medical school), undertook core medical training at East of England deanery and worked as an acute medicine / acute oncology medical registrar at a wide variety of London hospitals. She completed specialty training in Clinical Genetics at Birmingham Women's and Children's hospital NHS Foundation trust and started her consultant career at London North West University healthcare trust in 2019.

Awards and prizes

Louise Bruton dysmorphology prize (2018)

Research

Clinical research on the IQSEC gene.

Ravinder Sehra

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Ehlers Danlos Syndrome (EDS)/Inherited eye diseases

Training and education

Biomedical Science BSc, King's College London

Genetic Counselling MSc, Cardiff University

Experience

Ravinder is a registered genetic counsellor who has worked at the North West Thames Regional Genetics Service for the past 2 years. She was first appointed a genetic counsellor in the Royal United Bath hospital in 2011, Following this, she spent 5 years at Moorfields eye hospital specialising in ophthalmic genetics whereby she set up the first ever Retina Patient day. This then led her to re-enter clinical genetics now having a mixed cancer, prenatal and general genetics caseload. Ravinder's role is split with the National EDS Diagnostic Service. Most recently, she has built a Vascular EDS database to manage a specialist group of patients to aid scientific research and help co-ordinate the joint clinics that the team attend at St Bartholomew's Hospital and Great Ormond Street Hospital.

Registered Genetic Counsellor (GCRB 326)

Member of the Association of Genetic Nurse Counsellors and British Society for Genetic Medicine.

Hannah Shipman

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Sub-specialty

Cancer genetics, mainstreaming genetics

Training and education

BSc (hons) Biology, The University of Nottingham

MSc Genetic Counselling, Cardiff University

MA Language and Communication Research, Cardiff University

PhD Genetic Counselling, Cardiff University

Experience

Hannah Shipman has a background in research and clinical practice. She has worked at the University of Cambridge, piloting a mainstreaming genetic testing programme and in the clinical genetics service in Cambridge. Prior to joining the London North West Thames Regional Genetics Service in 2018, she was post-doctoral fellow at the University of Hong Kong researching genetic counselling and health communication. Hannah has a mixed cancer, general genetics and prenatal caseload and continues to be involved in mainstreaming genetics projects. She is also a dissertation supervisor for the MSc genetic and genomic counselling programme at Cardiff University.

Sinduya Srikaran

Specialty

Clinical genetics – Rare Disease Recruitment

Training and education

BSc in Biomedical Sciences (2013),

Research

Sindu has worked with the Genetics Department since 2017, facilitated recruitment to the Rare Diseases arm of the 100,000 Genomes Project and is involved with recruiting patients into many research studies.

Ilana Weintroub

Specialty

Clinical genetics

Training and education

2013 BSc Hons Genetics, University of Sheffield

2016 – Ongoing, MSc in Genomic Counselling through the NHS Scientist Training Programme

Experience

Ilana has previously worked in primary and secondary school settings, assisting and teaching science. In 2016 she joined the trust as a trainee genetic counsellor as part of the Scientist Training Programme. As part of her training she will gain experience of cancer genetics, general genetics and prenatal genetic counselling.