



Helen Burton Murray, MS

"I am a fourth-year clinical psychology doctoral student at Drexel University in Philadelphia. I specialize in the growing field of Psychogastroenterology, specifically the intersection of feeding, eating, and gastrointestinal disorders. My research is very much informed by my clinical practice—in particular, the unfortunate stories I have heard about substantial diagnosis and treatment delays from patients with rumination syndrome. I specialize in symptoms that are commonly misdiagnosed (e.g., “reflux” that is explained by GERD vs. rumination; avoidant/restrictive eating motivated by shape/weight concern vs. fear of gastrointestinal symptoms). My long-term goal is to build a career as a clinical researcher to increase accurate detection and treatment of such patients.

To facilitate my career goals, I sought out the Rome Visiting Fellowship to broaden my understanding of disorders of gut-brain interaction. As a Rome Visiting Fellow, I completed a 2-day training visit with DrossmanCare and the University of North Carolina (UNC) Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology. Through this unique opportunity, I enhanced my knowledge of clinical approaches for patients with a wide range of symptoms maintained by gut-brain interaction dysfunction.

At DrossmanCare, I learned from an expert (if not the expert!), Dr. Douglas Drossman, in the assessment and treatment of disorders of gut-brain interaction. As most of my research and clinical work has focused on symptoms characteristic of functional esophageal and gastroduodenal disorders, the observership at DrossmanCare allowed me to increase my understanding of symptoms characteristic of functional bowel disorders, including differential diagnosis and neuromodulator approaches for their management. I also had the opportunity to have illuminating discussions with Dr. Drossman, including the chronicity versus the potential for full recovery of irritable bowel syndrome, and behavioral treatment approaches for diaphragmatic dyssynergia. At UNC, I had discussions with psychologists who have been at the forefront of Psychogastroenterology, Drs. William Whitehead and Olafur Palsson, even initiating a research collaboration with Dr. Palsson.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to be a Rome Visiting Fellow. I encourage other professionals at all career stages to consider applying to this program!



From Left: Meghan Huff PA, Bill Whitehead (UNC), Helen Murray, Douglas Drossman (Drossman Gastroenterology), Oli Palsson (UNC)