

**Get to Know NYCPM Faculty:**  
**Annette Kirchgessner, Ph.D.**  
*Adjunct Professor, Pre-Clinical Sciences,  
Director of Lower Extremity Anatomy Lab Instructor and  
Lecturer, General Anatomy*

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**Dr. Kirchgessner** teaches general anatomy (with Dr. Joy Reidenberg) and is Director of Lower Extremity Anatomy (LEAN) at NYCPM, responsible for organizing the course (for second years), lecturing, teaching the labs as well as obtaining outside clinical speakers.

Her journey here was anything but a straight line, but has always been interesting. Following her BA in Psychology from Hunter College CUNY, she earned her MA in Neuropsychology from Queens College CUNY and then a PhD in Neuroscience from SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn.

Dr. Kirchgessner followed that degree with post-doc work at Columbia University on the enteric nervous system, and stayed at Columbia as a research scientist and assistant professor in the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology for 10 years. Then, it was back to SUNY Downstate as an Associate Professor in the Department of Physiology and Pharmacology for three years; she was then recruited by Glaxo Smith Kline in the United Kingdom as Director of Gastrointestinal Research in the Gastrointestinal Center for Excellence in Drug Discovery. After staying there for two years, she spent a year as Senior Managing Medical Editor for a publisher in Chicago, and then left for Toronto, and another pharmaceutical company (NPS Pharmaceuticals) for which she worked as the Director of Biology in Salt Lake City. While in Utah, she became Assistant Professor in the Department of Gastroenterology at the University of Utah School of Medicine.

Dr. Kirchgessner's return to academia took her to St. Maarten, where she was an Associate Professor in the Department of Anatomy at the American University of the Caribbean Medical School, and was also co-course director of Anatomy and Embryology. After two years, she became Associate Professor in the Department of Interprofessional Health Sciences and Health Administration at Seton Hall University in South Orange, NJ, where she still teaches, and is course director of Functional Human Gross Anatomy, a course taught to a large cohort of DPT, PA, and AT students. Dr. Fortunato Battaglia, MD, PhD, also an Associate Professor in the Department of Interprofessional Health Sciences at Seton Hall, told Dr. Kirchgessner about an opening at NYCPM, and she joined NYCPM in 2016.

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In general anatomy, students are introduced to initial instruction on how to dissect. In LEAN, Dr. Kirchgessner supervises cadaveric dissection starting at the hip; later, students lecture about what they've learned. Among the students in the class are also more advanced students, occasionally those with MD degrees from other countries. This mix produces a diverse set of students coming together to study LEAN.

In line with her vast experience in neurobiology (and her own research interest in enteric neurobiology), Dr. Kirchgessner would love to see a more active research program in LEAN that would include research on the variation of neural innervation of the foot.

And, Dr. Kirchgessner still loves the Caribbean and visits St. Kitts, where she is a Visiting Professor of Anatomy at the University of Medicine and Health Sciences. She is an avid underwater photographer. Her book about the underwater wonders around St. Kitts is on display in the NYCPM library!

