



LabAssistant: Guidance and Services from Expert Scientists

*Visit Kopf at the upcoming
Society for Neuroscience meeting Booth 717.*

On the *Carrier's* 50th publishing anniversary, David Kopf Instruments (KOPF) is excited to share with the neuroscience community a reimagined publication format. Historically, the *KOPF Carrier* has focused on sharing scientific information related to stereotaxic techniques, neuroscience history, animal care, and ethical issues. Although the *Carrier* does not intend to abandon these topics moving forward, the publication will broaden its scope to highlight a network of resources identified as pertinent to the neuroscientific community. These resources will include small businesses, organizations, and products KOPF has worked closely with during its six decades in the industry.

“Overall, at KOPF, we recognize that we are merely one small—but vital—component of your research and many factors impact your successes,” said Dawn Gelsinger, 42-year employee and current president of KOPF. Therefore, KOPF believes sharing information built on longstanding professional relationships will bring value to the neuroscience community.

“KOPF is not a one-stop shop,” said Gelsinger. “We specialize in stereotaxic instrumentation focused on brain and spinal cord research. Many customers contact us for resources and guidance in areas outside our expertise. We hope the *Carrier* can help in providing our customers and community with worthwhile information with the understanding that working together contributes to all our successes.”

This issue of the *KOPF Carrier* features LabAssistant, LLC, a scientific consulting company that specializes in providing consultation services to both academic and biotechnology laboratories. Gelsinger has worked closely with LabAssistant's Chief Executive Officer, Nagheme Thomas, for nearly 20 years. “In the 20 years Nagheme and I have known each other, we have supported each other's professional goals,” said Gelsinger.



Nagheme Thomas,
LabAssistant's CEO

“I have always seen our customers as an extension of the KOPF family. Their success is our success.” Overall, Gelsinger believes that LabAssistant can offer a reliable tool in supporting research success.

Thomas' education and professional experiences prepared and inspired her develop-

ment of LabAssistant. Thomas completed her undergraduate work at The University of Lethbridge in Alberta, Canada where she majored in neuroscience. She then relocated to warmer climates in sunny Florida, working initially as a laboratory technician and then as lab manager at the University of Florida, Department of Neuroscience. Subsequently, in pursuit of an advanced degree, Thomas relocated to Phoenix, Arizona where she continued to work in laboratories at Arizona State University while earning a master's degree, before moving back to Florida and subsequently developing LabAssistant.

Throughout her career, Thomas recognized that she possessed the ability and motivation to assist existing and emerging labs navigate “red tape,” especially in the academic setting. According to organizational theorists—such as Barry Bozeman, regent's professor for the Center for Organizational Research & Design— “red tape” refers to the regulations, procedures, and rules that enforce a compliance burden for the organization but provide little-to-no assistance in meeting the functional objectives of said rules. That's where LabAssistant comes in. “LabAssistant was born out of the need to help move scientific progress forward,” Thomas said.

Services and Specialization

Established in 2017, LabAssistant supports laboratories in the fields of cancer, degenerative diseases, molecular biology, cardiovascular medicine, and pharmacology. Specializing in murine models, LabAssistant provides laboratory assistance in the areas of experimental design, data analysis and interpretation, literature reviews, laboratory setup and close-out, training in lab-specific techniques, technical benchwork, institutional compliance (e.g., institutional review boards; institutional animal care and use committees [IACUC]; and environment, health, and safety

regulations), and advice on cutting-edge empirically-supported scientific techniques and technologies.

“LabAssistant offers a comprehensive range of services that any lab might require, from administrative support—like managing IACUC protocols and IBC registrations—to hands-on benchwork experiments such as cell culture procedures, animal experiments, and flow cytometry staining,” said LabAssistant client Dr. Hector Mendez-Gomez, research associate scientist in the RNA Engineering Laboratory at the University of Florida Brain Tumor Immunotherapy Program (UFBTIP) and Preston A. Wells, Jr. Center for Brain Tumor Therapy.

To provide specific examples, LabAssistant's regulatory compliance services include assistance with drafting the IACUC protocol and providing amendments when necessary. Additionally, “on occasion, LabAssistant will work with new principal investigators and institutional bodies to ‘open’ lab spaces that exceed the required standards at both the institutional and state levels,” Thomas said. Currently, regulatory services are in high demand at LabAssistant, followed by in vivo experimental procedures.

Overall, LabAssistant is a resource for laboratories looking to receive guidance and services from expert scientists. “Clients [who seek out LabAssistant's services] do not have to give a lot of directions or [provide] supervision,” said Thomas, “making it worth their time.” Additionally, LabAssistant provides “short-term contractual work so clients do not have to pay for what they don't need,” Thomas said.

Since its inception, LabAssistant has provided services to more than a dozen academic laboratories and numerous bio-tech firms, providing quality consultation resulting in forthcoming scientific publications in the area

of cancer and cardiovascular sciences. Importantly, LabAssistant works in collaboration with its clients, tailoring services to meet specific and unique laboratory needs, while accommodating varying budgets and timelines.

Client Testimonials

As mentioned above, LabAssistant spends a good deal of time providing services for in vivo experimental procedures. Clients using these services express great satisfaction with LabAssistant and Thomas. For example, assistant professor Dr. Loic Deleyrolle—with the Brain Tumor Metabolism and Immunology Lab in the Department of Neurosurgery at the University of Florida—speaks highly of Thomas’ professionalism and engaging personality. “For the past couple of years, our laboratory has had the privilege of collaborating with LabAssistant,” Deleyrolle said. Specifically, their partnership extends beyond research regulatory processes and includes technical support for critical experiments in the context of in vivo research, he said. “LabAssistant’s stellar reputation and extensive network have consistently delivered top-tier services, significantly contributing to the advancement and success of our projects,” Deleyrolle said. Importantly, Deleyrolle said that LabAssistant’s involvement has granted his laboratory the flexibility needed for effective human resource management.

Overall, clients cite LabAssistant’s exemplary services and Thomas’ professionalism and personal demeanor when discussing

their experiences with the company. “LabAssistant serves as the perfect complement to any laboratory, seamlessly addressing all potential needs,” Mendez-Gomez said. “Collaborating with Nagheme is always a pleasure; she is readily available and a joy to work with. Overall, their service is outstanding.”

Echoing the testimonial above, Deleyrolle “wholeheartedly recommends LabAssistant’s services. Nagheme Thomas’ remarkable professionalism and engaging personality make her an indispensable and integral part of our research operation” he said.

It is no surprise that, given the testimonials above, LabAssistant has thus far acquired most of its clients through word-of-mouth and the networking of past and current clients. However, in efforts of expanding LabAssistant’s reach and impact, Thomas is in the process of increasing the company’s web presence. In the meantime, potential clients can reach out to Thomas directly by either phone (352-234-3499) or email (info@labassistantllc.com). LabAssistant is a contemporary resource ready to help the neuroscience community. The website is labassistantllc.com.

“Working in the neuroscience field has been extremely impactful on the trajectory of my life both professionally and personally,” Thomas said. “Starting LabAssistant is my way of sharing that impact and expertise with fellow researchers and advancing the field of neuroscience even further. Join me in shaping the future of scientific discovery.”