Dr. Sophia Varadkar completed her undergraduate degree at Trinity College Dublin and her postgraduate medical training in Dublin and London. She is a Consultant Paediatric Neurologist and Honorary Senior Lecturer at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, London, UK, where she is the Head of Clinical Service for Neuroscience Medicine, Speciality Lead for the Children’s Epilepsy Surgery Service and Clinical Lead for the Vagus Nerve Stimulation Therapy programme. Dr Varadkar sits on the NHS England National Clinical Coordinating Group for the Children’s Epilepsy Surgery Programme. She has a PhD in neuroscience and is an Honorary Senior Lecturer at UCL Institute of Child Health and has an epilepsy transition clinic with her adult neurology colleagues at the National Hospital for Neurology and Neurosurgery, London. She is an enthusiastic teacher and is a regular faculty member of various training programmes, including the British Paediatric Neurology Association Paediatric Epilepsy Training (PET) courses (for which she is a member of the PET steering committee and chairs the organising group for Expert-to-Expert: Epilepsy, a course for consultant paediatric neurologists.)

Dr. Ahmed Abdelmoity is the Section Chief of epilepsy and neurophysiology at Children’s Mercy Hospital. He is the Director of Children’s Mercy Hospital’s level 4 epilepsy center, which is one of the few level 4 paediatric epilepsy centers in the country. He developed and is directing the clinical Neurophysiology Fellowship at Children’s Mercy Hospital. He also developed and is directing the Neurodiagnostic Program. Dr. Abdelmoity finished his medical degree at Cairo University in Egypt. He then started molecular neurobiology research at UT Southwestern at Dallas, where he later started his paediatric neurology residency. He then moved to Baylor College of Medicine, where he finished his pediatric neurology residency, and finished his clinical neurophysiology fellowship. Dr. Abdelmoity is board certified in Neurology, with special qualifications in Child Neurology. He is also board certified in Clinical Neurophysiology, as well as Epilepsy. He has some key publications in neurogenetics, and ketogenic diet treatment for refractory epilepsy. He is a reviewer for a number of epilepsy, and neurology journals. He has very active research in treatment of refractory epilepsy, as well as neurogenetics.
Refractory epilepsy of infancy and early childhood onset is commonly characterised by frequent seizures and epileptic encephalopathy, and often results in a progressive and severe developmental delay. Underlying etiologies vary and can involve cortical dysplasia, perinatal insults, dysplastic tumors or genetic abnormalities. The epileptic encephalopathy itself may drive the progressive deterioration of cerebral function, however frequent seizures in early life may negatively impact synaptic plasticity, which in turn may cause imbalances in excitation and inhibition contributing to learning and behavioural difficulties. Treatment of epileptic encephalopathies in children requires a multidisciplinary approach to successfully manage the expected cognitive and behavioural problems as well as high seizure burden and risks of status epilepticus. Based on a review of the literature and their own clinical experience our faculty will discuss strategies for optimising management of epileptic encephalopathies with VNS Therapy. There will be opportunities to ask questions and contribute to the discussion.