2026 IOTOX SYMPOSIUM BIOS

David Tweardy, MD
Speaker

Dr. David Tweardy holds the Robert A. Welch Foundation Distinguished University Chair in Chemistry and serves as head of the Division of Internal Medicine and professor of Infectious Diseases at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

He leads the country's premier onco-medicine group, focused on developing and delivering the most advanced medical care to cancer patients throughout their cancer journey. He is also a physician-scientist with a career-long interest in normal and aberrant cytokine signaling, especially the structural and biochemical features of disease-causing proteins that render them druggable.

Among notable contributions to this area, his group pioneered the discovery of a direct, small-molecule inhibitor of STAT3 that is in Phase 2 clinical trials for the treatment of fibro-inflammatory diseases and cancer.

Alexandra-Chloé Villani, PhD
Speaker

Dr. Alexandra-Chloé Villani is a principal investigator at the Massachusetts General Hospital Krantz Family Center for Cancer Research and the Center for Immunology and Inflammatory Diseases, where she directs the Single-Cell Genomics Research Program. She is also an Institute Member of the Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard and an assistant professor of Medicine at Harvard Medical School.

A leader in genomics and systems immunology, Villani pioneers single-cell and spatial multi-omics approaches to map human immune diversity across tissues, health, and disease. Her lab develops high-resolution immune reference atlases and models immune dysregulation to inform mechanism-driven, personalized immunomodulatory therapies. She leads a multidisciplinary team investigating immune-related adverse events from checkpoint inhibitor therapy and charting circulating immune programs across 40 immune-mediated diseases.

Villani holds key leadership roles within the Human Cell Atlas, serving as vice chair of its organizing committee and co-chair of both the Data Ecosystem Oversight Group and the Immune Bionetwork. She has received numerous honors, including the NIH Director's New Innovator Award and the Damon Runyon-Rachleff Innovation Award.

Mehmet Altan, MD
Moderator

Dr. Mehmet Altan is an associate professor of Thoracic–Head & Neck Medical Oncology at UT MD Anderson. He is a thoracic medical oncologist and clinical investigator specializing in thoracic oncology.

His clinical and research work integrates patient care, translational research, and clinical trials focused on lung cancer, mesothelioma, thymic malignancies, and immunotherapy-related toxicities.

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Seyed Moghaddam, MD
Moderator

Dr. Seyed Moghaddam is a professor of Pulmonary Medicine with a joint appointment in Immunology at the UT MD Anderson. He is the immediate past chair of the Division of Internal Medicine Research Committee and led the Immunology Graduate Program at the UTHealth Houston Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences from 2021 to 2024.

Dr. Moghaddam is known for his basic and translational research in lung tumor immunobiology. His program integrates cancer immunology, molecular and cellular biology, and transgenic modeling.

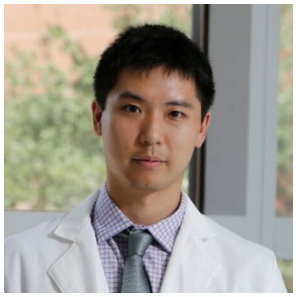
His laboratory has developed human-relevant models that reflect the molecular pathobiology of airway inflammation, COPD, and lung cancer. His group's work in defining pro-tumor cytokine networks in lung cancer has earned multiple awards and high-impact publications, forming the foundation for ongoing investigations.

Ajay Sheshadri, MD
Speaker
Moderator

Dr. Ajay Sheshadri is an associate professor of Pulmonary Medicine at UT MD Anderson, where he specializes in complications of cancer therapies, particularly drug-induced pneumonitis. His work integrates clinical care with research in obstructive airway diseases and advanced imaging.

He received a K23 Career Development Award from the National Institutes of Health to apply quantitative imaging to lung-disease phenotyping, including bronchiolitis obliterans syndrome after stem cell transplantation. He also developed an early screening and intervention program for patients receiving immune checkpoint inhibitors at UT MD Anderson to better understand the earliest features of pneumonitis.

As part of the core team that manages immune checkpoint inhibitor pneumonitis, he leads studies to define clinical risk factors and develop radiomic and clinical prediction models across treatment settings. His current research examines how interstitial lung diseases increase the risk of pneumonitis, using human genomics, blood and lung biomarkers, and preclinical models.



Kevin Ho, MD
Speaker

Dr. Kevin Ho is an assistant professor and pulmonologist at Ohio State University with a clinical and research interest in pulmonary toxicities of cancer therapies, with a specific focus on immune checkpoint inhibitor pneumonitis

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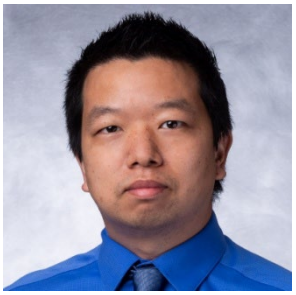


Jia Wu, PhD
Speaker

Dr. Jia Wu is an associate professor of Imaging Physics-Research at UT MD Anderson and a leading expert in AI biomarkers for cancer, specializing in the development, validation, and clinical translation of multimodal computational tools that integrate imaging, clinical variables, blood-based biomarkers, tissue features, and molecular profiles.

His research focuses on building robust and interpretable AI systems that improve early detection, risk stratification, treatment selection, and longitudinal monitoring.

With multidisciplinary training across engineering, machine learning, and oncology, he leads a highly collaborative data science laboratory that partners closely with oncologists, radiologists, pathologists, and surgeons to embed AI models into prospective clinical trials and rigorously evaluate their real-world performance.

Jianjun Gao, MD, PhD
Speaker

Dr. Jianjun Gao is a tenured professor and physician-scientist in Genitourinary Medical Oncology at UT MD Anderson. He leads a translational research program that uses clinical data and biospecimens from therapeutic trials to investigate mechanisms of response and resistance to immunotherapy in bladder and kidney cancers.

His early work identified tumor interferon-gamma signaling defects and VISTA overexpression as drivers of resistance to immune checkpoint therapy, and his group later established tumor tertiary lymphoid structures as predictive biomarkers of clinical benefit.

His current research examines how tumor genomic alterations, including homozygous loss of chromosome 9p21, shape the immune microenvironment and influence immunotherapy outcomes.

Michael Overman, MD
Speaker

Dr. Michael Overman is associate vice president of the Cancer Network Research at UT MD Anderson and a leading clinical investigator in intestinal cancers.

He directs national efforts in small bowel adenocarcinoma, including SWOG 1922, the first randomized trial in this disease, and served as principal investigator for CheckMate 142, which supported two FDA indications for MSI-H colorectal cancer. His current work spans neoadjuvant PD-1 strategies, microbiome-based approaches for PD-1–refractory disease, and personalized vaccine studies through the CRC/Pancreas SPORE.

Overman's work extends to improving the conduct and transparency of clinical research, with publications on endpoint reporting, research biopsy integration, racial reporting in FDA-registration trials, and objective assessment of ECOG performance status. He also identified a novel mechanism of oxaliplatin-induced thrombocytopenia.

Collectively, his efforts reflect a sustained commitment to advancing clinical trial quality and improving outcomes for patients with gastrointestinal cancers.

2026 IOTOX SYMPOSIUM BIOS

Douglas Johnson, MD
Speaker

Dr. Douglas Johnson is a professor of Medicine at Vanderbilt University and has been on the faculty since 2014. At Vanderbilt Ingram Cancer Center, he serves as director of the melanoma and Vanderbilt Precision Oncology programs, principal investigator of the Vanderbilt Oncology Training Program T32, and associate director for translational research. He also holds the Susan and Luke Simons Endowed Directorship.

Dr. Johnson's research focuses on optimizing immune and targeted therapies in melanoma and other cancers, identifying biomarkers of response and resistance, and improving management of treatment-related toxicities. He is a local and national principal investigator for multiple clinical trials and vice chair of the Melanoma Committee for the National Comprehensive Cancer Network. His work is supported by philanthropic funding and grants from the National Cancer Institute, ASCO, the Melanoma Research Alliance, the Department of Defense, and the Melanoma Research Foundation.

Sumit Subudhi, MD, PhD
Moderator

Dr. Sumit Subudhi is an associate professor of Genitourinary Medical Oncology at UT MD Anderson, specializing in immunology and oncology. His research focuses on the immunological mechanisms of anti-tumor immunity and related toxicities.

As the principal investigator of multiple biomarker-enriched clinical trials for advanced prostate cancer, he also leads the PORTER trials to explore novel immunotherapy combinations. Dr. Subudhi's work has identified mechanisms of immunotherapy resistance and biomarkers for treatment response and toxicity. He has received several awards, including the Prostate Cancer Foundation Challenge Award in 2023.

Stephane Champiat, MD, PhD
Panelist

Dr. Stephane Champiat is an associate professor in Investigational Cancer Therapeutics at UT MD Anderson. He is a medical oncologist specializing in early drug development and cancer immunotherapy.

Before joining MD Anderson in 2024, he spent more than a decade at Gustave Roussy Cancer Center in France, where he led multiple phase I immunotherapy trials and developed the iTOX program for managing immune-related toxicities. He serves as principal and co-investigator on several early-phase clinical trials and is a member of the UT MD Anderson Immuno-Oncology Toxicity (IOTOX) Leaders Group.

Dr. Champiat has authored more than 100 peer-reviewed publications in leading oncology journals.

2026 IOTOX SYMPOSIUM BIOS

Sangeeta Goswami, MD, PhD
Panelist

Dr. Sangeeta Goswami is a physician-scientist and associate professor of Genitourinary Medical Oncology and Immunology at UT MD Anderson. An inaugural member of the James P. Allison Institute, she leads a translational research program examining tumor–immune ecosystem dynamics and mechanisms of response and resistance to immune checkpoint therapy to develop biomarker-driven immunotherapy combinations for genitourinary cancers.

Her work, published in *Nature Medicine*, *Science*, and other leading journals, includes multiple investigator-initiated clinical trials. She also cares for patients with renal cell and urothelial carcinoma. Goswami received the 2025 MD Anderson Faculty Scholar Award and is recognized as a top 1% provider nationally by Press Ganey.

Kristen Pauken, PhD
Panelist

Dr. Kristen Pauken is an assistant professor in Immunology at UT MD Anderson. She is a T-cell immunologist whose work focuses on mechanisms of immune dysfunction across chronic diseases.

Dr. Pauken earned her PhD in immunology from the University of Minnesota and completed postdoctoral training at the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard Medical School, where she helped define how PD-1 inhibitors enhance CD8+ T-cell function in cancer and chronic infection.

She established her lab at MD Anderson in 2022. Her research focuses on improving checkpoint-based immunotherapy by identifying barriers to efficacy and reducing immune-related adverse events. She is a member of the IOTOX Leaders Group, co-chairs the Research and Education IOTOX subcommittees, and co-leads the Late Effects of Immunotherapy subgroup within the Cancer Survivorship Research Working Group.

Jason Schenkel, MD, PhD
Panelist

Dr. Jason Schenkel is an assistant professor in the departments of Translational Molecular Pathology, Immunology, and Laboratory Medicine at UT MD Anderson. He completed his MD/PhD at the University of Minnesota, where his dissertation in David Masopust's lab examined the development, distribution, and function of tissue-resident memory CD8-positive T cells after acute viral infection.

He completed a clinical pathology residency at Brigham and Women's Hospital, a transfusion medicine fellowship at Harvard Medical School, and postdoctoral training at MIT in the lab of Tyler Jacks. There, his research showed that CD8-positive T cells in tumor-draining lymph nodes act as a reservoir that replenishes the tumor microenvironment and requires stimulation by type I conventional dendritic cells

His lab studies how tumor and tissue microenvironments shape immune responses to cancer locally and systemically.

2026 IOTOX SYMPOSIUM BIOS

Catherine Sears, MD
Panelist

Dr. Catherine Sears is a tenured associate professor at the Indiana University School of Medicine and the Indianapolis VA Medical Center. She earned her medical degree from Indiana University, completed an internal medicine residency at Vanderbilt University, and a pulmonary and critical care fellowship at IU.

A physician-scientist, she conducts research spanning basic, translational, and clinical studies focused on early lung cancer development, diagnosis, and treatment. Her federally funded laboratory investigates the role of DNA repair in lung carcinogenesis, and her clinical work has driven research into the mechanisms and management of immune checkpoint inhibitor pneumonitis.

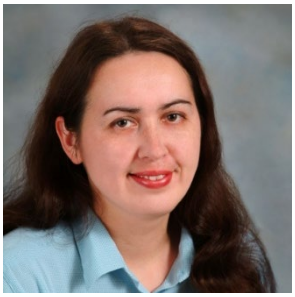
Dr. Sears co-directs the Pulmonary Oncology Program and leads the Lung Screening Program at the Indianapolis VA. She is active in national leadership and education efforts and is committed to mentoring trainees at all levels. Her work aims to improve early detection of lung cancer and outcomes while fostering the next generation of physician-scientists.

Yinghong Wang, MD, PhD
Moderator

Dr. Yinghong (Mimi) Wang is a professor in Gastroenterology and Hepatology and deputy division head of Research in the Division of Internal Medicine at UT MD Anderson. She holds an MD, PhD, and MSc, with clinical training from Johns Hopkins and the Cleveland Clinic.

Since joining MD Anderson in 2017, she has advanced research in IBD, fecal microbiota transplantation (FMT), and cancer immunotherapy–related GI toxicities, gaining national recognition for her expertise.

Dr. Wang and her team have pioneered FMT for refractory immunotherapy-induced colitis since 2017, achieving 80–85% efficacy through 2026. Their work appears in *Nature Medicine* and *Science Translational Medicine*, and she has edited two books on cancer toxicities.



Roza Nurieva, PhD
Moderator

Dr. Roza Nurieva is a professor in Immunology at UT MD Anderson. She is an expert in CD4+ and CD8+ T-cell biology, with research focused on how dysregulated immune responses drive inflammation, autoimmunity, and cancer.

Her work has defined key signaling pathways that govern T-cell activation and tolerance, identified new T-helper lineages including Th17 and T follicular helper cells, and mapped the transcriptional programs that shape their development and function.

Over the past five years, she has built a research program dedicated to understanding the immunobiology of immune-related adverse events in patients receiving immune checkpoint inhibitors.

2026 IOTOX SYMPOSIUM BIOS

Jessica Philpott, MD, PhD
Speaker

Dr. Jessica Philpott is an inflammatory bowel disease specialist and assistant professor at the Cleveland Clinic Center for Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD). She is highly involved in the Gastroenterology fellowship program and serves in various roles on the ACG education committee and as a board member of the Northeast Ohio Chapter of the Crohn's and Colitis Foundation.

Her clinical and research interests include inflammatory gastrointestinal disorders as complications of cancer immunotherapy and transitional care from pediatrics to adult for IBD.

Michael Li, MD
Speaker

Dr. Michael Li is a transplant hepatologist and gastroenterologist at University of California San Francisco who specializes in caring for patients with cirrhosis, autoimmune liver disease, and liver cancer. Dr. Li's research focuses on the relationship between the immune system and liver disease. This includes autoimmune diseases like primary sclerosing cholangitis as well as the use of immunotherapy to treat liver cancer.

He seeks to conduct meaningful clinical and translational research to better understand immune-mediated liver diseases.

Anisha Patel, MD
Speaker

Dr. Anisha Patel is a professor of Dermatology and serves as the section head for Cutaneous Toxicities and the deputy chair of research in Dermatology at UT MD Anderson.

She is double board-certified in dermatology and dermatopathology, and her clinical and research efforts focus on understanding and developing new treatment strategies for cutaneous toxicities related to cancer therapy.

2026 IOTOX SYMPOSIUM BIOS

Joanna-Grace Manzano, MD
Moderator

Dr. Joanna-Grace Manzano is an oncology hospitalist in Hospital Medicine at UT MD Anderson, where she leads research and quality-improvement efforts to strengthen inpatient cancer care, interdisciplinary communication, and safe care transitions. Her work focuses on outcomes of cancer-related hospitalizations, the oncology-hospitalist care model, and toxicities of cancer treatment.

She is a member of the institution's IOTOX Leaders Group and has presented nationally and internationally on managing immunotherapy-related toxicities. She received a Division of Internal Medicine Quality Improvement Grant for developing a clinical pathway to improve care coordination for hospitalized patients with irAEs.

Dr. Manzano directs Hospital Medicine's research program, co-leads the transition-of-care initiative to reduce readmissions, serves as medical director for UT MD Anderson's readmissions operations, and is associate program director for the Oncology Hospitalist Fellowship Program.

Nicolas Palaskas, MD
Moderator

Dr. Nicolas Palaskas is an associate professor in Cardiology at UT MD Anderson. He completed his internal medicine residency and cardiology fellowship at Baylor College of Medicine and now serves as the department's deputy chair of research. His clinical and research focus is on immune checkpoint inhibitor myocarditis.

He has received three grants supporting his work on myocarditis diagnosis and surveillance -- the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas Early Clinical Investigator Award, the Sabin Family Foundation Fellowship, and the UT MD Anderson Division of Internal Medicine Research Development Award. He also co-leads institutional efforts to standardize immunotherapy toxicity research, including automated data collection and longitudinal biospecimen programs.

Afreen Shariff, MD
Speaker

Dr. Afreen Shariff is director of the Cancer Therapy Toxicity Program at the Duke Cancer Institute and an associate at Duke University. She is a recognized leader in onco-endocrinology, specializing in endocrine complications of cancer therapy and in advancing AI-enabled care models to improve access, equity, and outcomes.

She serves on the board of the Association of Cancer Care Centers, co-chairs ASCO's ASPIRE Community of Practice, founded the Onco-Endocrinology Group at the Endocrine Society, and hosts the global medical podcast Checkpoint NOW.

Dr. Shariff is also the co-founder of Citrus Oncology, an AI-enabled platform that generates clinical insights and connects patients to rapid, multidisciplinary virtual care, with plans to expand into AI-powered SaaS tools for intake and triage.

2026 IOTOX SYMPOSIUM BIOS

Ala Abudayyeh, MD
Speaker

Dr. Ala Abudayyeh is an onco-nephrologist in Nephrology at UT MD Anderson with extensive experience in kidney disease among cancer patients. She is both the director of clinical research in the section of Nephrology and chair of ICI-induced nephritis as part of the IOTOX committee at UT MD Anderson.

She is nationally recognized as an expert in both immunotherapy-induced nephrotoxicity and stem cell transplant-related kidney complications. She wrote the first guidelines in the Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer's handbook for post-ICI management of nephritis and established the first institutionally accepted algorithm for nephritis at UT MD Anderson.

Vahid Afshar-Kharghan, MD
Speaker

Dr. Vahid Afshar-Kharghan is a physician-scientist at UT MD Anderson. For over 20 years, his research has focused on the interplay between hemostatic factors and the complement system in thromboinflammation, beginning during his time as a junior faculty member in the Thrombosis Research Section at Baylor College of Medicine.

After joining UT MD Anderson, he expanded this work to investigate how these pathways regulate inflammatory responses in cancer progression. Using murine models, his studies have defined roles for von Willebrand factor and complement activation products in shaping immune responses to tumors and to cancer therapies.

His research has been continuously supported by NIH funding for the past 18 years, and he actively collaborates with investigators in ovarian cancer, melanoma, and stem cell transplantation, among other fields. His overarching goal is to identify novel mechanisms to guide the immune system to target cancer while reducing the complications of cancer therapy.

Humberto N. Jiménez, MD
Moderator

Dr. Humberto Nieves Jiménez is a second-year resident physician in the Baylor College of Medicine and UT MD Anderson's Internal Medicine Residency Program. He earned his medical degree from the Universidad Central del Caribe School of Medicine in Puerto Rico, where he mentored more than 20 research projects and was inducted into the Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society and Gold Humanism Honor Society.

During his residency, he has led quality improvement initiatives and developed a strong commitment to medical education. His clinical and research interests center on inflammatory bowel disease and gastrointestinal immune-related adverse events, and he presents his work at national and international conferences.

Dr. Nieves Jiménez plans to pursue a fellowship in gastroenterology to integrate clinical practice, research, and community-centered care to improve long-term patient outcomes and quality of life.

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Keila C. Ostos-Mendoza, MD
Moderator

Dr. Keila Ostos-Mendoza is a physician-scientist specializing in cardio-oncology and immune-related adverse events. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at UT MD Anderson, where she leads efforts within the Immunotherapy Toxicity Operational Platform to improve early detection and characterization of immunotherapy-related toxicities.

Her work integrates clinical research, bioinformatics, and data science to advance patient-centered outcomes

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Maria Moura, MD
Speaker

Dr. Maria Moura is a research assistant in Gastroenterology & Hepatology at UT MD Anderson, with a focus on cancer immunotherapy toxicities. Her work centers on immune-related adverse events, including their clinical manifestations, management, and impact on quality of life and long-term outcomes.

She will begin her Internal Medicine residency at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Abdelrahman M. Attia, MD
Speaker

Dr. Abdelrahman M. Attia is a postdoctoral fellow in Pulmonary Medicine at UT MD Anderson.

He is a physician-scientist with a strong focus on thoracic oncology, immunotherapy-related toxicities, and pulmonary complications of cancer treatment.

2026 IOTOX SYMPOSIUM BIOS

Christopher Stueber
Speaker

Christopher T. Stueber is a senior research technician in the Villani Lab Group at Massachusetts General Hospital's Center for Immunology and Inflammatory Disease and Center for Cancer Research. He is a leading member of the laboratory's efforts to identify biomarkers of immune checkpoint inhibitor toxicities through proteomic analysis of human serum and body fluids collected from patients suffering from immune-related adverse events.

Prior to joining the Villani Lab Group, Mr. Stueber was a research specialist in Harvard Medical School's Drug Discovery Science Core, where he helped lead efforts to develop and use biochemical assays to advance small-molecule inhibitors.

He earned a master's in Chemistry from Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina.

Synat Keam, PhD
Speaker

Dr. Synat Keam is a postdoctoral fellow in Immunology at UT MD Anderson.

His research focuses on uncovering the cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying inflammatory arthritis induced by immune checkpoint inhibitor therapies.

His goal is to develop novel therapeutic strategies to treat ICI-associated arthritis without compromising the anti-tumor efficacy of immunotherapy

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Bilal Siddiqui, MD
Speaker

Dr. Bilal Siddiqui is an assistant professor of Genitourinary Medical Oncology at UT MD Anderson. He is a clinical and translational investigator focused on biomarker-driven immunotherapy trials in prostate cancer, with a particular emphasis on T-cell engagers and on improving outcomes in immune-mediated toxicities through mechanistic biomarker discovery.

He serves as principal investigator on multiple T-cell engager trials, including multi-center sponsored studies and investigator-initiated efforts. He is a member of the UT MD Anderson IOTOX Leaders Group, contributing to institutional strategies for managing and studying immunotherapy toxicities.

His recent work identified a novel population of IL-1–expressing macrophages in heart tissue from patients with immune-mediated myocarditis, a finding that now informs a rational clinical trial in development. His long-term goal is to maximize the efficacy of emerging immunotherapies while minimizing their toxicities.