

2024 IOTOX SYMPOSIUM BIOS



David Tweardy, MD

Dr. Tweardy serves as division head of Internal Medicine and professor of Infectious Diseases at MD Anderson. He holds the Robert A. Welch Foundation Distinguished University Chair in Chemistry.

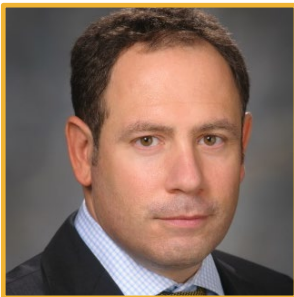
He is a physician-scientist with a career-long interest in cytokine signaling, especially the structural and biochemical features of pathological intracellular signaling proteins that render them druggable by small-molecules. Among notable contributions to this field, his group pioneered the discovery of a direct, small-molecule inhibitor of STAT3 that is in Phase 2 clinical trials for treatment of fibro-inflammatory diseases.



Padmanee Sharma, MD, PhD

Dr. Sharma is a professor of Genitourinary Medical Oncology and Immunology at MD Anderson, where she also serves as associate vice president for Immunobiology and holds the T.C. and Jeanette D. Hsu Endowed Chair in Cell Biology. She earned her MD and PhD in Immunology from Pennsylvania State University in 1998, completed her residency at Cornell Medical Center in 2000, and finished her postdoctoral work at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in 2004.

As the inaugural scientific director of the Immunotherapy Platform, she oversees immune monitoring for over 100 clinical trials and became the director of Scientific Programs for the James P. Allison Institute in 2022. Dr. Sharma's pioneering work includes leading the first neoadjuvant trial with immune checkpoint therapy and identifying mechanisms of response and resistance.



Adi Diab, MD

Dr. Diab is an associate professor and clinical investigator whose research at MD Anderson focuses on developing new Immunotherapeutic Strategies. Building on his extensive general immunology and tumor immunology background, Dr. Diab leads multiple clinical trials involving novel immune modulator agents with Melanoma.

In addition, he leads an interventional immunotherapy program established to develop intratumoral therapeutic and tumor vaccination strategies in combination with systemic therapy. This program is designed to improve clinical outcomes and allow a better understanding of the dynamics of each patient's immune response to the tumor.

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Roza Nurieva, PhD

Dr. Nurieva is a professor of Immunology at MD Anderson, specializing in immune responses of CD4+ and CD8+ T-cells. Her research focuses on how immune dysregulation leads to inflammation, autoimmunity, and cancer.

She has identified new T helper (Th) cell lineages, including Th17 and T follicular helper (Tfh) cells, and explored their roles in inflammation and cancer. In the past four years, she has advanced a research program on the immunobiology of immune-related adverse events in cancer patients treated with immune checkpoint inhibitors.



Yinghong (Mimi) Wang, MD, PhD

Dr. Wang is a professor on tenure track in Gastroenterology, Hepatology & Nutrition at MD Anderson. She earned her MD in China, and her PhD from Johns Hopkins. She completed her GI fellowship at Cleveland Clinic, where she was an inflammatory bowel disease specialist before joining MD Anderson in 2017.

Dr. Wang has authored and co-authored over 140 original scientific publications and many review articles out of broad global collaboration networks and runs multiple colitis trials. She is recognized as a pioneer and leader in the field of cancer immunotherapy-induced GI toxicities and fecal transplantation. She has also served on ASCO, NCCN, ESMO, SITC, AGA, ACG and UPTODATE guideline panels, and is editor for the first immunotherapy related organ toxicity practice handbook.



Michael Dougan, MD, PhD

Dr. Dougan is an associate professor at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School and is the director of the Immunotherapy Mucosal Toxicities Program at Massachusetts General Hospital.

He received his MD and PhD from Harvard Medical School, where he completed his dissertation work in immunology with Dr. Glenn Dranoff at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Dr. Dougan's research focuses on understanding the balance between protective antitumor immunity and the inflammatory toxicities of cancer immunotherapy.

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Christopher Flowers, MD

Dr. Flowers, division head of Cancer Medicine, joined MD Anderson in 2019 as chair of Lymphoma/Myeloma. Previously, he was a professor at Emory University, where he directed the Emory Healthcare-Lymphoma Program for 13 years.

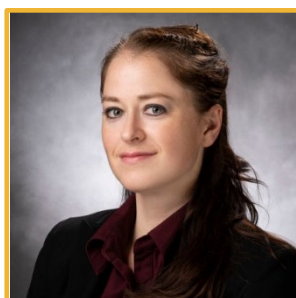
An expert in lymphoma clinical care and outcomes research, Dr. Flowers focuses on drug development and clinical trials for B-cell lymphomas. His research includes cancer informatics and patient-oriented studies, resulting in over 200 peer-reviewed publications and NIH-funded grants. He holds medical and MSc degrees from Stanford and completed oncology training at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.



Pauline Funchain, MD

Dr. Funchain is an associate professor at Stanford Medicine, specializing in melanoma, high-risk skin cancers, immunotherapy toxicities, and hereditary cancer genetics. She co-directs Stanford's Skin Cancer Genomics Program and the Immunotherapy Toxicity (IOTOX) Working Group. Previously, she led the Melanoma Oncology and Genomics Programs at Cleveland Clinic.

Nationally, Dr. Funchain co-chaired ASCO's inaugural Guidelines Panel on Systemic Therapy for Melanoma and serves on ASCO's panel for immune-related adverse events (irAEs). She also pioneered the first irAE tumor board and led the first U.S. conference on checkpoint inhibitor toxicity management.



Kristen Pauken, PhD

Dr. Pauken is an assistant professor of Immunology and a T-cell immunologist at MD Anderson, specializing in mechanisms of immune dysfunction that occur in diverse chronic disease states. Dr. Pauken obtained a PhD in Immunology from the University of Minnesota, where she studied checkpoint-induced autoimmune diabetes. She then did postdoctoral training at the University of Pennsylvania in the lab of Dr. John Wherry and Harvard Medical School in the lab of Dr. Arlene Sharpe, where she studied how PD-1 regulates CD8+ T cell responses in cancer and chronic infection.

In her own lab, Dr. Pauken is interrogating how PD-1 inhibitors promote protective vs. pathogenic immune responses with an emphasis on skin responses, with the long-term goal of dissociating the toxicities from the anti-cancer response.

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Seyed Moghaddam, MD

Dr. Moghaddam is a professor of Pulmonary Medicine and Immunology at MD Anderson, where he chairs the Division of Internal Medicine's research committee. He also leads the Immunology Graduate Program at UTHealth Houston.

Renowned for his work in lung tumor immunobiology, Dr. Moghaddam's research focuses on cancer immunology, molecular biology, and transgenic animal models. His lab has developed models that mimic human airway inflammation, COPD, and lung cancer. His pioneering research on pro-tumor cytokine networks in lung cancer has earned him numerous awards and high-impact publications.



Sumit Subudhi, MD, PhD

Dr. Subudhi is an associate professor of Genitourinary Medical Oncology at 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.



Ala Abudayyeh, MD

Dr. Abudayyeh is a professor of Nephrology and an onco-nephrologist at MD Anderson, specializing in kidney diseases in cancer patients. She serves as the director of Clinical Research in the Nephrology section and chairs the ICI-induced nephritis committee within the IOTOX group.

A nationally recognized expert in immunotherapy-induced nephrotoxicity and stem cell transplant-related kidney complications, she has been elected research committee co-chair for the American Society of Onconephrology, leading international efforts to advance the field. Dr. Abudayyeh authored the first guidelines on nephritis management post-ICI for the SITC handbook and established the first accepted nephritis algorithm at MD Anderson.

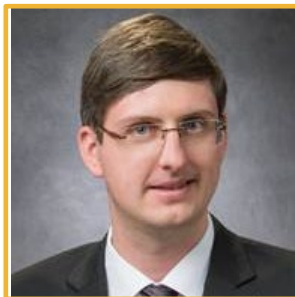
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Bilal Siddiqui, MD

Dr. Siddiqui is an assistant professor of Genitourinary Medical Oncology at MD Anderson. He first joined the institution after in 2018 as a fellow in Hematology and Oncology, and developed a strong interest in prostate cancer, a challenging disease to treat with immune checkpoint therapies due to its immunosuppressive tumor microenvironment (TME). Mentored by Dr. Sumit Subudhi and Dr. Padmanee Sharma, he focuses on overcoming the prostate TME with novel strategies.

His long-term goal is to develop new immunotherapies and improve outcomes by identifying predictive biomarkers and addressing immune toxicities through targeted treatments.



Sebastian Wurster, MD

Dr. Wurster is an assistant professor of Infectious Diseases at MD Anderson. After completing his medical education and a master's in Experimental Medicine at the University of Würzburg, Germany, he pursued doctoral and postdoctoral research in molecular oncology, experimental mycology, and microbial immunology at both the University of Würzburg and MD Anderson.

His research focuses on fungal and polymicrobial infections in immunocompromised individuals, investigating their epidemiology, pathogenesis, and immunobiology. Additionally, he is developing innovative animal models for studying invasive mycoses and exploring the use of cancer immunotherapies, such as CAR-T cells and immune checkpoint inhibitors, as treatments for opportunistic infections.



Noah Hornick, MD, PhD

Dr. Hornick is an assistant professor of Dermatology at Oregon Health & Science University (OSHU), where he founded the Oncodermatology Specialty Clinic. He earned both his MD and PhD in Molecular Microbiology and Immunology from OHSU, followed by a Dermatology residency at Yale University.

At Yale, Dr. Hornick trained under Dr. Jonathan Leventhal in Oncodermatology and conducted research in Dr. Nikhil Joshi's laboratory, focusing on skin tolerance loss due to checkpoint inhibitors. His current research explores cutaneous responses to checkpoint inhibitors and the clonal dynamics of melanoma-specific T cells.

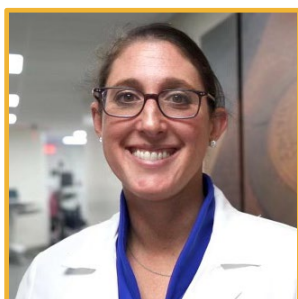
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Nupur Kikani, MD

Dr. Kikani assistant professor of Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders at MD Anderson, completed medical school, residency in Internal Medicine, and an endocrinology fellowship at Baylor College of Medicine. Her clinical and research focus includes managing diabetes, particularly atypical and ketosis-prone diabetes, steroid-induced hyperglycemia in cancer patients, and immunotherapy-related endocrinopathies.

Dr. Kikani also works to enhance health care delivery in both inpatient and outpatient settings. She serves as the associate patient safety and quality officer and is the faculty wellness lead for her department.



Alexa Meara, MD

Dr. Meara is an associate professor and rheumatologist in the Division of Oncology at The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center. Her clinical and research focus is on how cancer treatments disrupt the immune system and lead to new autoimmune diseases. She leads efforts to define and classify these autoimmune sequelae and develop evidence-based, steroid-sparing guidelines.

Additionally, she directs the Immunotherapy Management Clinic within the Division of Oncology, which supports oncologists in managing the side effects of immunotherapy and CAR-T treatments.

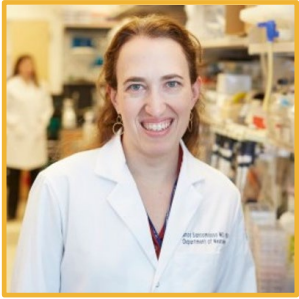


Ashley Aaroe, MD

Dr. Aaroe, assistant professor in Neuro-Oncology at MD Anderson, completed her neurology residency at NewYork-Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medical Center, and neuro-oncology fellowship at MD Anderson. Her clinical and research span the management of primary brain tumors and neurological complications of cancer and cancer treatment.

She is also active in the Society for Neuro-Oncology and American Academy of Neurology, with interests in medical education, health care disparities, and public policy.

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Bianca Santomasso, MD, PhD

Dr. Santomasso is an assistant professor of Neurology at Weill Cornell Medical College and an assistant attending neuro-oncologist at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK). She specializes in managing neurologic complications of immunotherapies, including CAR T-cell therapies and immune checkpoint inhibitors.

She earned her MD from Weill Cornell and her PhD from The Rockefeller University. Following her residency in neurology at New York-Presbyterian Hospital – Cornell, where she served as co-chief resident, she completed a neuro-oncology fellowship at MSK. Dr. Santomasso's research focuses on understanding neurotoxicity from immunotherapies to develop new treatments. She has contributed to guidelines panels for the NCCN, ASCO, and SITC.



Nicolas Palaskas, MD

Dr. Palaskas is an associate professor of Cardiology at MD Anderson. He completed his cardiology fellowship in 2017 and his internal medicine residency 2014 at Baylor College of Medicine. His clinical interests include cancer therapeutic cardiotoxicity management, echocardiography, and cardiac catheterization for patients with cancer. In addition, Dr. Palaskas leads institutional efforts in immunotherapy cardiotoxicity.

His main research focus is on immune checkpoint inhibitor-related myocarditis, for which he has three grants related to the diagnosis and surveillance of myocarditis; Cancer Prevention & Research Institute of Texas Early Clinical Investigator Award in 2020, Sabin Family Foundation Fellowship in 2020, and the Division of Internal Medicine Research Development Award in 2019.



Ajay Sheshadri, MD

Dr. Sheshadri is an associate professor of Pulmonary Medicine at MD Anderson, specializing in obstructive airway diseases and advanced imaging, with expertise in cancer therapy complications like drug-induced pneumonitis. He received a K23 Career Development Award from the NIH for using advanced imaging to phenotype airway diseases, including bronchiolitis obliterans post-stem cell transplantation. He developed an early screening program for patients on immune checkpoint inhibitor (ICI) therapies to investigate early pneumonitis.

As part of the ICI pneumonitis management team, he leads studies on clinical risk factors and develops radiomic and clinical prediction models. His recent research explores how interstitial lung diseases increase pneumonitis risk through genomics and blood-based assays in collaboration with Dr. Mehmet Altan, Dr. Jia Wu, and faculty at other institutions.

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Arielle Raugh, PhD

Dr. Raugh is a postdoctoral fellow in Immunology in the Pauken Lab at MD Anderson. She received her PhD in Translational Biology and Molecular Medicine from Baylor College of Medicine, and trained in the laboratory of Dr. Maria Bettini, where she studied the role of the Amphiregulin/EGFR axis on regulatory T cells in Type 1 Diabetes.

Dr. Raugh's work is focused on better understanding CD8 T cell tolerance to self-antigens and how the PD-1 pathway affects tolerance, with the overarching goal of developing better therapeutic strategies for autoimmune patients.



Synat Keam, PhD

Dr. Keam is a postdoctoral fellow in Immunology at MD Anderson. He holds a PhD from the University of Western Australia, where he investigated the combination of radiotherapy and immunotherapy in mesothelioma.

His current research focuses on uncovering the mechanisms behind inflammatory arthritis induced by immune checkpoint inhibitors.



Matthew Hadfield, DO

Dr. Hadfield is an assistant professor at Brown University Alpert School of Medicine and an oncologist who specializes in early drug development and cutaneous oncology at the Legorreta Cancer Center of Brown University. His clinical and research interests include early drug development, particularly on novel immunotherapeutic targets.

Dr. Hadfield also leads clinical and translational research projects aimed at improving the diagnosis and treatment of immune-related adverse events.

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Felipe Soto Lanza, MD

Dr. Lanza is a postdoctoral fellow in Pulmonary Medicine, Research under Dr. Ajay Sheshadri at MD Anderson. Originally from La Ceiba, Honduras, he completed medical school in Monterrey, Mexico. His research centers on lung toxicities linked to cancer therapies and pulmonary function in hematopoietic cell transplantation.

Driven by a commitment to "put the medical in medical oncology," he is developing expertise in clinical epidemiology, biomarker discovery, and causal inference methods, with plans to pursue a residency in internal medicine.



Naimah Turner

Naimah is a research assistant in Dr. Roza Nurieva's laboratory in immunology at MD Anderson. Her current research aims to establish a preclinical murine model of immune checkpoint therapy-induced colitis that will allow for the identification of mechanisms underlying pathogenesis and potential therapeutic targets.

Additionally, she investigates the links between the microbiome and tumor immune microenvironment that reflects outcomes in tumor progression.