

Updates as of 031226



Janeen Azare, PhD, MSPH

Sr. Director, Oncology Field Medical
Pfizer Oncology
New York, NY

Janeen Azare, PhD, MSPH, a native of Southwest Louisiana, developed an early interest in investigating the region known as "Cancer Alley." Her research has focused on proteins involved in the progression of breast and prostate cancer, as well as the role of the MDR-1 gene in the efficiency of transcriptional targeted chemotherapy. Dr. Azare currently holds the position of Field Medical Senior Director - Breast Cancer at Pfizer, where she leads initiatives in research services, diversity in clinical trials, healthcare disparities, and patient advocacy. She is a Chartered member of Pfizer's Diversity in Clinical Trials Center of Excellence and has completed a two-year Fellowship in Pfizer's Early Oncology Development and Clinical Research Division. Her work has been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and she has participated in various scientific committees.

Dr. Azare earned her PhD from the NYU Nelson Institute of Environmental Medicine, an MSPH from Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, and a BS from Xavier University of Louisiana. She completed her postdoctoral training at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, where she also held the position of Research Associate in the Department of Medicine.

In addition to her research, Dr. Azare mentors' students and early career professionals. Her guiding principle, inspired by Gandhi's words, is: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." Dr. Azare resides in Harlem, NY. #breast cancer #healthcare disparities, #clinical trials, #networking



J. Carl Barrett, PhD

Chief Scientific Officer
Precede Biosciences, Inc.
Boston, MA

Dr. Barrett is currently a Professor at the University of North Carolina and Chief Science Officer of Precede Biosystems. Previously, Dr. Barrett was Vice President of Translational Medicine in Oncology R&D at AstraZeneca. His responsibility was to develop and execute biomarker strategy and translational sciences efforts to support drug development and back translational. From 2005-2011, he was Global Head of Oncology Biomarkers and Imaging at Novartis Oncology.

Prior to joining Novartis, Dr. Barrett was the founding Director of the NCI intramural Center for Cancer Research. He was also Chief of the Laboratory of Biosystems and Cancer. Prior to joining NCI, Dr. Barrett was Scientific Director at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

Dr. Barrett's longstanding research interests focus on the critical genetic and epigenetic changes in the cancer cell, in particular, the discovery of genes involved in breast cancer (BRCA1) and in the processes of cellular senescence and cancer metastasis. This led him into drug development to translate basic research into patient impact. Trained as a chemist at the College of William and Mary, he received his Ph.D. in Biophysical Chemistry from Johns Hopkins University. He has published over 600 research articles and reviews.

Keywords: Discovering genomics and epigenomics of cancer. Developing therapies for cancer. Discovering mechanisms of cancer resistance.

General advice:

Follow your passion and have fun

Be a lifelong learner

Be a great communicator and listener

Key to success is the 3 C's: Creativity, Caring, Communication

Everything is possible

"We are all responsible to all for all" (Dostoyevsky)

"Progress in science depends on new techniques, new discoveries, and new ideas, probably in that order" (Sydney Brenner)

"I think one of the things about creativity is not to be afraid of saying the wrong thing " (Sydney Brenner)

Be kind



John M. Carethers, MD, FAACR

Vice Chancellor
UC San Diego Health
La Jolla, CA

Dr. Carethers is the Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences at UC San Diego, overseeing UC San Diego Health along with the Schools of Medicine, Public Health, and Pharmaceutical Sciences to integrate, grow, and expand the missions of clinical excellence, education, discovery, and community engagement. He obtained his MD from Wayne State, followed by residency in internal medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital and a gastroenterology fellowship at the University of Michigan. He served as Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine at the University of Michigan from 2009 through 2022. Dr. Carethers is a trained gastroenterologist and physician-scientist who focuses his research in the area of hereditary colon cancer genetics and colon cancer disparities, publishing over 250 manuscripts and book chapters. He has been continuously funded by the NIH for 30 years. His work has focused on the DNA mismatch repair function that drives post-replicative repair of DNA. He served as Senior Associate Editor for Gastroenterology, completed a 2-year appointment on the National Commission for Digestive Diseases, and currently serves on the NIDDK Advisory Council. He is a past President of the American Gastroenterological Association, past President of the Association of American Physicians, and is currently on the Board of Directors of AACR. He is a member of the US National Academy of Medicine and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Keywords: Colorectal cancer; gastroenterology; familial cancer syndromes; medical administration; department chair; division chief; vice-president of health.

General Advice:

The power of knowledge through discovery is intoxicating once you are in the field of cancer research. Through science, figuring out pathways, molecular interactions, altered nucleotide consequences, metabolic adjustments, and cellular mishap patterns help aim ideas on how to combat these errors to ultimately help a patient to live as long and as full life as possible. Through your work, you develop into a curious leader that will help shape the future. This element of science-based learning, discovery, and expertise also prepares you to play a lead role in the future of science and education. Take the leap, enjoy, learn, be curious, ask questions, and teach others what you know once you have mastered things.



John D. Carpten, PhD

Director
City of Hope Comprehensive Cancer Center
Duarte, CA

John D. Carpten, PhD, is the Director of City of Hope's National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center, Director of Beckman Research Institute of City of Hope, and chief scientific officer. Dr. Carpten also holds the Irell & Manella Cancer Center Director's Distinguished Chair and the Morgan & Helen Chu Director's Chair of the Beckman Research Institute. Dr. Carpten provides overall executive leadership and strategic direction for research at City of Hope.

An internationally recognized expert in genome science, Dr. Carpten has deep experience in multiple disciplines, including germline genetics for disease risk and predisposition, somatic cancer genomics, health disparities research, cell biology, functional genomics, and precision medicine.

Dr. Carpten is uniquely positioned to help further the City of Hope's critical goal of democratizing cancer care and expanding access to leading-edge research and care for more patients, families, and communities. He has been a national leader in health disparities research and has been a tireless advocate and key voice for reaching underserved populations, ending disparities in cancer outcomes and care, and building a more diverse workforce in cancer research. In 2022, President Joe Biden appointed Dr. Carpten as the first African American chair of the National Institutes of Health's National Cancer Advisory Board, a distinguished post that helps set the national cancer research policy agenda.

He joined City of Hope from the University of Southern California (USC), where he was a professor and chair of the Department of Translational Genomics at Keck School of Medicine of USC and associate director of the cancer center. Prior to USC, Dr. Carpten served as director of the Division of Integrated Cancer Genomics and, later, deputy director of Basic Research at City of Hope's Translational Genomics Research Institute.

Earlier in his career, Dr. Carpten completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the National Human Genome Research Institute (part of the National Institutes of Health) in cancer genetics, where he was later promoted to the tenure track in 2000. Dr. Carpten earned his Ph.D. from Ohio State University in 1994, with a focus on human genetics.



Luis G. Carvajal-Carmona, PhD

Professor & Associate Vice Chancellor
Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine
University of California, Davis, CA

Dr. Luis G. Carvajal-Carmona is Associate Vice Chancellor for the Office of Advancing Mentoring and the Professoriate and Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine at the University of California, Davis. He earned his Ph.D. at University College London and completed postdoctoral training at the London Research Institute and the University of Oxford. A leading expert in cancer genetics, epidemiology, health disparities, and global health, Dr. Carvajal-Carmona has identified multiple cancer susceptibility genes and published more than 120 peer-reviewed papers in journals such as *Nature Genetics*, *Gastroenterology*, *AJHG*, *Lancet Gastroenterology & Hepatology*, and *PNAS*. His work has advanced the understanding of Latino genetic ancestry, colorectal cancer risk, and hereditary gastric cancer. He has received major awards and fellowships from the European Association for Cancer Research, the University of Oxford, the University of California, the V Foundation, and was inducted into the Atlas of Inspiring Latinx/Hispanic Scientists. He advises the University of California, the California Cancer Registry, NIH, AACR, and several national research initiatives. A first-generation college graduate, Dr. Carvajal-Carmona is deeply committed to mentoring. His trainees, many of whom are also first-generation students, have earned more than 60 fellowships and awards, reflecting his impact as both a scientist and mentor.

Keywords: cancer genetics, cancer disparities, global cancer health.

**Raffaele Colombo, PhD**

Director, Medicinal Chemistry, ADC Therapeutic Development
Zymeworks, Inc.
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Raffaele Colombo is Director of Medicinal Chemistry at Zymeworks, a biotechnology company based in Vancouver, Canada. Raffaele has 15 years of experience in drug conjugates and a primary focus on antibody-drug conjugates (ADCs). He received his Ph.D. from the University of Milan, Italy, where he investigated small-molecule drug conjugates (SMDCs), and completed his postdoctoral training at the University of Pittsburgh within the NCI's Chemical Biology Consortium (CBC), part of the NCI Experimental Therapeutics (NExT) program. In 2014, he was awarded a Lilly Innovation Fellowship Award (LIFA) and joined Eli Lilly in Indianapolis, contributing to the development of novel payloads and linkers for SMDCs and ADCs. He subsequently continued his ADC research at MedImmune/AstraZeneca in Gaithersburg, and since 2020, he has led the medicinal chemistry team at Zymeworks, advancing new technologies for ADCs. In 2024, Raffaele was named an honoree of the PharmaVoice 100 list, which recognizes the most inspiring leaders in the life sciences industry, and last year, at the 12th Annual World ADC Awards, he received the George R. Pettit Individual Input to the Field Award for his dedication to advancing ADC science.

General Advice Statement:

Pursue depth, stay curious, and collaborate. Do your best to build strong expertise in your field while continuously questioning what you think you know.

Favorite Quote: "Learning is experience. Everything else is just information." – Albert Einstein

Keywords: antibody drug conjugates, drug development, translational science, biotech

**Marcia R. Cruz-Correa, MD, PhD**

Professor, Medicine & Biochemistry
University of Puerto Rico
San Juan, PR

As a Chief Medical Officer and a CEO, I lead multidisciplinary teams in conducting innovative clinical trials and advancing cancer research and prevention in Puerto Rico and beyond. With over 20 years of continuous NIH funding, I have established a strong track record of scientific excellence and impact in the field of gastrointestinal oncology and hereditary cancer.

My mission is to leverage my clinical, academic, and leadership skills to improve the quality of life and outcomes of cancer patients and their families. I have academic appointments at UPR Medical Sciences Campus and Johns Hopkins University, where I mentor and train the next generation of clinicians, physician scientists and researchers. I am also actively involved in several national and international professional organizations and journals, where I contribute to the advancement of cancer science and policy.

**Johann S. de Bono, PhD**

Professor
The Institute of Cancer Research
London, England

Professor Johann de Bono is Regius Professor of Cancer Research at The Institute of Cancer Research and The Royal Marsden Hospital and led on the development of abiraterone, cabazitaxel, enzalutamide, Olaparib, lutetium PSMA and the molecular genomic stratification and germline sequencing of advanced prostate cancer. Professor de Bono leads the Drug Development Unit at the Royal Marsden which comprises >100 staff and conducts >50 Phase I clinical trials at any one time. He also runs a translational research laboratory. Professor de Bono has received numerous awards for his contributions to the field of oncology, including drug discovery and prostate cancer

Goals for the AACR

I am committed to transforming the care of individuals suffering from cancer and the conduct of hypothesis-testing, biomarker-driven, proof-of-concept clinical trials, as evidenced by my track record. I am now the head of the Division of Clinical Studies at the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR), an independent college of the University of London. I am a key opinion leader in the development of novel cancer therapies, co-founding and now running, as its director, The Royal Marsden Drug Development Unit, one of the world's largest trials units for cancer patients and leading our Experimental Cancer Medicine Centre team. I am a leader in prostate cancer research, having changed the treatment of these diseases through trials of abiraterone, cabazitaxel, enzalutamide, Olaparib, and Lutetium PSMA.

Research Interests: Clinical and translational research; experimental therapeutics; prostate cancer; elucidating treatment resistance; circulating biomarkers.

**Laura Fejerman, PhD**

Professor, Department of Public Health Sciences
UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center
Sacramento, CA

Dr. Fejerman is the Placer Breast Cancer Endowed Chair and Professor in the Department of Public Health Sciences, School of Medicine at the University of California, Davis. She is the Associate Director for Community Outreach and Engagement and the Director of the Women's Cancer Care and Research Program (WeCARE) at the UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center. She completed her undergraduate degree in Social Anthropology at the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina and earned her PhD in Biological Anthropology and MSc in Human Biology at the University of Oxford, England. Dr. Fejerman's research focuses on the discovery of genetic and non-genetic factors that contribute to breast cancer risk and prognosis. She leads the Latin America Genetics and Genomics of Breast Cancer Consortium (LAGENO-BC), which brings together researchers from the U.S. and Latin American countries to study the genetics of breast cancer in individuals of Latin American heritage. Dr. Fejerman is passionate about cancer prevention and control and dedicates part of her time to the development and implementation of cancer education and navigation programs tailored to underserved and under-resourced communities in California.

Keywords: breast cancer, genetic epidemiology, genetic ancestry, breast cancer in Hispanic/Latina women, breast cancer risk prediction



Erica L. Jackson, PhD

Chief Discovery Officer
Scorpion Therapeutics
South San Francisco, CA

Dr. Erica L. Jackson is the Chief Discovery Officer at Scorpion Therapeutics, a clinical-stage oncology company advancing next-generation precision medicines. An accomplished scientific leader, she has a proven track record in new target discovery, strategic portfolio contributions, and cross-functional leadership across all stages of drug discovery and development, from early research through IND submission.

Before joining Scorpion in 2020 as EVP of Biology, Dr. Jackson held senior roles at AbbVie, ORIC Pharmaceuticals, and Genentech, where she contributed significantly to oncology discovery and translational research. She also brings experience in business development, including academic and corporate collaborations, and evaluating in-licensing and partnering opportunities. Dr. Jackson is an expert in tumor cell heterogeneity, cancer stem cells, and mechanisms of drug resistance. She has extensive experience in developing in vivo cancer models—ranging from genetically engineered mouse models to patient-derived xenografts—for target identification, proof-of-concept validation, and preclinical efficacy studies. She earned her Ph.D. in Biology from MIT and holds a B.A. in Biology from Brandeis University.



Susan Galbraith, MBBChir, PhD

Executive Vice President
AstraZeneca Oncology
Gaithersburg, MD

Dr. Susan Galbraith, BSc (Hons), MB BChir, PhD, MRCP, FRCR, FMedSci, FAACR, is Executive Vice President of Oncology Haematology R&D at AstraZeneca, responsible for transforming the productivity and scientific output of Oncology Haematology R&D. Over her career, Susan has contributed to the development of 13 approved medicines. She has worked at AstraZeneca since 2010 prior to which she held senior R&D roles at Bristol Myers Squibb. A Clinical Oncologist by training, she studied medicine at Manchester and Cambridge Universities and holds a PhD from the University of London. In recognition of her contributions to oncology drug development, she has received an honorary Doctorate of Medical Science from the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR), is a Fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences, and has been elected to the Academy of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR). Susan is a member of the Cambridge Cancer Centre Executive Committee and the Scientific Advisory Board of the ICR. From 2021 to 2024, she served on the AACR Board of Directors and is currently a member of the European Association of Cancer Research (EACR) Advisory Council.

Keywords: Drug discovery, drug development, clinical trials, precision medicine

General advice: When I reflect on my career to date, I'm struck by how far we have collectively come – whether that be the rise of precision medicine to provide targeted therapies based on a patient's genetic makeup or the availability of immuno-oncology (IO) which has transformed outcomes for many previously untreatable cancers – the advances in treatment options for cancer patients have been immense. Despite these advances, there is so much more to do if we are to achieve our ambition of one day eliminating cancer as a cause of death. For example, we need to be able to target 'undruggable' oncogenic drivers, such as MYC and P53, as well as identify and treat patients earlier when the likelihood of better outcomes is higher. While these challenges may seem as daunting as IO once did, I'm optimistic that with the support of the next generation of investigators and scientists, who, as AI natives, are well placed to harness technological advances, we can continue to make great strides. My advice for early-career investigators is to be curious, challenge the norm, be adaptable to the technological advances that will happen over the course of your career, not self-limit, and see where science can take you – the patients of tomorrow are counting on you.



Electron Kebebew, MD, FACS, FCS (ECSA), FSSO

Professor of Surgery, Chief of the Division of General Surgery & The Harry A. Oberhelman Jr. & Mark L. Welton Professor
Stanford Cancer Center
Stanford, California

Dr. Kebebew is Professor of Surgery, Chief of General Surgery, and the Harry A. Oberhelman Jr. and Mark L. Welton Professor at Stanford University. He is an internationally recognized surgeon-scientist with expertise in Endocrine Oncology and Surgery. His scientific contributions include the use of molecular markers in endocrine tumors to refine diagnosis and prognostication, identification of novel targets for endocrine cancer therapy, implementation of genetic testing and advanced imaging modality to optimize the management of patients with endocrine tumors and that allows for the practice of precision surgery, and the identification and characterization of inherited endocrine and neuroendocrine syndromes, and their susceptibility genes. He has performed more than four thousand operations on the adrenal, parathyroid, and thyroid glands, and for neuroendocrine tumors of the gastrointestinal tract and pancreas. He has given over 200 invited lectures and visiting professorships. Dr. Kebebew has authored and coauthored over 400 scientific articles, 40 book chapters, and edited or co-edited four textbooks.

I have been a member of the AACR since 2002. I look forward to serving on the Minorities in Cancer Research Council (MICR) to promote and increase the number of minority scientists in cancer research, to enhance the breadth and depth of the AACR's programs that highlight and support the work of investigators of diverse backgrounds, and to advocate for research that will accelerate the elimination of cancer disparities.

One of the most enjoyable and rewarding aspects of my career has been to be able to mentor and sponsor young investigators in biomedical research. As part of the MICR, I will actively contribute to programs that address the needs and visibility of minority scientists and advocate for policies and programs that address cancer disparities.

**Emma M. Lees, PhD**

Senior Vice President, Research
Bristol-Myers Squibb Co.
New York, NY

Dr. Emma Lees holds a PhD from Imperial Cancer Research Fund, London, England, and performed post-doctoral work for Cold Spring Harbor Labs and Harvard Medical School, Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center. Her industry career began at DNAX Research Institute/Schering Plough in Palo Alto, California, where she was responsible for building and leading the Oncology Research group. From there, Emma joined Novartis Institutes of Biomedical Research (NIBR) as Site Head and Vice President of Oncology in Emeryville, California, and later became Vice President of Oncology Biotherapeutics in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she was responsible for the design, development, strategy, and implementation of the biologic's oncology portfolio. Emma transitioned to Jounce Therapeutics, also in Cambridge, a small immuno-oncology company where she served as Head of Research.

Presently, Emma is Senior Vice President, Oncology Discovery at Bristol Myers Squibb and serves as Site Head at Bristol Myers Squibb's Cambridge, MA location. Emma's team is primarily focusing on understanding resistance to standard of care therapies, studying patients who do not respond or build resistance to current drugs, with a goal to discover medicines for these patients' populations with unmet medical needs. In her role as Site Head, Emma collaborates with the site leadership team to craft a unified vision, set objectives, and cultivate a culture that aligns with the global strategy.

**Shiva Malek, PhD**

Global Head of Oncology Disease Area
Novartis Institute of BioMedical Research, Inc.
Cambridge, MA

Dr. Shiva Malek received her PhD in biochemistry from UC San Diego, studying the structure and function of NF- κ B/I κ B protein complexes in the laboratory of Dr. Gourisankar Ghosh. Dr. Malek has over 20 years of experience in oncology research and drug discovery, having held positions of increasing responsibility at biotechnology companies including Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Exelixis, and Genentech. She has spent the last 15 years at Genentech and is currently executive director of discovery oncology, a department responsible for the targeted therapy oncology portfolio at Genentech. Dr. Malek has authored/co-authored over 30 papers, with her most notable work being the discovery that BRAF inhibitors paradoxically activate the MAPK pathway and enhance tumor growth in RAS mutant or RAF WT contexts. This work was selected by *Nature* as one of the most highly cited cancer research articles published in 2010 and one of the most important cancer papers published between 2008-2010. Since then, her lab has continued to make important contributions to the field, including defining the mechanism of action of MEK inhibitors, the discovery of BRAF-MEK complexes in RAS mutant tumors, and the mechanism of oncogenic deletion mutations in BRAF, HER2, and EGFR. Her own lab continues to focus on understanding how catalytic and non-catalytic functions of RAF kinases regulate cancer signaling in RAF and RAS mutant tumors. She is particularly passionate about developing novel, transformative therapies for RAS mutant cancers. Dr. Malek actively mentors a number of early-career scientists and has spoken about the importance of mentorship in the "Portraits in Science" editorial series titled "[The Gift of Mentorship](#)".

**Reza Mazhari, PhD**

Chief Business Officer
Delphia Therapeutics
Cambridge, MA

Prior to joining Delphia, Dr. Mazhari was chief business officer at Triana Biomedicines, where he led a discovery partnership with Pfizer in 2024. Prior to joining Triana, he was the head of search and evaluations for oncology at Novartis, where he led numerous successful in-licensing deals that contributed to the early-stage oncology pipeline and expanded the portfolio of enabling technologies, while also leading out-licensing efforts for early-stage programs. Previously, Dr. Mazhari was the vice president of translational medicine and head of business development and licensing at Rexahn Pharmaceuticals.

At Cerecor, he was vice president of drug discovery and early development and led business development. Dr. Mazhari was the co-founder and vice president of research and pharmacology at Cardioxyl Pharmaceuticals, which was acquired by Bristol-Myers Squibb in 2015. He began his career as a faculty member at the School of Medicine at Johns Hopkins University.

Dr. Mazhari holds a Ph.D. in bioengineering from the University of California at San Diego and a postdoctoral research fellowship in cardiovascular medicine from The Johns Hopkins School of Medicine.

**Ruben A. Mesa, MD**

President, Atrium Health Levine Cancer
Executive Director, Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Comprehensive Cancer Center
Enterprise Senior Vice President, Atrium Health
Vice Dean for Cancer Programs, Wake Forest University School of Medicine
Professor of Medicine, Wake Forest University School of Medicine
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Atrium Health Senior Vice President, Ruben A. Mesa, MD, FACP, is also President & Executive Director of Atrium Health Wake Forest Baptist Comprehensive Cancer Center, which has two locations, one in Charlotte and the other in Winston-Salem. He is also Vice Dean for Cancer Programs and Charles L. Spurr, MD Professor of Internal Medicine at Wake Forest University School of Medicine. In his roles, Dr. Mesa oversees all efforts related to cancer practice, research and education across the Atrium Health system. Dr. Mesa is an international expert in hematologic cancers. He has dedicated his life's work to research and drug development for myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs), a group of chronic leukemias that can cause difficult symptoms, bone marrow problems, acute leukemia and premature death. He has over 800 lifetime medical publications, with more than 400 peer-reviewed manuscripts, 15 book chapters and 2 edited books. He is frequently invited to speak on MPNs with over 600 such lectures and visiting professorships, nationally and internationally.



Coleman K. Obasaju, MD, PhD

Associate Vice President
Eli Lilly and Company
Indianapolis, IN

Coleman K. Obasaju, MD, PhD, is an Associate Vice President at Eli Lilly and has served as Global Leader for Diversity in Clinical Research, Global Medical Affairs Leader, Global Product Development, and Global Product Safety Leader. Previously, he led the US Oncology Medical organization and had responsibility for the US Medical Liaisons in the Oncology Business Unit (OBU) of Eli Lilly. Dr. Obasaju received his medical degree at the University College Hospital, Ibadan, Nigeria, in 1982. He then went on to pursue post-graduate training in clinical pharmacology and medical oncology in England at Christie Hospital and the University of Manchester, obtaining both a master's and a doctoral degree. A former Audrey Mayer Mars Oncology Fellow, Dr. Obasaju completed an Internal Medicine residency program at the University of Pennsylvania Health Systems and then completed a combined fellowship in medical oncology/hematology in the U.S. at Fox Chase Cancer Center and Temple University Cancer Hospital, both in Philadelphia. He obtained a Clinical Investigator Training Program (CITP) Fellowship awarded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) before joining Eli Lilly and Company in 2001.

Additionally, Dr. Obasaju has served two four-year terms as a board member of the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Minority in Cancer Research Council. In that role, he provided more visibility to the scientific contributions of minority scientists and helped in developing strategies to improve the pipeline of future minority investigators. Dr. Obasaju championed an Eli Lilly/Roswell Park Cancer Institute partnership to develop a workshop to train and mentor minority Oncology investigators in Clinical cancer research. Three yearly workshop was completed with outstanding success. He played a key role in the partnership between Eli Lilly and the Tuskegee Bioethics Institute that had a goal of increasing the number of African Americans who participate in pharmaceutical clinical trials and the ultimate goal of reestablishing trust between the African American community and the medical research establishment. In 2013, the National Medical Association (NMA) awarded Dr Obasaju the prestigious Scroll of Merit for outstanding work in the field of Medicine and specifically for his dedication and tenacious efforts in clinical research and untiring focus on increasing minority participation in clinical trials. In 2018, he received the "Top Black Doctors in Health care" award, which was jointly given by Black Doctors.org and Milken Institute School of Public Health.

**Folakemi T. Odedina, PhD**

Enterprise Deputy Director
Mayo Clinic Comprehensive Cancer Center
Jacksonville, FL

Dr. Odedina is an internationally recognized cancer researcher and academic leader. She has led global research programs for decades, primarily funded by the National Cancer Institute and the Department of Defense. This research focuses on developing cost-effective, community-based behavioral intervention programs to address prostate cancer in Black males.

Her research, education, training, and community outreach activities have exclusively focused on addressing health disparities in racial and ethnic minority and underserved communities. As a behavioral scientist, she conducts behavioral research across the translational continuum to test behavioral models, confirm who will benefit from behavioral interventions and examine how to deliver interventions in all settings.

Dr. Odedina's research program has developed and validated multiple behavioral models that include multilevel assessment of barriers and facilitators for the uptake of interventions, tested and adapted interventions that include behavioral clinical trials, and worked closely with community health workers to implement health intervention programs in diverse community settings worldwide.

She has also been a leader in training future scientists whose backgrounds are underrepresented in biomedical research.

**Thomas A. Paul, PhD**

Director, Cancer Epigenetics
Pfizer Oncology R&D
La Jolla, CA

Thomas Paul, Ph.D., is a Senior Director of the Tumor Biology Group in the Pfizer Oncology R&D unit in La Jolla, CA. He leads a group focused on therapeutic targeting of oncogenic pathways in cancer through the development of small molecule inhibitors. His group has progressed multiple compounds into clinical testing, including PF-06821497 (EZH2 inhibitor/ Mevrometostat), PF-06939999 (PRMT5 inhibitor), and, more recently, PF-07258144 (KAT6 inhibitor/Prifetrastat). In addition, he helps lead several discovery initiatives within Pfizer, manages the oncology postdoctoral program in Pfizer, and has developed academic and industry collaborations.

Prior to joining Pfizer, Dr. Paul was a Scientist at Celgene in San Diego, CA (2009-2012). He received his BS degree in Biology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1998 and his PhD from Cornell University in 2005. He was a postdoctoral fellow at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, MD, from 2005 to 2009, where he studied cancer epigenetics in acute myeloid leukemia.

General advice statement: Understanding your translatable skills from your training is key to transitioning to industry roles.

Keywords: Drug Development, Industry



William Pao, MD, PhD

Chief Executive Officer
Revelio Therapeutics, Inc.
New York, NY

William Pao is a physician-scientist whose career has spanned academia, industry, and biotech. As a faculty member at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, and Vanderbilt University in Nashville, he was a practicing oncologist and was recognized for his ground-breaking work in translational medicine, mechanistic and clinical studies of targeted cancer therapeutics, and cancer genomics and personalized medicine, changing the standard of care in lung cancer. In industry, through executive leadership positions at Roche in Basel (Switzerland) and Pfizer in New York, he oversaw the discovery and development of a portfolio of new molecular entities, many of which have been approved to treat a range of diseases in cancer, rare diseases, ophthalmology, infectious diseases (including vaccines), neuroscience, rare blood disorders, and immunology. William is currently CEO and Co-Founder of a cancer biotechnology company.

William received his undergraduate degree from Harvard and his M.D. and Ph.D. degrees from Yale University. The author of multiple scientific and medical publications he has advised numerous professional associations and has served on the editorial boards of prestigious medical research journals. William also co-founded MyCancerGenome, an internationally recognized online tool to enable a genetically informed approach to cancer medicine. William is the author of the book BREAKTHROUGH: The Quest for Life-Changing Medicines, published in the UK in October 2024 and in the US in January 2025.

Keywords: epidemiology; health disparities; interventional studies; cancer screening



Elizabeth A. Platz, ScD, MPH

Professor, Epidemiology
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Baltimore, MD

Elizabeth A. Platz, ScD, MPH, is a Professor and the Martin D. Abeloff, MD Scholar in Cancer Prevention in the Department of Epidemiology at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, where she directs the NCI-funded (T32) training program in Cancer Epidemiology, Prevention, and Control. She holds joint appointments in the Departments of Oncology and Urology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and is the Associate Director for Population Sciences at the Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins. She received her doctorate in epidemiology from and was a post-doctoral fellow at the Harvard School of Public Health. A major focus of her work is the use of molecular epidemiology approaches to understand the mechanisms underlying the incidence and progression of cancer, including prostate. She conducts her work with an eye toward translation of findings into prevention and treatment strategies. Known for her leadership of multidisciplinary prostate cancer research teams, she is at the forefront of epidemiologic research on the role of inflammation, a target for prevention, in the development of prostate cancer, and on telomere length as a prognostic marker for poor outcome after treatment for prostate cancer. 5. Over the last 5 years, she has guided research to advance the understanding of the utility of blood-based omics, including proteomics, circulating DNA, and DNA from peripheral blood leukocytes for cancer etiology, risk stratification, early detection, and outcomes. She is the editor-in-chief of the American Association for Cancer Research's *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention*, and an elected member of AACR's Board of Directors. She is an elected Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, "For distinguished contributions to our understanding of the roles of genetics, epigenetics, and environmental factors in cancer epidemiology."

Career development advice: Accept all reasonable scholarly opportunities...you never know where the opportunity will lead. Collaborate across disciplines...cancer research discovery and one's career advances faster with complementary thinking and approaches.

Keywords: Epidemiology, prostate cancer, biomarkers



Robert Radinsky, Ph.D.

Vice President, Oncology Discovery Research
Janssen R&D, LLC
Raritan, NJ

Robert Radinsky, PhD is Vice President, Discovery Research for the Oncology Therapeutic Area at Janssen Research & Development, LLC. He is a member of the Oncology Senior Leadership team. In this role, he is responsible for leading Janssen's research efforts to drive the development of a robust and sustainable oncology drug discovery pipeline aligned with our Disease Area Stronghold strategies.

Robert has had a very successful oncology research career in both academia and industry. Prior to joining Janssen, he was Executive Director, Oncology Research at Amgen Inc., where he led groups at multiple research sites, including Thousand Oaks, California, Cambridge, Massachusetts. He was responsible, in part, for research and/or pharmacology for numerous active targeted therapeutic anti-cancer programs (protein, small molecules, and nanotechnology modalities), culminating with multiple candidates in clinical trials and an approved drug for the treatment of colorectal carcinoma.

Before joining the industry 14 years ago, Robert was on the faculty at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, first serving as an American Cancer Society Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the Department of Cell Biology, and eventually becoming a tenured Associate Professor in the Department of Cancer Biology. He continued as an Adjunct Professor at the MD Anderson Cancer Center after joining the industry.

Robert has published more than 130 peer-reviewed articles, holds multiple patents, and is a present/past member of numerous societies, including the American Association for Cancer Research, Board of Directors for the Metastasis Research Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Scientific Advisory Board, and the Aspen Cancer Conference. He is an Editorial Member and/or ad hoc reviewer for more than 20 scientific journals and has served on review panels for a number of granting agencies, including the National Institutes of Health/National Cancer Institute, the Department of Defense Prostate and Breast Cancer Research Programs, and the Veterans Administration Merit Review Board.

Robert earned his doctorate in Molecular Biology and Microbiology from Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine in Cleveland, Ohio.

**Camille Ragin, PhD, MPH**

Professor of Cancer Prevention and Control Program
Fox Chase Cancer Center
Philadelphia, PA

Dr. Ragin is a professor in the Cancer Prevention and Control Program at Fox Chase Cancer Center-Temple University Health System in Philadelphia. Her research focuses on cancer epidemiology and prevention, primarily in Black populations. She earned a PhD in infectious diseases and microbiology from the University of Pittsburgh, Graduate School of Public Health, and completed her postdoctoral training and MPH degree in epidemiology as part of the NIH/NCI-funded Cancer Education and Career Development Program at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute. Her research focuses on the molecular epidemiology of cancer in the African diaspora. In 2006, she established the African-Caribbean Cancer Consortium (AC3), a research group designed to promote collaboration between cancer researchers who focus their work on the African diaspora. This research group supports collaborations in women's cancers, prostate, upper aero-digestive tract, and colorectal cancers. Recognizing the public health significance of cancer in populations of African origin, and socio-cultural factors that influence disparities in health outcomes, she has fostered collaborative research by leading numerous multinational pooling data initiatives to examine genetic, molecular, and environmental contributions in carcinogenesis among populations of African origin.

She is the recipient of a number of NIH and Foundation grants and is an American Cancer Society Research Scholar. In 2016, Dr. Ragin received the Cancer Control Award from the American Cancer Society, Greater Philadelphia Area. She is also a recipient of a strategic planning grant from the National Cancer Institute to establish a Caribbean Regional Center for Research Excellence, focused on cancer research in the Caribbean. She is PI of the Cancer Prevention Project of Philadelphia (CAP3), a multicultural community-based cohort consisting of US- and foreign-born persons of African descent. She is also PI of an international cohort in Jamaica, which focuses on cancer and CVD risk. Her research program focuses on lung, head and neck, prostate, and cervical cancers.

**Victoria M. Richon, PhD**

CEO
Entact Bio, Inc.
Watertown, MA
Duarte, CA

Victoria Richon is a scientifically trained executive with leadership experience in biotechnology companies, global pharmaceutical companies, and academia. Before joining Entact, Dr. Richon was the President and CEO of Ribon Therapeutics, a clinical-stage biotechnology company focused on the discovery and development of first-in-class cancer and inflammatory disease medicines. Previously, she was the Vice President and Global Head of Oncology Research and Translational Medicine at Sanofi, where she was responsible for the oncology drug discovery and translational medicine portfolio. Prior to Sanofi, Dr. Richon was Vice President of Biological Sciences at Epizyme, Inc., a biotechnology company pioneering the discovery and development of novel therapeutics focused on epigenetics, including Tazverik, the first EZH2 inhibitor approved by the FDA for the treatment of advanced epithelioid sarcoma and follicular lymphoma. Earlier in her career, she was Founder and Executive Director of Aton Pharmaceuticals, which was acquired by Merck & Co. Aton was formed to develop HDAC inhibitors, including Zolinza, the first HDAC inhibitor approved by the FDA. Dr. Richon is a member of the Board of Directors of HotSpot Therapeutics, Inc.

Dr. Richon is the author of over 100 papers and carried out postdoctoral studies at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. She received her PhD in Biochemistry at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and a BA in Chemistry at the University of Vermont.

**Victoria L. Seewaldt, MD**

Ruth Ziegler Chair and Professor
Population Sciences
Beckman Research Institute of The City of Hope
Duarte, CA

Victoria Seewaldt, M.D., the Ruth Ziegler Chair in Population Sciences and professor and chair, Department of Population Sciences, is an accomplished clinician and researcher who's devoted to improving the lives of her patients and the community at large. She has led community outreach education efforts on cancer prevention through personal well-being and directed research aimed at finding biomarkers that can be used for early cancer detection, particularly triple-negative breast cancers that are especially resistant to treatment.

At City of Hope®, Dr. Seewaldt directs efforts to provide breast cancer education, free breast cancer screening and treatment, mentorship of young minority scholars, and a forum for community-partnered trials. Clinically, Dr. Seewaldt aims to empower women at high breast cancer risk to be full partners in developing wellness strategies to promote personal health. Dr. Seewaldt received her medical degree from the University of California, Davis, and completed her residency and clinical fellowship at the University of Washington in Seattle. She then pursued a medical oncology fellowship with the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and then became an assistant professor at The Ohio State University. Afterward, she transferred to Duke University, where she held various clinical, academic, and leadership roles in its School of Medicine and Comprehensive Cancer Center — most recently as a professor, co-leader of the breast and ovarian cancer program, and head of the cancer breast prevention program — before joining City of Hope.

**Sheila K. Singh, MD, PhD**

Professor, Director, Centre for Discovery in Cancer Research
Chief of Neurosurgery
McMaster Children's Hospital
Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Dr. Sheila Singh has been Professor of Surgery and Biochemistry, University Scholar, Senior Pediatric Neurosurgeon at McMaster Children's Hospital, Division Head of Neurosurgery at Hamilton Health Sciences, and Founding Director of the Centre for Discovery in Cancer Research (CDCR) at McMaster University. She holds a Tier 1/ Senior Canada Research Chair in Human Brain Cancer Stem Cell Biology and served as founding Director of the McMaster Surgeon Scientist Program. From March 2026, she serves as Joint Head of the School of Cancer & Pharmaceutical Sciences and Director of the Comprehensive Cancer Centre at King's College London, appointed as Professor of Neuro-oncology and Neurosurgery, and a senior strategic advisor to Evelina London Children's Hospital, Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust.

Her PhD thesis described the novel identification of a population of cancer stem cells that exclusively drive the formation of brain tumors (SK Singh et al. Identification of human brain tumor initiating cells. *Nature* 2004; 7015(432): pp 396-401). Since 2007, her lab applies a developmental neurobiology framework to the study of brain tumorigenesis. Building upon previous cell culture techniques developed for the isolation of normal neural stem cells (NSC) and applying them to brain tumors, and through the development of a xenograft model to efficiently study brain tumor initiating cell (BTIC) activity, her lab aims to understand the molecular mechanisms that govern BTIC self-renewal. She has published extensively on the regulation of BTIC signaling pathways in glioblastoma, brain metastases, and childhood medulloblastoma, with an ultimate goal of selectively targeting the BTIC with appropriately tailored immunotherapies and molecular therapies. Her laboratory is funded by CCSRI, CIHR, TFRI, CRS, the Stem Cell Network, McMaster Surgical Associates, Brain Canada, and the Boris Family Fund. She served as scientific founder and interim CEO of a start-up company, Empirica Therapeutics, a brain cancer therapeutics company that is seeking new, data-driven, and polytherapeutic treatment options for patients with Glioblastoma and brain metastases. Empirica was acquired by Century Therapeutics Inc (Philadelphia) in June 2020, resulting in the creation of a Canadian subsidiary, Century Canada, based in the McMaster Innovation Park in Hamilton. She has won many awards, including, most recently, the 2024 Canadian Cancer Society Robert L. Noble Prize for outstanding achievements in basic biomedical cancer research, and is a fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences and of the Royal Society of Canada, and a council member of AACR. She has published over 200 manuscripts in journals such as *Nature*, *Nature Medicine*, *Cancer Cell*, *Cell Stem Cell*, *Cancer Research*, *PNAS*, and many others; she has 26,792 citations, and her h-index is 84.



Kedar S. Vaidya, PhD

Jazz Pharmaceuticals, Inc.
Associate Director, Research and Early Development
Palo Alto, CA

Kedar Vaidya is Associate Director in the Department of Research and Early Development at Jazz Pharmaceuticals. As a pharmacologist and cancer biologist by training, Kedar started his career in the In Vivo Pharmacology Department at Abbott Laboratories at Abbott Park, Illinois, in 2009 with a focus on the development of small molecules and biologics. Kedar Joined Jazz Pharmaceuticals in 2020 and is a pharmacology team lead and program lead for multiple discovery and development programs with a focus on biologics and drug delivery systems. His contributions have led to the approval of Venetoclax and 8 other entities that are in various phases of clinical testing.



Arti P. Varanasi, PhD, MPH, CPH

President and Founder
Advancing Synergy, LLC
Baltimore, MD

Dr. Arti Patel Varanasi, a serial entrepreneur, is President and CEO of the social enterprise, Advancing Synergy, LLC. She has over 25 years of combined experience in cancer research, advocacy, capacity building, public health and project management. Arti is passionate about developing innovations that build stronger communities and enable all individuals to lead healthier and longer lives. Her focus has been on leveraging technology to address chronic disease and advance health equity and justice. She is an active member of the health, entrepreneurial, and technology communities in the DC-Maryland-Virginia area and serves the community through various leadership roles. Arti is a senior lecturer for the Master's in Biotechnology Program at Johns Hopkins University. As an advocate for improving the training of postdoctoral fellows, she was one of the founders of the National Postdoctoral Association, the NCI Fellows and Young Investigators Association, and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences Fellows Committee. Arti was a fellow in the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Cancer Prevention Fellowship Program, where her research interests focused on nutrition, immunity, and cancer prevention. She received her PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and MPH from Johns Hopkins University. Arti is also a graduate of the National Science Foundation funded ACTiVATE® program for women technology entrepreneurs.



Robert A. Winn, MD

Director
VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center
Richmond, VA

As director of VCU Massey Comprehensive Cancer Center, Robert A. Winn, M.D., oversees a cancer center designated by the National Cancer Institute that provides advanced cancer care, conducts groundbreaking research to discover new therapies for cancer, offers high-quality education and training, and engages with the community to make advancements in cancer treatment and prevention equally available to all. He is leading the nation in establishing a 21st-century model of equity for cancer science and care, in which the community is informing and partnering with Massey on its research to best address the cancer burden and disparities of those the cancer center serves, with a local focus but global impact.

As a physician-scientist, his basic and translational research is focused on the development of novel in vitro and in vivo models to study the translational aspects of the role that various signaling pathways (e.g., WNTs, PRMT, KSRP) play in lung cancer. Winn has also brought the importance of the concept of ZNA (i.e., one's zip code or neighborhood of association) and its impact on DNA and biological outcomes to the forefront in basic and translational research. His findings in this area have driven several important studies and has truly advanced the science of health equity.



Clayton C. Yates, PhD

Johns Hopkins School of Medicine
John. R. Lewis Endowed Professor
Professor of Pathology, Oncology, and Urology
Director for Translational Health Disparities and Global Health Equity Research
Program Co-Leader for Cancer Genetics and Epigenetics
Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center

Dr. Clayton Yates is a recognized expert in health disparity research. Dr. Yates earned his Ph.D. from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine in molecular pathology, as well as a certificate of training in Tissue Engineering and Regenerative medicine from the McGowan Institute of Regenerative Medicine. He then went on to complete a postdoctoral fellowship at Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Urology. After completing his post-doctoral training, Dr. Yates started as a tenure-track Assistant Professor at Tuskegee University in the Department of Biology and the Center for Cancer Research. Dr. Yates was promoted through the ranks to Full Professor. He holds Adjunct faculty positions at Clark Atlanta University Department of Biology and the Department of Pathology at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB). Cell-MENTOR recognized Dr. Yates (an online resource from Cell Press and Cell Signaling Technology) among the 100 most inspiring Black Scientists in America. Dr. Yates's lab focuses on prostate and breast cancer, particularly in African Americans. His lab has established several cell line-based models derived from African American patients, used by many labs today to study molecular events that lead to prostate cancer development and metastasis. Additionally, Dr. Yates identified a subtype of Breast cancer called "Quadruple Negative Breast Cancer" (QNBC), which is more frequent in women of African Ancestry. This novel approach used genetic admixture analysis and identified a specific ancestry-associated immune-related signature in both Breast and Prostate Cancers. Using this signature, Dr. Yates's lab was able to identify and develop a novel therapeutic that targets a specific immune cell termed tumor-associated macrophages (TAMs) that contributes to increased tumor aggressiveness and therapeutic resistance. This novel therapy was recently licensed to Aurinia Pharma for clinical development. Dr. Yates's lab has been continuously funded by NIH and DoD CMDRP/PCRP for over the last 18 years. He has trained 17 Ph.D. students, 28 master's level students, and 5 postdoctoral trainees during this time. He has mentored 10+ junior faculty through the MSM/TU/UAB Health Disparities Training Program, for UAB and TU faculty. Currently, five of these mentees have received tenure at their respective universities.

Dr. Yates has spoken at many universities and conferences, including the inaugural NCI Health Disparities Conference and the AACR Plenary Session, and numerous grand rounds and distinguished lecture series. Dr. Yates is featured on NCI's website for the *NCI Annual Plan & Budget Proposal for Fiscal Year 2023*, which was provided to Congress, President Joe Biden, and the public. Dr. Yates currently serves on the UAB External Advisory Board (EAB) for Training of Oncology Surgeons, University of North Carolina (UNC) NCI T32 External Advisory Board, Chair of the University of Florida (UF), University of Southern California (USC), Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University (FAMU) U54- NCI CPACHE. He has also received numerous research honors and awards, authored over 100+ peer-reviewed publications, and is a member of the editorial board of Scientific Reports and Cancer Research Communications. Dr. Yates also serves as Co-Director for the Transatlantic Prostate Cancer Consortium, which focuses on understanding the tumor biology in native African men in Nigeria. Dr. Yates co-chaired the 2022 American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Conference in April 2022. In addition, Dr. Yates was the 2022-2023 Chair of the Minorities in Cancer Research Council (MICR) within the AACR, which serves 7,000+ minority cancer-focused scientists. Dr. Yates currently serves as MPI of U54- NCI CPACHE-Cancer Health Disparities Partnership with Johns Hopkins Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center and the Howard University Cancer Center.