



SEMINARS

No seminars until the fall — enjoy your summer!

STAFF PROMOTIONS

- ❖ **Aaron Mitchell**
promoted to Associate
Attending
- ❖ **Kathryn Graz**
promoted to Senior Research
Technician
- ❖ **Kelli O'Connell**
promoted to Senior Research
Biostatistician

STAFF FAREWELLS

We bid farewell to **Jeffin Naduparambil**, Research Project Associate in Epidemiology. Jeffin primarily supports Dr. Margaret Du, with a focus on the Pancreatic Tumor Registry and the Epidemiology of Endometrial Cancer Consortium (E2C2) and is an active member in the department's Community Building Committee.

Jeffin will be transitioning to the Department of Medicine as a Research Project Manager in the Breast Medicine Service. We thank Jeffin for his dedication and collaboration and wish him all the best in this exciting next chapter.

We also say farewell to **Yasin Khadem Charvadeh, Azka Javaid, Vincent Pisztora, Farimah Shamsi** and **Mohammad Yosofvand**. Wishing you all the best of luck!



Venkat Seshan
Biostatistics



Jonine Bernstein
Epidemiology



Tiffany Trafalgar
Administration



Wesley Tansey
**Computational
Oncology**



Andrew Vickers
**Health
Outcomes**

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Prusha Patel, MPH
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Charlie White, MS
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ALEXIA BECOMES PRESIDENT OF THE SCT

Our very own [Alexia Iasonos](#) has stepped into the role as President of the Society of Clinical Trials (SCT). She was elected at the 47th annual meeting and her one-year term began May 19th this year.

Alexia brings deep roots in the SCT community to her new role. A member since 2003, she was elected to the Board of Directors in 2019, where she served through 2023, and was named a Fellow of the SCT in 2022. She is also a Fellow of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)—a distinction rarely awarded to statisticians. At MSK, she currently chairs the Data Safety Monitoring Board and previously served for a decade on the Research Council, including a term as Co-Chair.



In her welcome message as SCT President she writes, “There is no doubt, the landscape of clinical trials is changing rapidly. Digital technologies (including wearables and data capture and sharing capabilities), data automation and standardization, artificial intelligence, and precision medicine are creating exciting new opportunities to make trials faster, smarter, and more patient-centered. We have witnessed remarkable innovation in the past few years alone, from novel trial designs, standardized and automated reporting to the rapid development of therapies, vaccines and preventive interventions. Yet innovation alone is not enough. We need to ensure that our trials are impactful and to do so they need to be scientifically valid, their findings need to be truly generalizable and applicable in practice and ultimately bring better treatments to patients everywhere.”

Congratulations Alexia!



HALVORSEN CENTER FOR COMPUTATIONAL ONCOLOGY RETREAT

The Halvorsen Center for Computational Oncology held its annual retreat, featuring an energizing program that highlighted the strength and momentum of its research community. Eight invited speakers delivered talks spanning cutting-edge computational methods, emerging clinical applications, and collaborative data-driven discoveries. The retreat also featured a lively poster session where participants shared new findings, sparked cross-disciplinary conversations, and built connections that will shape future projects. The event highlighted the Center's growing impact and its commitment to advancing computational approaches that improve cancer understanding and care.



EPIBIO @ JSM2026

Several members of our group gave talks at this year's Joint Statistical Meetings!

Xinjun Wang — *A unified model-based approach to identify tumor states in scRNA-seq*

Mookyong Son — *Bayesian Methodology for Genomics*

Yuan Chen — *Bayesian Neural Networks for Multi-Institutional, Multi-Modal Genomic Data Integration*

Ronglai Shen — *Virtual Histological Staining Using Deep Learning*

Frank Shih — *High Dimensional Inference via Regularized Extended Fiducial Inference in Survival Analysis*

SUMMER STUDENT SEASON

It's well known in Epi Bio that Summer is student season! We'd like to take a moment to acknowledge the trainees joining us in Summer 2026 and their contributions to the department's training initiatives.

In May, the GEMS program introduced a new cohort of seven masters level students. Each fellow is mentored by a quantitative expert from Epi Bio faculty and a physician-scientist to demonstrate the importance of team science. Throughout the 12-week program, fellows will delve into genomics research projects, with topics ranging from sequencing of somatic mutations; models for integrating single-cell RNA sequencing and flow cytometry data; deep survival analysis with uncertainty quantification, and more. Students will present their findings at 10am on Thursday, August 6th at 633 3rd Avenue, as well as at a poster session with MSK's summer medical fellows on Friday, August 7th, in the ZRC lobby.



The QSURE program is also proud to welcome an impressive cohort of 12 students this summer, it's largest group yet. Recently, QSURE hosted its annual PFACQ Patient Panel, featuring three members of MSK's Patient and Family Advisory Council for Quality (PFACQ). The panel shared their clinical trial experiences, a session that QSURE fellows find incredibly impactful year after year. This year, the partnership went a step further by pairing each student with a PFACQ member as a patient advocate advisor, aiming to establish best practice of incorporating patient voices early in students' research careers. The QSURE Program will culminate in the two-day QSURE Symposium on August 5th and 6th, when students will present on their summer research projects.

At the end of June, the Bridge to Biostats Summer Program (B2BSP) welcomed seven New York City high school students. Over the course of seven weeks, participants will dive into R programming, explore fundamental statistics, and present their data analysis projects. As a member of the New York City Science Research Mentoring Consortium at the American Museum of Natural History, B2BSP joins other Pinkerton-supported initiatives in fostering scientific excellence. The B2BSP students will join the other consortium scholars on August 13th for a research symposium at the American Museum of Natural History (under the famous blue whale!).

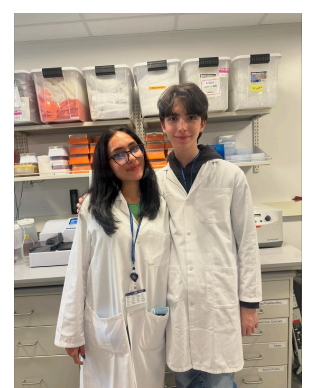


If you are interested in attending the final presentation sessions for B2BSP, QSURE or GEMS, please reach out to **Richard Koppenaal**.

The Oncology-focused Postdoctoral Training In Care Delivery and Symptom Science (OPTICS) Training Program is excited to welcome three new trainees for summer 2026: **George Mellgard**, **Zoe Walts**, and **Julia Slack**. OPTICS mentors and trains physicians and scientists with PhD/ScDs in social or quantitative sciences, focusing on innovative cancer care delivery research.

Outside of the formal training programs, there are several students working directly with Epi Bio faculty, including **Gloria Zhan**, who is interning with **Dr. Ronglai Shen**. Additionally, **Dr. Irene Orlow's** molecular epidemiology lab is hosting two summer interns, **Monica Nikolova** and **Roberto Bailey**, who are working on projects related to melanoma and gastric cancer, respectively.

Please join us in welcoming the new cohort, as well as all the Epi Bio summer students!



PUBLICATIONS

[Justin Jee](#), [Jiajia Zhang](#), [Jessica A. Lavery](#), [Michele Waters](#), [Christopher Fong](#), [Andy Minn](#), [Michael Glickman](#), [Katherine S. Panageas](#), [Charles L. Sawyers](#) and [Nikolaus Schultz](#) published the paper *Deconvolving SARS-CoV-2 mRNA vaccine impact on immunotherapy-related survival* in the *Cancer Discovery — AACR Journal*. The study discusses how real-world data have suggested that SARS-CoV-2 mRNA vaccination within 100 days of immune checkpoint inhibitor (ICI) therapy (“peri-ICI vaccination”) may improve ICI effectiveness through immune priming. However, analyses of an independent real-world cohort and re-analysis of a published cohort found no evidence supporting a treatment-synergy effect. The previously reported survival advantage was observed only early in the pandemic, not specific to ICI therapy, and could not be confirmed after vaccines became widely available. Together, these findings suggest the apparent benefit was largely due to selection bias, with patients having more favorable prognoses more likely to be vaccinated early in the pandemic.

[Aaron Mitchell](#), [Akriti Mishra Meza](#), [Grace Gallagher](#), [Patrick Augello](#), [Nirjhar Chakraborty](#), [Gabrielle Guzman](#), [Victoria S. Blinder](#), [Andrew S. Epstein](#), [Bobby Daly](#) and [Mithat Gönen](#) published *Quality, Cost, and Timeliness of Cancer Treatment in Medicare Advantage vs. Traditional Medicare* in *JAMA Internal Medicine*. The study assessed the timeliness and quality of initial cancer treatment among Medicare Advantage beneficiaries newly diagnosed with cancer. Although Medicare Advantage has grown rapidly and now insures the majority of Americans over age 65, cancer care outcomes in this population remain poorly understood. The researchers found that the timeliness of treatment (how long until treatment began) and the quality of treatment was the same, but that Medicare Advantage patients received treatments which were less expensive — a plus from the standpoint of reducing health care costs.

[Katherine S. Panageas](#), [Jasme Lee](#), [Jessica A. Lavery](#) and others had the paper *Rule-Based Identification of a Reliable Real-World Cancer Recurrence Endpoint* recently accepted for publication in the *Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers & Prevention Journal*. The paper evaluated rule-based algorithms to detect recurrence and estimate its timing using publicly available clinico-genomic database of patients with breast, colorectal, non-small cell lung, or pancreatic cancer. The best algorithms, anchored at six months post-diagnosis and required two pieces of supporting evidence, showing high sensitivity and strong predictive value while estimating recurrence timing within about one month of institutional reference data. The approach helps turn routine EHR data into usable real-world oncology endpoints and could support outcome tracking in broader patient populations.

GRANT SUCCESS

[Helena Furberg Barnes](#) and Patrick Bradshaw from UC Berkeley were awarded an NCI R21 to investigate the prognostic impact of post-diagnosis trajectories in weight and body composition in a large cohort of localized kidney cancer patients from MSK.

[Ziad El Bakouny](#) received an award from the Louis V. Gerstner Physician Scholars Program.

[Andriy Derkach](#) received an R01 award for the research titled “Mediation Analysis of Epidemiologic Data from Multiple Incomplete Data Sources.”

[Jake Lee](#) received an award from the Seoul National University College of Medicine Alumni Association for “Defining a High-Risk Subset of Pulmonary Carcinoid Tumors through Genomic Profiling.”

[Jake Lee](#) received an award from the Druckenmiller Center for Lung Cancer Research Internal Competition for Translational Research for “Oncogenic Mechanisms and Clinical Implications of MYC Amplification-Driven Small Cell Lung Cancer.”

[Ed Reznik](#) received an award from Cycle for Survival for a project entitled “A Computational Engine for Adverse Event Prediction Across the Rare Cancer Spectrum.”

[Sohrab Shah](#) received an award from Break Through Cancer for a project titled “Ovarian Cancer MRD 2.0.”

[Ronglai Shen](#) received a DoD Team Science award “Integrative Molecular Approaches for Melanocytic Tumor Diagnosis and Risk Prediction.”

[Matteo Serra](#) received an American-Italian Cancer Foundation (AICF) fellowship award “Integrative Spatial Analysis: Decoding Melanoma Response to Vaccine-Based Immunotherapy.”

[Ruslan Soldatov](#) received an award from the Leukemia Research Foundation for a project entitled “Delineating the impact of hereditary MSI2 RNA regulatory variation on contextual AML stem cell phenotypes.”

[Mookyong Son](#) received a travel award to present “Bayesian Neural Networks for Multi-Institutional, Multi-Modal Genomic Data Integration” at the New Horizons on Model Transportability and Data Integration workshop, organized by the Institute for Mathematical and Statistical Innovation (IMSI) this June. This work is a collaboration with [Ronglai](#), [Kathy](#), and [Yuan](#).

[Jian Carrot-Zhang](#) received an R01 award for “Characterizing germline determinants of tumor development and response to treatment.”

SCIENCE AND SUN

[Xiang Shu](#) went to Buenos Aires to attend Metabolomics 2026 last month and gave a talk titled “Multi-Omics Profiling in an Understudied Population Uncovers Novel Risk Factors for Gastric Cancer.” In addition to the presentation, he visited Teatro Colón, and watched an Argentina match with local fans.



SUMMER FUN POSTDOC OUTING

The Biostatistics Postdocs had a fun trip to the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), featuring a guided tour of The Masterworks of the Collection. The outing provided an opportunity for them to connect outside of the workplace while exploring one of the world’s premier collections of modern and contemporary art.



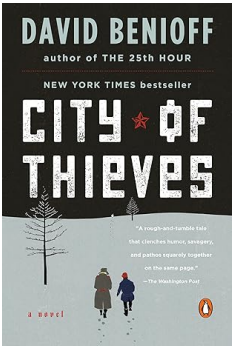
JESSICA LAVERY BABY SHOWER & BABY

The Biostats group held a baby shower for [Jessica Lavery](#) and her husband Henderson. On July 30th Jessica and Henderson welcomed their beautiful baby boy, Noah Henderson Cole, weighing 9lbs 3 oz! Congratulations to the new parents!



BOOK CLUB

The Epi Bio book club met on August 4th at 4:00pm to discuss *City of Thieves* by David Benioff. If you’d like to join the next book club contact [Elizabeth Kantor](#). Don’t be shy if you want to join Book Club — all are welcome to attend!



NEW STAFF

Sara Baldini, Research Fellow

Sara is delighted to join as a Research Fellow in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, where she will be working with Dr. Andrew Vickers on biostatistics and clinical research. She is a Urology Resident at ASST Sette Laghi – Ospedale di Circolo, Varese, Italy, in long-standing collaboration with San Raffaele Hospital in Milan. Her research interests span prostate and renal cancer, translational studies on NK cell biology, and andrology. She looks forward to contributing to the department’s work over the coming months.



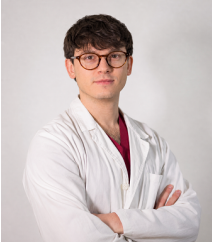
Dalia Barkley, Medical Fellow

Dalia has joined as a Research Fellow in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatics with Dr. Sohrab Shah, as well as the Department of Cancer Biology and Genetics with Tuomas Tammela. Her prior work with Itai Yanai at NYU focused on single-cell and spatial analysis of cancer cell states across solid tumor types. Here, she will continue to use computational and experimental approaches to study intratumoral heterogeneity, with a particular interest in pancreatic adenocarcinoma. Outside of the lab, she has recently become a mother to little Amalia.



Andrea Folcia, Research Fellow

Andrea joins the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics as a Research Fellow which he finds represents an exciting opportunity to expand his research experience under the supervision of Dr. Vickers. He is a Urology Resident at San Raffaele Hospital in Milan, Italy, mentored by Professor Francesco Montorsi. He is grateful for the longstanding collaboration between MSKCC and his home institution, as well as for the warm welcome he has received. His previous research has focused primarily on upper tract urothelial carcinoma, kidney cancer, and endourology. Over the next year, he looks forward to contributing to the team’s work and learning as much as possible.



Maxim Kuleshov, Bioinformatics Software Engineer III

Maxim has joined the McPherson Lab as a Bioinformatics Software Engineer, where he will design and maintain software infrastructure and scalable genomic pipelines to support cancer research. Prior to joining MSK, Maxim spent over a decade building genomics pipelines and web platforms, including managing the infrastructure scaling for functional genomics tools at Mount Sinai. He holds a Bachelor’s and Master’s degree in Computer Science from Bauman Moscow State University.



Erik Ladewig, Senior Computational Biologist

Erik joined the Computational Oncology Program with Andrew McPherson. His research combines single-cell genomics, computational biology, and statistical modeling to uncover the regulatory mechanisms that drive cancer progression, tumor evolution, and therapeutic response. He completed his postdoctoral training at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center with Christina Leslie and Charles Sawyers, integrating single-cell transcriptomic and epigenomic technologies with computational modeling to investigate gene regulation, chromatin accessibility, and lineage plasticity in prostate cancer. Prior to that, he earned his PhD under the mentorship of Raul Rabadan at Columbia University, developing computational approaches to study tumor evolution and clonal dynamics in gliomas and lymphomas using genomic sequencing data.



George Mellgard, Postdoctoral Research Scholar

George joins the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics as a Research Fellow in the OPTICS program with Dr. Kathy Panageas. He is a Hematology/Oncology fellow (PGY-5) at MSK. George’s research focuses on designing nonoperative and neoadjuvant clinical trials in head and neck cancers with a focus on reducing the treatment and symptom burden of surgery and radiation. Previously, George completed his MD at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai and internal medicine residency at NYP/Columbia.



Julia Slack, Postdoctoral Research Scholar

Julia joins the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics as a Postdoctoral Research Scholar with the OPTICS T32 Fellowship, working primarily with Dr. Jun Mao. Her research focuses on utilizing multi-omics approaches to better understand the etiology of symptoms in individuals living with cancer. She received her PhD in Nursing from Duke University. Julia is excited for the opportunity to work at MSK as well as the chance to explore New York City’s vibrant food scene.



Caitlin Timmons, Graduate Student

Caitlin joins the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics as a graduate student in the Tri-Institutional PhD program in Computational Biology and Medicine. Co-advised by Drs. Jake Lee and Sohrab Shah, her research focuses on understanding how structural variants and high-level amplifications in tumor genomes rewire epigenetic signaling and gene expression. She received her Bachelor’s degree in Biology and Statistics and Data Science from Smith College and previously worked as a technician at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute studying genome topology in ovarian cancer. Outside of lab, Caitlin enjoys cooking and exploring the live music scene in NYC.



Zoe Walts, Postdoctoral Research Scholar

Zoe joins the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics as a Postdoctoral Research Fellow in the OPTICS program with Dr. Jessica Scott. Zoe’s research focuses on how social determinants of health interact with health traits such as comorbidities to impact cancer outcomes. Zoe has a passion for community-engaged research and dissemination, with a belief that cancer research should empower and prioritize patients. Previously, Zoe completed their PhD in Epidemiology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a dissertation aiming to develop the clinical translation potential of allostatic load as a prognostic biomarker in colorectal cancer. Outside of research, Zoe enjoys spending time with their 3 cats, going on long hikes, and playing music.



Jason Weirather, Bioinformatics Software Engineer III

Jason joins the Biostatistics Service as a Bioinformatics Software Engineer III. He has experience analyzing multiplex immunofluorescence imaging and other spatial proteomics platforms to better understand the opportunities and challenges of cancer immunotherapies. He originally hails from Iowa, where he received his PhD in Genetics from the University of Iowa; his path to translational oncology research has wound its way from service as a medic in the U.S. Army, to wet- and dry-lab parasitology research, to bioinformatics methods development. He is particularly interested in building AI applications that are reproducible, understandable, and ultimately useful to MSK’s clinical and research missions.



Jiajia Zhang, Hematology/Oncology Fellow

Jiajia is a Hematology/Oncology Fellow focused on thoracic oncology. Her translational and clinical trial research utilizes real-world clinical data and genomics to personalize cancer therapies. When she isn’t analyzing data or seeing patients, she can be found walking her 18-month-old toddler and her spirited 5-year-old lab mix on Roosevelt Island—though on any given day, it’s highly debatable who is walking whom.

