



Fox Chase Cancer Center Postdoc Alumni Newsletter

Winter 2015

In This Issue

A note from Glenn...

Happy New Year to you all, and welcome to the third edition of our newsletter, highlighting Fox Chase's postdoctoral trainees and their science. A bit over a year ago, we embarked on a fairly audacious effort to reconnect with you, our alums, creating a comprehensive database (finding some of you was no easy task!), and then developing a variety of platforms to provide you with up-to-the-moment information on what's happening at the Center. This newsletter is one obvious example, as is our rapidly growing Postdoc Alum LinkedIn account. If you have not joined this [LinkedIn page](#), please do so: each month, we highlight one of our current trainees, his or her science, and their career goals. Plus it's a great way for current trainees to build their professional networks.

Our efforts seem to be working! We have been pleased with how many of you have called, emailed, and visited, and we have had some of you back to provide career guidance and mentoring to our current trainees. Some of you have generously donated to the Postdoctoral Program as well, and—while fundraising is not our primary objective—this

support is most welcome. We use these funds to directly support travel awards, career lectures, and educational efforts to develop the critical skills needed for our trainees to get the jobs they want. 100% of the funds go directly to the Program, and all of you who contribute will be honored on our Alumni Wall adjacent to the Postdoc Office on the second floor of the West Building.

The faculty and trainees of the Center join me in wishing you a happy, healthy and productive 2016. We hope that you have a chance to make your way back to us; it would be our pleasure to show you around, introduce you to some current fellows, and rekindle your connection to this unique institution.

Glenn F. Rall, Ph.D.
Director, Postdoctoral Program



Postdocs and graduate students who volunteered their time to support **In Vino Vita**, the Cancer Center's Signature Fundraising Event.

In the spotlight

In this section we highlight Lauren O'Donnell, Ph.D. an Assistant Professor of Pharmacology at Duquesne University and postdoc alum of the Center. We sat down to talk about Lauren's career, her time at Fox Chase and the things that helped to shape her journey along the way.

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Have you heard?

Read about the exciting stories from the Postdoctoral Association in 2015, including the new Trainee Program website, professional development beyond the bench, and the recent achievements of our trainees.

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Looking forward

We want to grow the Fox Chase Cancer Center Postdoctoral Association professional network. Read about how to reconnect with us!

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The Postdoc Alumni Newsletter is published twice a year by the Academic Affairs Office for current and former trainees of Fox Chase Cancer Center.

Dr. J. Robert Beck
Chief Academic and Administrative Officer

Dr. Glenn F. Rall
Associate Chief Academic Officer

Dr. Amanda K. Purdy
Academic Programs Director

Robin Wertz
Executive Assistant



What contributes to the development of a successful scientist? Is it the training environment? Is it luck, or being in the right place at the right time? Recently, the Academic Affairs team reconnected with Dr. Lauren O'Donnell – an alum of the Cancer Center and currently an Assistant Professor of Pharmacology at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh – to discuss her particular journey and what she credits for her current success. Lauren pointed to three critical elements: 1) being able to **COMMUNICATE** and be persuasive about her research, 2) surrounding herself with supportive **MENTORS** that challenged and empowered her and 3) taking advantage of **SERENDIPITY**.

COMMUNICATION

Lauren places the utmost importance on communication and believes that of all the things she's learned, the ability to communicate has paid off more than any other. In fact, in her own lab she spends a great deal of time helping her students prepare talks, and determining how they will tell their stories in a clear and compelling way.

“It doesn't matter how good your science is...without good communication skills, no one will ever know about your research.”

Lauren's exceptional ability to communicate and teach is exemplified in her achievements; she's the recipient of the numerous awards, including being named Teacher of the Year award by the PharmD class in 2011, 2013 and 2015.

MENTORING

Lauren credits the excellent training environments and supportive mentors throughout her career for her current success. Now, as the mentor to the next generation of scientists, she reflects on how each mentor (Carl Schmidt, Dennis Kolson, Kelly Jordan-Sciotto and Glenn Rall) shaped the scientist and person that she is today...

Carl introduced Lauren to virology, which was never on her radar before. Dennis added a neuro component to her growing interest in virology. He stressed the importance of communication.

“He allowed me the independence to explore and ask questions and empowered me to take ownership of my contributions.”

SERENDIPITY

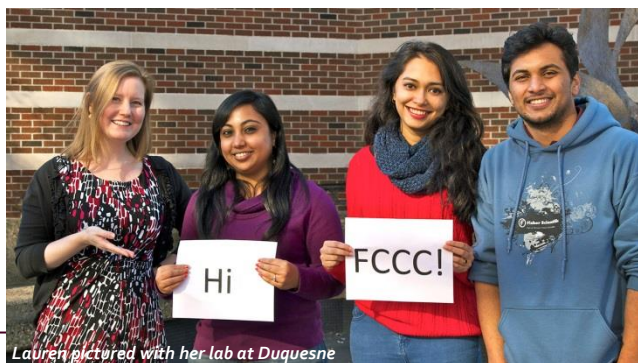
Sometimes it's the **chances** that we take that put us on a completely new, never-dreamed-of path...

THE ROAD TO RESEARCH- Despite her current success as a Research Scientist at Duquesne, Lauren never considered research as a career path; instead, she dreamed of being a small animal veterinarian. Knowing that vet schools looked favorably upon lab experience, she joined the only lab at the University of Delaware that had room-- Dr. Carl Schmidt's lab—to work on a chicken virus. She discovered (much to her surprise!) that her experiences in the lab far outweighed those in the vet clinic.

“It was a natural fit.”

Chance stepped in again in graduate school during the selection of her future Ph.D. mentor, Dr. Dennis Kolson. On selection day -- which just happened to be 9/11/2001, a completely undecided Lauren was preoccupied with finding her relative who was being treated at UPenn. In the ensuing confusion of 9/11, Lauren found herself at Dennis's door enlisting his help to find her relative. She was struck by how he immediately helped make calls to track down the missing relative. This kind act, combined with the fact that she liked the questions being

asked in his lab, were the deciding factors in choosing his lab.



Lauren pictured with her lab at Duquesne

Kelly helped her think about the message that she wanted to leave in her wake. She also stressed that Lauren should project confidence and be positive about her research, which was “one of the most useful pieces of advice”, according to Lauren. Glenn believed that her career goals (teaching AND research) were viable, empowering her to think big.

Now as a **mentor** to graduate students in her own lab, Lauren applies these same these lessons. “Being an advisor is tough. I knew the kind of tone I wanted in the lab, I try for balance – making sure my students have ownership in their work (I constantly try to assure them that we are doing this together), while also managing my vision for the lab and the questions we ask. “I want them to be able to explore things and pursue their own scientific intuition without getting too far off course”

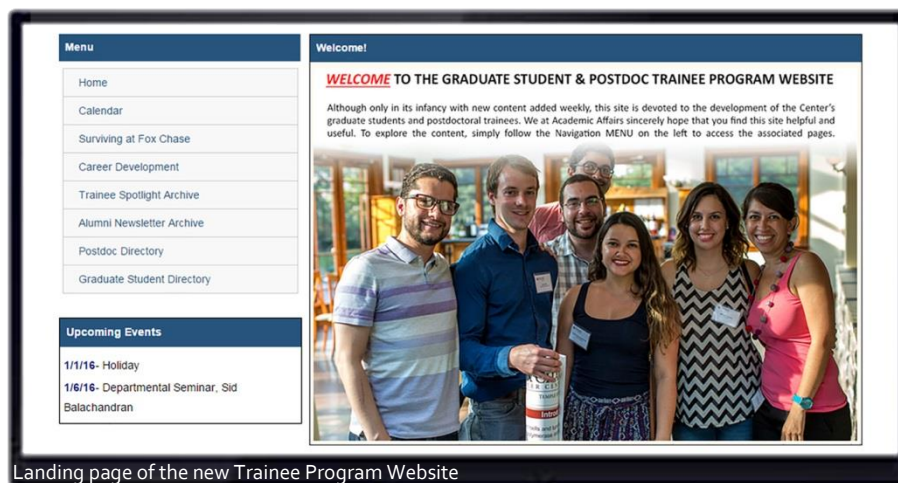
Have You Heard?

New Trainee Website

The faculty of the Cancer Center believe that, in addition to doing experiments, writing papers and applying for grants, trainees also need to spend time developing themselves as scientists through networking, giving presentations, mentoring other scientists and contributing to the mission of Fox Chase...not to mention becoming a good colleague.

In response, the Office of Academic Affairs recently unveiled its new initiative, called the Trainee Program Pages, to support trainees during their tenure at Fox Chase. These website pages boast an extensive archive of information devoted to complementing the scientific training that the Center's graduate students and postdocs receive in their host labs. This new site is devoted to the development of soft skills, including leadership, written and oral communication, teaching, networking, and community engagement.

In addition to information related to career development, the site aims to create a sense of community among the Center's researchers. There is a photo directory of current postdocs and graduate students, links to the Trainee Spotlight (a monthly feature that highlights the recent publication of a postdoc or graduate student) and archives of the Alumni Newsletter. For those new to the Cancer Center and to Philadelphia, there is information about getting around the Center, transportation in and around the city, demographic and housing information for the major Philadelphia neighborhoods, and suggestions for exploring the cultural events in the city.



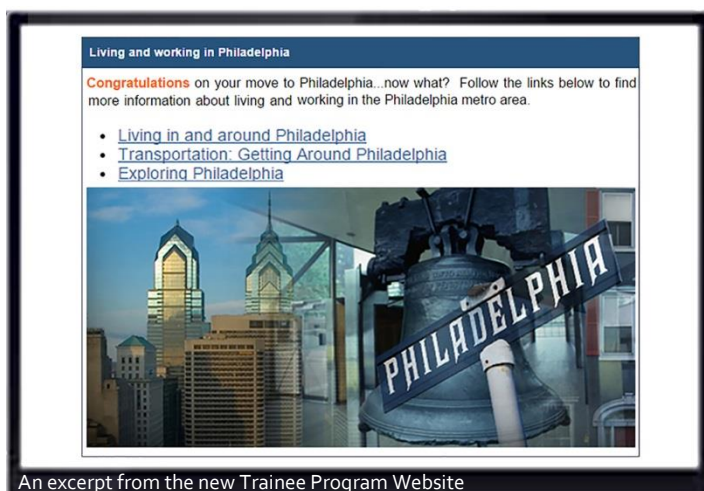
Landing page of the new Trainee Program Website

Teaching Opportunities: An Expansion

In an effort to expand the teaching skills of our trainees, Academic Affairs recently partnered with Chestnut Hill College for guest lectureship opportunities. In contrast to teaching an entire course, which may be too time-intensive for postdocs early in their careers, guest lectureship offers the chance to teach in an academic setting, network with faculty, prepare a lecture and engage students. We hope to grow this program in 2016, enhancing the opportunities of our trainees and helping prepare them for careers in science education and academia.

Women in Science

Started in 2014 by Drs. Sanjeevani Arora and Rachelle Kosoff, postdocs in Erica Golemis' and Sid Balachandran's labs, respectfully, the *Women in Science* group supports the development of women scientists and strengthens the community of female scientists at Fox Chase. The group meets twice a month to discuss relevant issues and promote networking among female faculty and trainees. In addition, the group invites influential female scientists from around the region to discuss their career paths and give advice to junior scientists. Recent speakers include: Nancy Speck and Yvonne Paterson from UPenn and MaryAnn Sells from the Cancer Institute of NJ. If this is something you want to participate in, contact Dr. Amanda Purdy at amanda.purdy@fcc.edu.

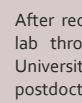


An excerpt from the new Trainee Program Website

New Faces: 2015



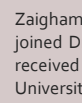
Pengtao Jiang joined Dr. Xiaowei Chen's lab in May, 2015. He received his Ph.D. from Dr. Taotao Wei and Dr. Fuyu Yang at Institute of Biophysics, Chinese Academy of Sciences.



After receiving her Ph.D. in Dr. Igor Astsaturov's lab through collaboration with Kazan Federal University, **Linara Gabitova** began her postdoctoral training in the same lab in November 2015.



Patrycja Thompson joined Dr. Dave Wiest's lab in November. She received her Ph.D. from Dr. Juan Carlos Zúñiga-Pflücker at the University of Toronto.



Zaigham Khan is our newest trainee having joined Dr. Mark Andrade's lab in December. He received his Ph.D. from Dr. Thilo Stehle at the University of Tuebingen.



Highlighting Our Achievements Fellowships, Papers and Awards

Shawn Fahl from Dave Wiest's lab received a fundable score on his F32 Ruth L. Kirschstein fellowship entitled "Molecular mechanisms of gamma/delta T cell lineage commitment".

Rossella Tricarico, a postdoc with Alfonso Bellacosa, recently received top honors for her research talk about the role of DNA demethylation by TET-TDG in colorectal tumorigenesis at the SIGU conference in Rimini, Italy.

Minshi Wang, a postdoc in Dave Wiest's lab, received the Outstanding Poster award at ASH 2015 for her work studying Rpl22 and Rpl22-like1 in zebrafish.

Notable papers

Maria Radu: p21-Activated Kinase 2 Regulates Endothelial Development and Function through the Bmk1/Erk5 Pathway. *Mol Cell Biol*. 2015 Dec 1;35(23):3990-4005.

Anna Nikonova: Opposing Effects of Inhibitors of Aurora-A and EGFR in Autosomal-Dominant Polycystic Kidney Disease. *Front Oncol*. 2015 Oct 16;5:228.

Rossella Tricarico: Involvement of MBD4 inactivation in mismatch repair-deficient tumorigenesis. *Oncotarget*. 2015 Oct 16.

Notable new jobs

Lauren Fink, who trained with Jeffrey Peterson, is now a Medical Writer at MedErgy HealthGroup.

Josephine Wixed, from Matt Robinson's lab, was recently hired as a Scientist at Janssen Pharmaceuticals Company.

Looking forward

Pay us a visit!

We would love to show you around, and have you meet with some of our current trainees. In fact, several alums have recently been back to the Center to discuss their careers and share their stories. If you're going to be in Philly-or just haven't been on campus in a while—reach out to us and we would be happy to schedule a visit. We think you'll like what you see!

Contact us!

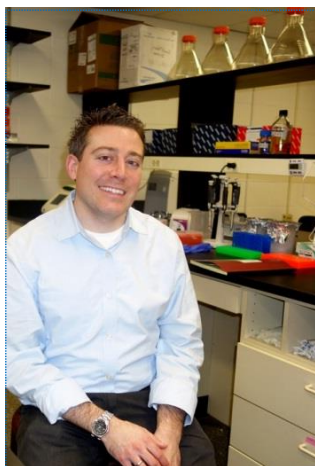
We want to stay in contact with you! Please drop us an email with your contact information, or send us an invitation on [LinkedIn](#) (Group – Fox Chase Cancer Center Trainee Association): we're hoping to expand our database of former trainees to enable our current graduate students and postdocs to reach out for career advice or questions about particular fields, institutions or companies.

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Help us make a difference!

Postdoctoral training is a *formative* time in one's career: not quite independent, but no longer a student. This period is often marked with tremendous growth and development, but also substantial anxiety. To continue the rich training environment here at the Center, we now call on you, the alumni, to help. We reached out to a FCCC alum that had recently given back to the program and asked what it was about Fox Chase that motivated their donation.



"I give to the postdoctoral research program to enrich the experience of current and future trainees at Fox Chase Cancer Center. I feel it is important to support the funding of travel grants, and career development seminars as these experiences are vital to the overall success of the program." --TODD STROCHLIC, DVM, Ph.D.

A postdoc with Jeff Peterson from 2008-2013, Todd is now an Assistant Professor at Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia.

Donate Today!

There are two easy ways to donate to the Postdoc Association.



- 1) Online donations can be made at:
<http://www.foxchase.org/giving>
- 2) Alternatively, donations can be made payable to FOX CHASE CANCER CENTER and mailed to:

Fox Chase Cancer Center
Attn: Academic Affairs
 333 Cottman Ave
 West Bldg 216
 Philadelphia, PA 19111



A photo from the 20th Annual Research Day (formerly "Postdoc Day")