



2014 FCCC CURRENT TRAINEES

# Fox Chase Cancer Center Postdoc Alumni Newsletter

## Fall/Winter 2014

### IN THIS ISSUE

## A note from Glenn...

Welcome to the first of what we hope will be a lasting initiative to re-establish contact with former trainees of Fox Chase. I have been the Director of our Postdoctoral Program for about 3 years now, and I continue to be impressed with the passion and intelligence of our postdoctoral trainees. Of course, the quality of our postdoc workforce is a "tradition" here: I suspect many of you look at your time at Fox Chase as formative for your careers and--I hope--pleasant and supportive as well. A number of former trainees (who now are leaders in their fields), have visited the Center in the past year, and all have remarked that the sense of collegiality, creativity and openness that they valued when they were here in the '80s and '90s is still very much alive today.

### Establishing connections

Our goal with this newsletter is two-fold. First and foremost, we want to keep you aware of what's going on at your "postdoc alma mater". In this first edition, you'll meet some of our



postdocs, hear about their science, and find out about new ways that Fox Chase postdocs are getting involved in STEM initiatives within Philadelphia. Our second objective is to re-establish a connection with you: we'd love for you to visit us, or to have your name added to our growing database of former trainees.

This database will be a key tool for our current trainees to learn more about various careers as they plan their futures. More information about this is on the back page of this newsletter.

In any case, I'd love to hear from you: my email address is [glenn.rall@fcc.edu](mailto:glenn.rall@fcc.edu), and my direct line is 215-728-3617. Your input, remembrances, or advice are most welcome.

Glenn F. Rall, Ph.D.  
Professor and Program Leader  
Associate Chief Academic Officer  
Director, Postdoctoral Program

### Have you heard?

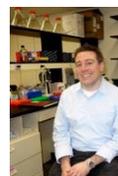
Read about the exciting stories from the Postdoctoral Association in 2014, including our Annual Research Day, Science Outreach and new trainees that joined our team in 2014.



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### In the spotlight

In this section we highlight two trainees, Drs. Todd Strohlic and Maria Radu, learning a little about them including what brought them to Fox Chase Cancer Center, how the Center influenced their careers and where they are headed now.



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### Looking forward

We want to grow the Fox Chase Cancer Center Postdoctoral Association professional network. Read about how to reconnect, donate and visit 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 Coordinator

# Have you heard?

## Changing the face of Postdoc Day

Started in 1995, the **Annual Postdoc and Graduate Student Research Conference** provides the postdoctoral and graduate student community at Fox Chase with the opportunity to present their work both as oral and poster presentations, with cash awards for each. In addition, each year we host a prominent Keynote lecturer in cancer biology. While the format for this annual conference has been largely the same since its inception, to make the event more inclusive and to broaden the scope of data presented, Drs. Brian L. Egleston and Roland L. Dunbrack (the organizers of the 2013 conference) implemented two new categories for competition. The first focused on the art of data presentation, in which participants submitted an example of data presented in a unique or interesting way, an area of interest to investigators conducting more numeric driven data research. The second competition was geared toward artistic expression, in which graduate students and postdoctoral fellows were encouraged to submit striking science images. In 2014 postdocs Renata Muradimova and Larra Yuelling won 1<sup>st</sup> place for their image of The *In Vitro* Big Bang in a glass flask (pictured at top). The 20th Annual Conference is scheduled for June 5, 2015, and we are already planning for this special anniversary. If you are interested in joining us for this exciting day, just let us know!. *Additional art work can be found on pg. 4.*



In August, ten students from the STEM Scholars Program at Philadelphia's Franklin Institute visited Fox Chase (pictured bottom left). In addition to identifying fruit fly mutants and observing a mouse dissection, the students toured the Center and had lunch with graduate students, postdocs and faculty.

Slightly closer to home, our postdoc trainees are mentors to budding student scientists from West Oak Lane Charter School (WOLCS), a minority-serving K-8 charter school located in the heart of North Philadelphia. Recently, our trainees helped 8<sup>th</sup> graders design their projects for this year's Washington Carver Science Fair competition.

In both programs, getting young students to meet and know our postdoctoral fellows was the real value of the day: the kids asked lots of questions about the process of being a scientist, and our postdocs served as role models for these Philly-based students.

## Teaching experience

Transitioning into an academic career without teaching experience is difficult. To provide our trainees with more opportunities in this area, FCCC has recently partnered with Ursinus College and Temple University to expand the Immersion Science Program, a Fox Chase-initiated program aimed at training high school students in scientific research. Postdoctoral fellows are instructors for this course, and gain valuable teaching and mentoring experience.



Postdoc Dr. Ryan Henry, lectures to high school student scientists during a session of the 2014 Immersion Science Lab program

## Telling our stories

Every year, Fox Chase labs are filled with talented undergraduates who spend up to 12 weeks, working full-time in a research laboratory. To complement this training, Academic Affairs hosted eight speakers at our very popular pizza lunches to introduce these undergraduates to the variety of career options in science. Each speaker discussed their unique path from student to professional, highlighting the surprising ways that life influences each of us along the way, and discussed the advantages and challenges of their particular job.

## New Faces: 2014

**PETER HUWE** joined Dr. Roland Dunbrack's lab in August 2014. He received his Ph.D. from Dr. Ravi Radhakrishnan at University of Pennsylvania



**DANIELA ARAIZA-OLIVERA TORO** joined Dr. Jon Chernoff's lab in July 2014, after receiving her Ph.D. from Dr. Salvador Uribe Carvajal at National Autonomous University of Mexico



**MINSUN LEE** accepted a position in Dr. Suzanne Miller's lab in July 2014. Minsun received her Ph.D. from Drs. Arthur M. Nezu and Christine Maguth Nezu at Drexel University



**KATE M. BUETTNER** is a new postdoc in Dr. Ann Skalka's lab as of February 2014. She completed her Ph.D. in Dr. Ann Valentine's lab at Yale University



After receiving her Ph.D. in Dr. Jon Chernoff's lab through collaboration with Drexel University, **SONALI JALAN** began her postdoctoral training in the same lab in January 2014.



## Highlighting our achievements

### Notable new jobs in 2014

**Janet Wangari-Talbot** from Dr. Beth Hopper-Borge's lab is now scientist at Janssen

**Sang-Yun Lee** from Dr. Dave Wiest's lab is now a Staff Scientist at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Center

**Neil Beeharry** from Dr. Tim Yen's lab is now a staff scientist at LAM Therapeutics

**Erin Walsh**, a postdoc in Dr. Alana O'Reilly's lab, is now an Assistant Professor at Albright

**Vikram Bhattacharjee**, a trainee from Dr. Tim Yen's lab, is now a primary scientist at Evol Science

### Notable papers

**Anna Nikonova**: Neddg restrains renal cystogenesis in *Pkd1*<sup>-/-</sup> mice (PNAS 2014 Sep 2;111(35):12859-64)

**Alex MacFarlane IV**: PD-1 Expression on Peripheral Blood Cells Increases with Stage in Renal Cell Carcinoma Patients and Is Rapidly Reduced after Surgical Tumor Resection (Cancer Immunology Research 2014 Apr;2(4):320-31)

## Bringing science to our community

Where will our *future* scientists come from? FCCC is committed to fostering enthusiasm for science and encouraging young adults in our community to pursue STEM-related careers. Two programs run through Academic Affairs help accomplish this goal.



Stem scholars visit Fox Chase

# IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Training postdoctoral candidates to become the next generation of scientists is central to Fox Chase's tradition of leadership in cancer research. The Academic Affairs Team recently met with two of our trainees – Drs. Todd Strochlic and Maria Radu—to talk about how their experience at Fox Chase has shaped their careers. Dr. Amanda Purdy, the Coordinator of Academic Programs and postdoctoral alum of Fox Chase herself, led the discussion.

**AMANDA:** *Many scientists point to events during their childhood (e.g. losing a loved one to disease, an impactful movie, a highly publicized scientific discovery, etc.) as the impetus for their decision to get into science. For yourself, did you always want to be a scientist? What else did you want to be when you grew up?*



**TODD:** I knew that I always wanted to be a veterinarian but I also knew that I liked doing scientific research. As I progressed through veterinary and graduate school, I realized that I enjoyed being in the lab much more than being in the clinic. So I chose to pursue a postdoc position rather than an internship/residency after graduation and haven't regretted that decision.

**MARIA:** Honestly, I didn't know I wanted to be a scientist until I became one. Growing up I thought I wanted to be an artist...Only after I came face to face with the life in a research lab did I know that's what I like and what I want to do.

**AMANDA:** *Fox Chase Cancer Center is home to postdocs from around the world. Back in 2004, when I was looking for a place to do my postdoc, FCCC was ranked among the best by Scientist Magazine for postdoctoral training in the U.S, and that prompted me to look into fellowships here. How about you Todd? What attracted you to FCCC?*

**TODD:** The national/international reputation of Fox Chase Cancer Center as a leader in both basic and clinical cancer research was an important factor in choosing FCCC for my postdoctoral training.

**AMANDA:** *Maria, what's kept you here at Fox Chase?*

**MARIA:** The fact that I could do science surrounded by friendly faces, in an

environment where you are not pressured by your peers, but by your own desire to find the scientific truth. I was also fortunate to collaborate with many scientists both in academia and industry.

**TODD:** For me, the collegial nature of the scientific community at FCCC was amazing, and I was always pleasantly surprised to discover how easy it was to get help with a certain experimental technique or get feedback on a manuscript, for example.

**AMANDA:** *I agree that Fox Chase is a very supportive environment where everyone, from PI's to technicians, is always willing help with advice or reagents, and collaborate. If you could go back and do it all again, what advice would you give yourself as an incoming postdoc?*

**TODD:** Get involved in all postdoc-associated activities and make yourself known both within FCCC and outside of the center. Don't be afraid to ask questions at seminars. Approach other scientists at meetings and talk to them about your work. It's an unfortunate stereotype that scientists are introverted. I've found that some of the most successful scientists are some of the most outgoing individuals.

**MARIA:** To leave the bench once in a while and meet the incredible people around you. Fox Chase is amazing in this regard, filled with people that are both passionate about science and ready to help. I'd definitely encourage them to volunteer and be part of as many programs and activities as possible.

**AMANDA:** *For almost a decade, Fox Chase has been ranked among the best places to work as a postdoc by The Scientist Magazine. How would you make FCCC's postdoctoral training program better?*

**MARIA:** As for making the program better, before improving it, let's keep the many good

things we already have. It's great that Fox Chase has its internal subsidized day care, subsidized housing and free parking. We might take these for granted here, but these are not features many institutes offer for their postdocs. It makes Fox Chase feel like a big home where you belong, where others understand you and we all take care of each other.

**"My time as a postdoc at FCCC solidified my passion for academic research."**

**-- Todd Strochlic**



**TODD:** I would place more of a focus on scientific writing and presentation skills. It's certainly essential to perform exciting high-quality science, but it's just as essential to be able to clearly convey that enthusiasm and importance to an audience or a grant reviewer. I think this is especially important given the current funding climate.

## Maria Radu

After training as an M.D. in Romania, Maria received her PhD from Temple University in 2008. Later that same year, Maria started her postdoctoral research with Jon Chernoff to study the genetic and biochemical factors that influence Pak kinase function.

## Todd Strochlic

Originally trained as a VMD/PhD at the University of Pennsylvania, Todd joined Jeff Peterson's lab at FCCC in 2008 to study the mechanisms of Pak kinase signaling. In August 2013, Todd became a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Biochemistry and Molecular Biology department at Drexel University College of Medicine.

**"My future success will have its roots in the confidence and trust that my Fox Chase mentors and peers have seeded in me."**

**-- Maria Radu**



# Looking forward

## 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 Postdoctoral 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. Here’s our contact info:

 Fox Chase Postdoc Association

Join our group 

[CLICK HERE!](#)



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We encourage you to also check out our newly updated [Postdoctoral Research Program Pages](#).

## Pay us a visit!

We would love to show you around, and have you meet with some of our current trainees. 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

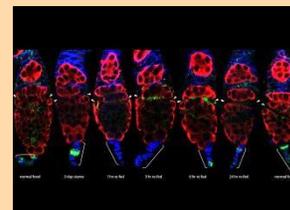


## Donate!

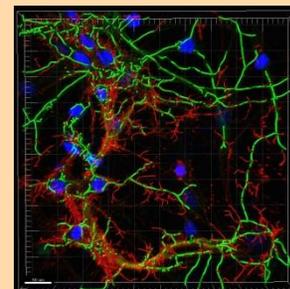
The Postdoctoral Program was the recent recipient of a generous grant from a former trainee: these funds have enabled us to enrich the experience for our trainees by hosting Career Day lecturers, offering courses on grant writing and seminar presentations, and providing support for our Annual Research Day. If you are interested in giving back to Fox Chase we have two easy options for donation:

- 1) Donations can be made online at <http://www.foxchase.org/giving/postdocs>
- 2) Alternatively, donations can be made payable to FOX CHASE CANCER CENTER and mailed directly to:  
  
 Fox Chase Cancer Center  
 Attn: Academic Affairs  
 333 Cottman Ave  
 Reimann 345  
 Philadelphia, PA 19111

## ANNUAL RESEARCH DAY ART COMPETITION



Hedgehog induced proliferation  
by Tiffiney Hartman



Measles virus infection in neurons by  
Chris Matullo



Happy Fibroblast  
by Linara Gabitova

Additional submissions for the Annual Research Day Art Competition from 2013-2014