



Inside this issue:

Benefits Advocacy	1
PGA Retreat Winners	2
Open Innovation Portal	3
Precision Cancer Medicine Symposium	3
Adventure Trips	4
Hiking Mt. Kilimanjaro	4

PGA Advocates for Postdocs

Why do we need a postdoctoral association such as the PGA? To organize seminars, annual retreats, and social events? Maybe. To provide advice and support to the postdoctoral community? Probably. To advocate for improvements on behalf of postdocs and graduate students? Certainly!

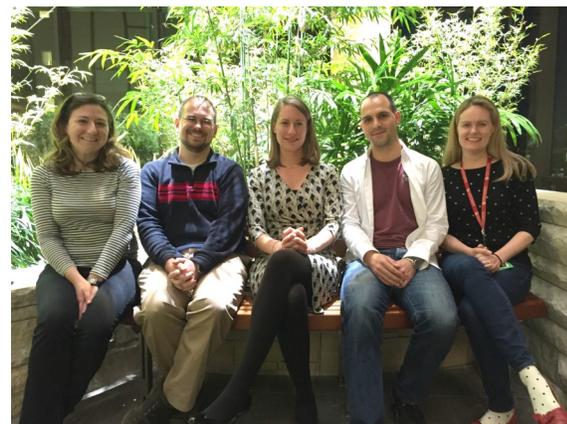
In March 2012, the PGA formed an *ad hoc* committee to advocate for improved postdoc benefits. Originally called the Benefits Advocacy Group, the Advocacy Committee was established to identify issues concerning the postdoctoral experience at DFCI and to suggest improvements and solutions to the DFCI administration. The Advocacy Committee opened lines of communication with DFCI administration and Human Resources (HR), contributed to the preparation and discussion of the “DFCI Postdoc Survey 2012”, and compared salary and benefits conditions for postdocs at DFCI to those for other Boston area research institutions.

One of the main issues identified by the committee was that postdoc benefits varied, depending on a fellow’s funding category (funded, stipend, or sponsored trainees). Despite the fact that obtaining a fellowship is valuable for postdocs, their PIs, and DFCI, those who managed to secure external funding became ineligible for some benefits, such as health insurance, childcare subsidy, life insurance, or the MBTA pass program. While this issue has been on DFCI’s radar for many years, the PGA worked closely with HR to expedite finding a solution to this parity issue. On the part of DFCI, this effort involved addressing many legal and tax-related concerns. A solution was achieved with the

involvement of many people, most notably Dr. Barrett Rollins (Chief Scientific Officer), Michelle Cox (Vice President, Research Operations), Robin Antonellis (Senior Director, HR), and Jessica Lord (Benefits Compliance & Operations Manager, HR).

On September 16, 2014, the administration and HR presented their new plan for Postdoc Benefits at a Town Hall Meeting. Effective January 2015, DFCI will provide comparable benefits for all postdocs, regardless of the source of their funding – this plan is unique in the Boston area and involves partnering with Crosby Benefits to accommodate postdocs who do not receive their paychecks directly from DFCI. We hope that postdocs will take advantage of these benefits.

While this was a major step forward, the Advocacy Committee acknowledges that many other issues still exist and strives towards further improvements. We will focus on topics such as childcare support, retirement, salary, mentoring, teaching opportunities, and more. Stay tuned for future updates and get involved in our advocacy efforts.



The Advocacy Committee (Left to Right): Alison Taylor, R. Anthony Barnitz, Hilary Eaton, Tobias Otto, and Jennifer Spangle

Where @ DFCI?



Do you know where this is?
Send your answer to
dfci_pgapost@dfci.harvard.edu

The first 2 people with the correct answer will receive a \$5 gift card!

Winners of the Annual Retreat Presentation Awards

Best Oral Presentations



Jennifer Yeh

4th year graduate student in the laboratory of Dr. David Frank, Department of Medical Oncology

Pursuing a PhD in the Biological & Biomedical Sciences Program at Harvard University

Talk title: Elucidating the mechanism of novel STAT3 inhibitors in breast cancer: a proteomics-based approach.

What are your key strategies to a successful talk?

Practice! I like to have descriptive titles in the form of conclusions for each slide to help the audience focus on key findings. I also try to explain my thought process as I transition through slides, so the audience follows the logic of my approach to the project.

What do you want to do after your graduate training?

After finishing my PhD, I will return to medical school to complete my MD. I then plan to pursue a career as a physician-scientist in hematology/ medical oncology.

What are your non-work related interests?

I enjoy running (especially along the Charles River), Zumba, baking, photography, and playing the flute and piano.

Francesca Cottini

4th year postdoc in the laboratory of Dr. Kenneth Anderson, Department of Medical Oncology MD from Università Vita-Salute San Raffaele in Milan

Talk title: Inhibition of the STK4 kinase restores the Hippo co-factor YAP1 and induces DNA-damage mediated apoptosis in multiple myeloma cells.

What are your key strategies to a successful talk ?

Giving a successful talk is not easy, especially if you are not a native English speaker. Three aspects are crucial to prepare a great presentation. First, you need to be competent and know your topic very well. Second, you should practice your talk several times, to gain confidence. Third, you must display passion and enthusiasm to gain and retain the attention of your audience. For more pointers I recommend an amazing TED talk by Melissa Marshall on science communication!

What are your non-work related interests?

I love hiking, snorkeling and skiing. As a trained ballerina, I still enjoy going to the theater and doing yoga as an activity. My husband and I love to cook for a bunch of friends in our spare time!



Best Poster Presentations



Michalina Janiszewska

3rd year postdoc in the laboratory of Dr. Kornelia Polyak, Department of Medical Oncology

PhD in Life Sciences from University of Lausanne (Switzerland)

Poster title: The effect of chemotherapy on Her2+ breast cancer heterogeneity measured by STAR-FISH – detection of *PIK3CA* mutation and *Her2*

amplification on the single-cell level *in situ*.

Any special ways you plan to use your award?

I have already spent part of it on a celebration – we had a pub night with the whole lab. I hope to spend the rest wisely...

What got you interested in the topic you presented at the retreat?

I've been interested in tumor heterogeneity since my undergraduate years spent in a stem cell laboratory. The presence of multiple subpopulations of cells within each tumor, whether hierarchically organized according to the cancer stem cell paradigm, or equally contributing to tumor evolution, is one of the biggest challenges in designing effective treatments. Thus, I was very enthusiastic about working on a project that allowed for visual detection of genetically distinct populations in archived patient samples.

Katherine H. Walsh

6th year graduate student in the laboratory of Dr. Charles Roberts, Department of Pediatric Oncology

PhD in Biological and Biomedical Sciences from Harvard University

Poster title: ARID1B is a specific vulnerability in *ARID1A*-mutant cancers.

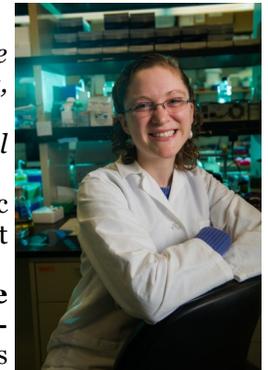
What got you interested in the topic you presented at the retreat?

After joining the Roberts Lab, I became interested in learning about whether there are specific vulnerabilities in cancer cells that contain SWI/SNF mutations; this interest led to a great collaboration at the Broad Institute, and the initial discovery of synthetic lethality in the *ARID1A*-mutant cells.

What do you enjoy most about working at DFCI?

I think DFCI is a special place where researchers work in close proximity to patients, who represent the main focus of our work in the first place. I find inspiration from the patients and they help to bring an important perspective to my work.

What are your non-work related interests? I am a proud Bostonian, so I love cheering for the Red Sox and spending time by the ocean.



A new way to boost your research

Do you have a great idea? Then a new 'Open Innovation' program, set up by one of the world's leading biopharmaceutical companies, may be just what you need.

AstraZeneca has launched a program that is designed to work with scientists from academia who have great ideas, but who need the compounds, capabilities, expertise or funding that only big pharma can provide.

The program offers:

- Access to a clinical compound bank of patient-ready small molecule compounds and biologics for novel clinical and translational research. In clinical trials, these compounds show evidence of human target coverage and tolerability.
- Access to compounds with good pharmacological properties for pre-clinical research to explore novel disease biology.
- Opportunities to collaborate on target validation, molecular drug target research, high throughput screening projects, and research on the therapeutic potential of new molecules.

Any scientist can submit proposals that range from early idea evaluation through to clinical validation studies. Grants of up to \$100,000 are available for the most interesting proposals.

Visit them at <http://openinnovation.astrazeneca.com/>

Genomic approaches towards Precision Cancer Medicine

Jimmy Fund Auditorium, January 30, 2015

The DFCI Center for Cancer Genome Discovery (CCGD) and BWH would like to invite you to our annual symposium on Precision Cancer Medicine. The agenda contains key note lectures, in-depth case studies, and detailed tutorials that cater to clinicians, researchers, postdocs, students, and anyone with interest in genomics or targeted cancer treatment.

Topic	Speakers
Lectures	Jeff Golden (BWH), John Iafrate (MGH), David Solit (MSKCC)
Case studies	Adam Bass, Rafael Irizarry, Frank Kuo, Sandro Santagata, Richard Stone, Nikhil Wagle
Tutorials	Matt Ducar, Ryan Abo

Free registration. For more information and to register, please visit:

www.cancer genomediscovery.org

Attention Writers: Share your talents with the *PGA Post!*

Would you like to write an article for the PGA Post? We would love to get more postdocs and graduate students involved in representing the interests and concerns of the DFCI postdoc and graduate student community. Contribute on a freelance basis for an issue or two, or become a longer term member of our productive and creative team!

Please email

Jennifer_Molina@dfci.harvard.edu



A sample of sweets at the Spooky Cookie Social

Editorial Team

Tobias Otto, Monica Ter-Minassian, Aaron Thorner, Siddha Kasar, Reina Improgo, and Nicole Spardy.

Special thanks to Jennifer Molina and Sonal Jhaveri and Sam Ogden. Comments and suggestions are welcomed, email us at dfci_pgapost@dfci.harvard.edu!



Off the Beaten Path – Head into a World of Adventure

Whether you are planning your next weekend getaway or your next big vacation, consider these local and international destinations that will get your adrenaline rushing.

Mount Washington, New Hampshire: About 3.5 hours drive from Boston, this is the tallest peak in the White Mountains. The arduous hike should be started at dawn, to enjoy the breathtaking views and still make it back before nightfall; or you can decide to return via the Cog Rail instead.

Penobscot River Rafting, Maine: Enjoy challenging Class IV and V rapids in the Ripogenus Gorge of the Upper Penobscot River. Several tour operators offer guided day rafting trips.

Mount Denali, Alaska: It is featured in the top 7 summits to climb worldwide. This trip is not for the faint-hearted and requires considerable mountain climbing experience. For the adventurous who lack the climbing skills, flight-seeing tours offered by local airfields provide breathtaking views of the mountain and even include a glacier landing.

Galapagos Island, Ecuador: Take a four day expedition to these remote islands and walk in Darwin's shoes. The island is home to some of the most exotic species on the planet, such as the Blue-footed Booby and the Marine Iguana (the only existing marine lizard in the world).

Machu Pichu, Peru: Conquer the challenging 26 mile Inca Trail and enter the ruins of the 'Lost City of Inca' through the Sun Gate. You could also opt for a shorter 8-mile 2-day trek from Cusco Km 104.

Photo: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/your-travels/9573996/Machu-Picchu-readers-tips-and-recommendations.html>

PGA Calendar

January 8, 2014

2:00 – 4:00 pm, Smith 308/309

Jeff Ding, Ph.D., Lab Head, Oncology R & D, Sanofi US “Getting Ready to Start Your Career”

Mark Chen, Ph.D., Founder & CSO, X&Y Solutions, Inc. “On the Way to Becoming an Entrepreneur”

Hiking Mt. Kilimanjaro



Kazu takes in the view of Mt. Kilimanjaro from the Mawenzi Peak on the 3rd day of his climb to the top.

Kazumasa (Kazu) Komura, M.D., a researcher in the Medical Oncology Department, had a great excuse for missing the 10th Annual Postdoc and Graduate Student Retreat in September. Kazu was in Africa, hiking Mt. Kilimanjaro, the world's highest peak (19,341 ft

above sea level) located in Tanzania National Park.

Kazu took on this challenge in September, an ideal time of year for climbing Mt. Kilimanjaro. Accompanying Kazu was a good friend and a team of 30 other people, including porters and sherpas, or guides who are essential for assisting in climbs of this nature.

When asked about some of the challenges that he faced during the hike, Kazu stated that it was “no picnic”, but that it “surely makes you bigger as a human being”. Being in good physical condition is also a key component when considering a hike of this magnitude. Climbing at high altitudes, in atmospheres with 50% less oxygen than at sea level, can be dangerous and lead to hypoxia and altitude disease, even in the fittest of people. In fact, that's exactly what happened to him: after reaching the Uhulu Peak, Kazu passed out and had to be rescued and carried back to the bottom of the mountain.

Some of the advice given to Kazu prior to setting foot on Mt. Kilimanjaro: above all, take your time and enjoy the beautiful landscapes that unfold around you. While reflecting on his trip, Kazu said that the experience has made him a more patient person, not only in his personal life but also “in the area of research”.