

## 2016 Leadership Statements

The PGA is pleased to announce the election of the following members as leaders of this year's PGA. Below are their Leadership Statements, which provide a brief background for each member and his/her vision for leading the PGA during 2016. Please read these statements and get to know your leaders - they will be working hard for you!

### Jennifer Spangle, PhD and Alison Taylor, PhD PGA Co-Chairs

As long-term members of the PGA and 2015 PGA Co-chairs, we enjoy serving the postdoc and graduate student population and advocating for their interests. Currently the PGA is awesome. The work accomplished by previous PGA chairs has significantly contributed to the PGA and postdoc community, and we are proud to be a part of it. While we have helped organize many successful brain lunches and retreats, one of our proudest moments was the successful implementation of the benefits equalization plan as members of the Advocacy Committee on January 1, 2015. We are excited to serve the postdoc and grad student community with other advocacy efforts and activities described below.

Our first year as PGA co-chairs, we built upon previous initiatives and began the development of an active community service and outreach program. In 2015, we volunteered for the Jimmy Fund, a food pantry in Cambridgeport, and the local LUNgevity walk. For 2016, we aim to expand our community service program with bi-monthly events. We strive to effectively recruit the postdoctoral and graduate student community to join the PGA and participating in PGA-sponsored events, and we believe increasing the breadth and depth of planned events (social-, community-, and professional events) is one of the best ways to pique interest in the PGA and recruit new members, as well as enrich the professional experience of all DFCI postdocs and graduate students. As such, we hope to work with the existing PGA committees and Boston area postdoc and graduate student associations at other institutions to maximize our presence and better serve the community.

Jenn has been a postdoc at DFCI in Tom Roberts' lab in the Cancer Biology department for three and a half years. She joined the PGA just days after starting at DFCI and has been active in the retreat committee since then, serving in 2014 as the Retreat Committee Co-Chair, treasurer, and as a member of the Advocacy Committee. During this time she has successfully contributed to planning and orchestrating four retreats. She also worked closely with the PGSAO to develop the 2014, 2015, and 2016 budgets.

Alison has been a postdoc in Matthew Meyerson's lab in Medical Oncology for

two and a half years, and has been part of the PGA for more than two years. She co-chaired the Seminars Committee in 2014, organizing monthly Brain Lunches with presentations by postdocs, grad students, and DFCI core facilities, and has written articles for recent PGA posts. Alison has also been involved in formalizing a Boston-wide postdoc association (BPDA) and aiding in their advocacy efforts. Both Alison and Jenn are members of the DFCI PGA Advocacy Committee, where they participated in the discussions with DFCI Human Resources over the 2015 postdoc benefits parity project described above.

## **Tobias Otto, PhD, and Meghan Bushway, PhD, Advocacy Committee Chair Co-Chairs**

### **Tobias Otto:**

After obtaining my Ph.D. in Germany, I joined Dana-Farber as a research fellow in Peter Sicinski's lab in the department of Cancer Biology. My research focuses on the role of microRNAs during mouse development and in mouse models of human cancer.

Since I joined the PGA, I have been an active member in the Social Committee organizing a variety of events for the postdoc and graduate student community at DFCI. In 2012 and 2013, I also served as a co-chair of the PGA. During that time, I realized that a number of issues concerning the postdoctoral experience at DFCI exist and that postdocs will benefit from advocacy efforts by the PGA.

Therefore, in March 2012, I initiated the establishment of a new PGA committee (now called the Advocacy Committee) to identify issues concerning the postdoctoral experience at DFCI and to suggest improvements and solutions to the DFCI administration. Since then, I have been leading this committee as a chair, and with the help of many people, we have made progress especially with regard to benefits for postdocs with external funding. Our PGA 2014 Survey and the Postdoc Town Hall meeting in 2015 also provided valuable information regarding career, demographics, living, income/expenses, and childcare situation for postdocs and grad students. As a result, we are currently working together with DFCI administration on several improvements. I have also established contacts with other postdoc associations in this area and initiated combined advocacy efforts of the members of the "Boston Postdoctoral Association".

I would like to continue and intensify this work in 2016 together with

Meghan as a co-chair and with the help of a growing number of committee members, and I am optimistic that we will achieve some fundamental improvements during this upcoming year.

**Meghan Bushway:**

I joined Dana-Farber in June 2015 after obtaining a PhD in Immunology from the University of Rochester. I am a postdoctoral fellow in Carl Novina's lab in the department of Cancer Immunology and Virology, where my research focus is on epigenetic reprogramming of immune cells to improve anti-tumor responses. Like many postdocs at DFCI, I hope that my research will lead to the development of novel cancer therapies in the clinic.

Although I have only been a postdoc for a short time, I have quickly realized that energetic and innovative postdocs drive many of the important therapeutic innovations coming out of DFCI, and the biomedical field as a whole. Despite the level of importance that postdocs play in accelerating research, postdocs face many challenges, including salary/stipends, job security and unequal benefits.

With this in mind, I attended my first PGA meeting shortly after starting at DFCI, joining the Advocacy Committee soon thereafter. Although I have only been a part of the Advocacy Committee for 5 months, I am very impressed with the progress made to improve postdoc benefits and the continued effort to improve the postdoc experience at DFCI. In addition, I recently joined the Boston Postdoctoral Association and the National Postdoctoral Association Advocacy Committee to work towards better postdoc benefits at both a local and national level. I am very excited to serve as co-chair of the Advocacy Committee with Tobias, working towards improving the overall postdoc experience for current and future scientists.

**Nadia Hassounah, PhD and Patrick Grossman, Newsletter Committee Co-Chairs**

**Nadia Hassounah:**

I obtained my Ph.D. in cancer biology from the University of Arizona in August, 2014. In November, 2014 I moved to Boston to begin my postdoc in Peter Hammerman's lab here at DFCI. I currently am working on a few different projects in diverse areas, such as modeling lung cancer genetic fusions in mice using CRISPR/Cas9, as well as understanding immune evasion in lung cancer and head and neck cancer.

The PGA provided me with a very warm welcome to DFCI, and I became

involved in the PGA, specifically in the newsletter committee, in March of 2015. I specifically joined the newsletter committee since I believed I could make the most impact in helping the PGA and my fellow postdocs and graduate students by joining this committee. I have helped contribute to three of our newsletters- writing articles which I believed would benefit our postdoctoral and graduate student community either professionally or personally. For example, I wrote an article recapping the conclusions of the 2014 Future of Research Conference, to help educate our PGA community on the efforts devoted nationally to help improve the lives of postdocs and graduate students. I have also conducted interviews with outstanding DFCI alumni to help showcase their efforts, as well as to inspire and motivate our current postdocs and graduate students. Working together with our newsletter team, I am proud to say that we have produced some terrific PGA Post publications.

As a Newsletter Committee co-chair, my goal is to continue to help educate, inspire, or simply entertain our postdoctoral and graduate student community through our newsletter. I will help lead our newsletter team as we create, execute and polish each issue we publish. I am very excited to be part of the Newsletter Committee for 2016!

**Patrick Grossman:**

I joined Dana-Farber in January 2014 as a PhD student from University Maastricht (the Netherlands) to conduct doctoral research at the Computational Imaging and Bioinformatics laboratory headed by Dr. Aerts. I obtained both my Master and Bachelor of Science degrees in Bioinformatics and Genome Research from University Bielefeld (Germany) after working on my theses at ETH Zurich (Switzerland). I am now working on developing noninvasive imaging biomarkers and on integrating these with molecular data using statistical models and machine learning approaches.

I had already attended a few PGA social events and was actively following the PGA and PGSAO newsletters when Jennifer Molina asked if I were interested in joining the organizational part of the PGA. Writing was always one of my favorite parts in academic research and because the newsletter committee also could use some help at that time, I decided to join that committee in Spring 2015. Since then I have helped publishing two issues. In the first issue, I wrote an article about Radiomics, an emerging field that translates medical imaging into predictive data. In the second issue, I contributed by researching and writing about the inspiring idea of Open Science. For this, I got the chance for a helpful conversation with Laurie Goodman, who is also editor-in-chief of GIGA Science, a new journal devoted to the promotion of Open Science.

As a newsletter committee co-chair, I am hoping to discover exciting stories around science in both academia and industry, and to make these available to our community of post-docs and graduate students at Dana-Farber. I hereby consider our newsletter one of the most useful means of reaching out to this community. I am excited to be given the opportunity to lead our team and am gratefully looking forward to interact with the various personalities involved in our work!

### **Michalina Janiszewska, PhD, Retreat Committee Chair**

I joined Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in September 2012 after obtaining my PhD from University of Lausanne in Switzerland. I am a post doc in Kornelia Polyak's lab, working on genetic intratumor heterogeneity in breast cancer.

As I started to participate in PGA activities, I've met many extremely helpful and friendly PGA members. I was impressed by all the work they are doing to improve post doc life quality and career preparedness. Thus, after 2 years at DFCI I decided I would like to join the PGA and actively participate in organization of next year's PGA retreat. As a Co-Chair of the Retreat Committee in 2015 I learned about the organization behind this unique event, which provides a great opportunity to obtain career advice from excellent scientists as well as panelists with diverse career trajectories. In 2016, I will serve as Chair of the Retreat Committee. I will do my best to incorporate all the feedback we received to improve the Retreat and make it even more exciting and inspiring. I hope that my experience from last year will help me achieve this aim.

### **Muhammad Ekram, Ph.D., Seminars Committee Chair**

I joined the lab of Dr. Kornelia Polyak of the Department of Medical Oncology as a Postdoctoral Fellow in September 2013. The focus of my research has been to employ pooled shRNA screen to identify genes as potential drug targets in a wide array of cell lines originating from many different organs and tissues. From the very beginning of my time here in DFCI I was amazed to see the phenomenal job the PGA does in positively impacting the professional lives of the graduate students and postdocs here in DFCI. Inspired by that I decided to join the Seminars Committee of PGA in June 2015. I along with Tim Branigan, a graduate student in DFCI, have been serving as the co-chairs of the committee. The primary duty of this committee has been to oversee the Brain Lunch series of seminars that are usually held at least once a month. This series, which has gained a lot of popularity over last several years, provides an excellent opportunity to anyone who wants to showcase their scientific work to the broader community, be it for a practice of a job talk or

just for feedback. We hope to maintain the high standards of the Brain Lunch series in 2016 and try to make it even better by making it more engaging.

## **Per Hydbring, PhD, and Anne Fassl, PhD, Social Committee Co-Chairs**

### **Anne Fassl:**

I joined Dana Farber in August 2013 as a postdoctoral fellow in the lab of Peter Sicinski investigating the role of the cell cycle machinery in disease and development. As my bay mate is a longtime member of the PGA I started attending PGA meetings shortly after and now I am already in my third PGA year with two years of experience as the co-chair of the social committee. I love working with the PGA as it is inspiring, challenging and a welcome change in the daily lab business. In 2016 I want to continue my work as a co-chair of the social committee and try to enhance our already manifold networking options for postdocs and graduate students. I hope that our work in the next year helps to increase the scientific and intercultural exchange in our postdoc and graduate student community.

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