

POSTDOC SPOTLIGHT

Simona Dalin, PhD

How long have you been at DFCI?

1 year, 10 months (2 years in November).

I work with Rameen Beroukhim in Cancer Biology, and with Gaddy Getz in the Cancer Program at the Broad Institute.

From where did you receive your graduate degree?

I did my PhD work with Mike Hemann and Doug Lauffenburger in the Biology Department at MIT.

Why did you choose this area of study?

I have been interested in chemotherapy resistance since college when a close friend of mine had lymphoma. While her treatment was successful, many of the other kids on the floor with her are no longer alive because their cancer was resistant to the therapies they were treated with. Many of the frontline agents used to treat cancer are DNA damaging agents, so I am interested in learning more about genomics and how DNA damage and repair interact with chemotherapy sensitivity.

What is the focus of your current research?

I am developing methods to assess features of genomic rearrangements that will shed light on which DNA damage repair processes formed those rearrangements. I also study how those and other genomic features associate with chemotherapy sensitivity. My goal is to better understand how chemotherapy resistance works so we can develop better treatments and personalize treatments more effectively.

How do you envision your career trajectory? How has working at Dana-Farber enhanced your career?

During my postdoc I plan to strengthen my skills in several research areas such as genomics, as well as my mentoring and teaching skills. I plan to pursue a faculty position that will allow me to continue my research into chemotherapy resistance and DNA damage repair, while also teaching and mentoring students. At Dana-Farber I have been able to learn from experts in my field, train younger scientists, and create a professional network that will hopefully generate future collaborations. The research community at DFCI has been fantastic. I have been able to get feedback and advice on my project from excellent mentors. I've also been able to have enthusiastic collaborators who help move my projects in new directions that I couldn't have done (or even thought of!) on my own.

When you're not doing science, where might we find you? (i.e., any outside activities or hobbies you enjoy?)

I'm a bookworm, I spent most of the last year of my PhD reading the entire Wheel of Time series! I usually read around 30 books each year. Some of my favorite authors are Brandon Sanderson and Orson Scott Card.



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