

23rd Annual Department of Immunology Retreat

University of Pittsburgh
Oglebay Resort and Conference Center
September 25-26, 2025



Thursday, September 25, 2025

(Rev. 9/17/2025)

8:30 – 1:00 pm **Registration – Glessner Foyer (main level)**

All Presentations – West Ballrooms (2nd floor)

- 9:00 – 9:05 am **Welcome and Introduction of New Students**
Dario Vignali, PhD
Distinguished Professor and Chair
Dept. of Immunology
- 9:10 – 9:40 am **John Alcorn, PhD.**
Professor, Dept. of Pediatrics and Immunology; Vice Chair of Basic Research
B cell deficiency induces cytotoxic memory CD8+ T cells during influenza-associated bacterial pneumonia
- 9:45 – 10:00 am **Aaron Yang**
2024 Graduate Student (4+) Poster Winner
Dept. of Pediatrics/Poholek Lab
Understanding the role of CTCF and 3D chromatin in regulation of T cell exhaustion
- 10:05 – 10:20 am **Nicholas Pease, PhD**
2024 Postdoc Poster Winner
Dept. of Immunology/Singh Lab
Cell cycle-coupled transcriptional network orchestrates human B cell fate bifurcation
- 10:25 – 10:55 am **Rebecca Elsner, PhD**
Assistant Professor, Dept. of Immunology
Regulation of the Extrafollicular Immune Response – Cellular Interactions, Affinity and Tolerance
- 11:00 – 11:15 am **Prabal Chhibbar**
Oral Presentation from Selected Abstracts
Graduate Student (4+), Das Lab
Leveraging HIVs Evolutionary Choices at the CD4 Interface in Designing Broadly Neutralizing Immunotherapies
- 11:20 – 11:35 pm **Chien-Sin Chen, PhD**
Oral Presentation from Selected Abstracts
Postdoc, Kaplan Lab
The Genesis of Cutaneous Neurogenic Inflammation is a Multi-Step Process Requiring DC Aggregation
- 11:40 – 12:40 pm **Poster Session (odd numbered abstracts)**
Allegheny and Shenandoah Meeting Rooms, Glessner Stage And Glessner Foyer (main level)
- 12:40 – 1:25 pm **Lunch – Glessner and Glessner Lawn (main level)**

1:25 – 2:25 pm	Poster Session (odd numbered abstracts) Allegheny and Shenandoah Meeting Rooms, Glessner Stage And Glessner Foyer (main level)
2:30 – 2:45 pm	Group Photograph – Lobby Entrance <i>*In case of inclement weather, photo will be taken at 11:50 on Friday morning prior to the poster session.</i>
2:50 – 2:55 pm	Sponsor Elevator Talk - Immudex
3:00 – 4:00 pm	Keynote Speaker Marion Pepper, PhD Dept. of Immunology, University of Washington <i>CD4+ T cell Heterogeneity in the Tissue</i>
4:00 – 7:00 pm	Free time to enjoy Oglebay facilities and interact with colleagues Room Check-in at 4:00 (main level front lobby)
7:00 – 9:00 pm	Dinner – Glessner (main level) *cash bar – no wine service 7:00 – cash bar opens 7:30 – dinner served
9:00 – 10:00 pm	Trivia Social - Glessner (main level) *cash bar – no drink tickets
10:00 – 11:00 pm	<i>“Fire Pit/Pool” Social - Indoor Pool/Lawn Fire Pit (2nd floor) *cash bar – no drink tickets</i>

Friday, September 26, 2025

8:00 – 9:00 am	Breakfast – Glessner (main level) Check-out by 11:00 am
9:00 – 9:30 pm	State of the Department Address Dario Vignali, PhD Distinguished Professor and Chair Dept. of Immunology
9:35 – 10:05 am	Jing Li, PhD Assistant Professor, Dept. of Immunology; Member, Cancer Immunology and Immunotherapy Program, UPMC Hillman Cancer Center <i>Immunosuppression mediated by regulatory CD8+ T cells in tumors</i>
10:10 – 10:50 am	Elevator Pitch Session – 10 3-minute talks <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Afsana Naaz, PhD – Postdoc, Turnquist Lab and Little Lab <i>Alloimmunity Generated Injury Signals Control Local Chemokine Levels in Areas of Cardiac Allograft Vasculopathy</i> • Kenta Yamamoto – Graduate Student (1-3), Gaffen Lab <i>The RNA-binding Protein Arid5a is a Novel T cell-intrinsic Driver of Graft-versus-Host Disease (GvHD)</i>

- **Ellen Fleming** – Graduate Student (1-3), St. Leger Lab
Herpes Simplex Virus Type 1 Ocular Infection Triggers Brain Inflammation at Steady State and During Neurodegenerative Disease
- **Alexandra Glathar, PhD** – Postdoc, Cillo Lab
Identification of a Spatially Resolved Cellular Neighborhood in HNSCC that Limits Response to Immunotherapy
- **Rufiaat Rashid** – Graduate Student (4+), Bruno Lab
Ovarian Cancer-Induced Ascites Fluid Impacts B cell Fate and Function in Women with High Grade Serous Ovarian Cancer
- **Steven Joachim** – Graduate Student (4+), M. Shlomchik Lab
Commensals vs Pathogens: Balancing B cell Tolerance and Protection
- **Swapnil Keshari** – Graduate Student (4+), Das Lab
Uncovering Cellular Programs and Regulatory Circuits Governing Cell Fate Bifurcations Using Interpretable Machine Learning
- **Harshita Beeravolu** – Graduate Student (4+), Poholek Lab
Prdm1-Associated Non-Coding Regulatory Elements Drive Blimp-1 Expression in a Context-Dependent and Cell-Type Specific Manner
- **Nishtha Trivedi** – Graduate Student (1-3), Joglekar Lab
Microproteins as a Potential Source of Antigens in Autoimmunity
- **Chenxian Ye** – Graduate Student (4+), Delgoffe Lab
Differential Roles of Glut1 in Treg cell Function Across Tissue Microenvironment

10:55 – 11:25 am	Amanda Poholek, PhD Assistant Professor, Dept. of Immunology <i>Blimp-1 regulation of type 2 immunity</i>
11:30 – 11:45 am	Melissa E. Cook, PhD Oral Presentation from Selected Abstracts Postdoc, Gaffen Lab <i>Type 17 Cytokines Collectively Control Antifungal Immunity in the Female Reproductive Tract</i>
11:50 – 12:50 pm	Poster Session (even numbered abstracts) Allegheny and Shenandoah Meeting Rooms, Glessner Stage and Glessner Foyer (main level)
12:50 – 1:35 pm	Lunch – Glessner and Glessner Lawn (main level)
1:35 – 2:35 pm	Poster Session continued (even numbered abstracts) Allegheny and Shenandoah Meeting Rooms, Glessner Stage and Glessner Foyer (main level)
2:40 – 2:55 pm	Victor So Oral Presentation from Selected Abstracts Graduate Student (4+), Lohmueller Lab <i>Expanding the Antigen Targeting of CAR T cells Via a Universal Bispecific T cell Engager</i>

3:00 – 3:30 pm	Jing Hong Wang, MD, PhD Professor, Dept. of Medicine, Div. of Hematology and Oncology, and Dept. of Immunology <i>Determinants underlying the divergent outcomes of immune checkpoint inhibitors in head and neck cancers</i>
3:35 – 4:05 pm	Heth Turnquist, PhD Professor, Dept. of Surgery; Interim Director, Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute <i>Elucidating the role of immune cell-mediated repair in heart transplantation outcomes</i>
4:05 – 4:20 pm	<i>Closing Comments/Poster Award Presentations</i> <i>Glessner</i>
4:20 pm	Departure at your convenience

Acknowledgements:

The Department of Immunology would like to thank
the following vendors for their support and
participation in this year's retreat:

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**Please visit their display tables located in the Allegheny and
Shenandoah Meeting Rooms and Glessner hallway (main level).**

A special thank you to the retreat committee:

Robert Binder, PhD
Anthony Cillo, PhD
Jishnu Das, PhD
Roberta Erickson
Jodi Russo
Daniella Schwartz, MD

Sarah Bradley – Cillo Lab
Kelsey Ertwine – Overacre Lab
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Jessica Jana – Overacre Lab
Stephen Joachim – M. Shlomchik Lab
Afsana Naaz – Turnquist and Little Labs
Aaron Rosen – Das Lab
Drew Wilfahrt – Delgoffe Lab

Cover page artwork used to create this year's poster by Sarah Bradley.