



Dermatology Foundation  
SHAPING THE FUTURE OF DERMATOLOGY

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# TOMORROW'S DISCOVERIES



# BEGIN TODAY

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2023 ANNUAL REPORT



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# DISCOVERIES ARE YEARS IN THE MAKING.

Today's expert researchers and academicians were once promising investigators. Every life-improving skin therapy was, at first, just a novel idea. Since 1964, the Dermatology Foundation has fulfilled its mission—to drive advancements in patient care by investing in the early career research of those with the greatest potential to achieve scientific breakthroughs.

Your donation to the DF accelerates the development of groundbreaking research that makes new discoveries possible. With your support, we enable talented academic researchers to pursue new insights and treatments in all areas of our specialty.

**TOMORROW'S DISCOVERIES BEGIN TODAY**

# 2023 Year in Review

**E**very year we strive to provide the best possible support to promising researchers. We celebrate these incredible individuals because they drive transformative discoveries that will further our field. Thanks to the dedication and generosity of our supporters—member physicians, industry, and society partners—we are able to provide these emerging thought leaders with the research funding they need to launch their careers.

This year, we awarded \$2.97 million in research funding to 61 individuals across 38 different topic areas. Our sincere thanks to our 750 physician colleagues who donated \$1.1 million, and industry and society partners who provided \$1.2 million. With your help, we're making a real impact and are deeply grateful to have you be a part of our journey.

The \$1-million sponsorships in prior years from Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS), Sanofi, and Regeneron allowed us to enhance our Research Award Program for mid-career researchers. This includes funding a BMS Psoriasis Research Award, and the inaugural Sanofi and Regeneron Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Research Award we created through our partnership with the Skin of Color Society.

## Achieving our strategic goals

This past year, we continued to strengthen the infrastructure of the DF through our strategic plan. We completed the implementation of new state-of-the-art systems for our fundraising and Research Award Program and reintroduced physician-to-physician fundraising.

We continued to focus on excellence in education through our flagship online publication *Dermatology Focus* and most notably, the annual DF Clinical Symposium, a true highlight of our tradition of excellence in medical education. We are pleased to share that many of our expert speakers are former DF award recipients. Many current year attendees praised the educational program and told us it's their "must-attend" CME meeting each year.

## Paying it forward

In the year ahead, we hope that you will join us in celebrating the 60th anniversary. We salute the foresight of the DF's 10 founding members who created the Foundation so all dermatologists could contribute to the advancement of the specialty. It is also a time for us to express our heartfelt gratitude for the support and commitment the Foundation received from our many constituents over the years. With their help, the DF's mission to support early research has never faltered, enabling us to nurture hundreds of specialty experts and innovators over the past six decades. We are proud that approximately 80% of our awardees have remained in academics, and 70% of these individuals competed successfully for federal funding.

Today, the competitive nature of investigative dermatology and its inherent financial challenges remain, making the need for continuous investment in tomorrow's prominent investigators essential. If you are a DF member, we are truly grateful for your sustained support. You help the DF sponsor innovative research.

**If you are not yet a member of the Foundation, join us and many of your colleagues this year to help advance the next 60 years of discovery and healing. Every contribution supports new knowledge across the specialty and benefits patients everywhere. We invite you to consider joining us with a special 60th anniversary gift.**



Janet A. Fairley, MD  
President



Elizabeth I. McBurney, MD  
Chair, Advisory Council

For 60 years, the Dermatology Foundation has supported the innovative research of promising investigators that has led to new knowledge and the advancement of patient care. Thanks to the generosity of our 2023 supporters, the **DF awarded \$2.97 million** in research funding in March of 2024.

**14**

**Research Award Categories**



**61**

**Researchers**



**23**

**Academic Institutions**



DF funding is awarded for meritorious research projects that address important questions in any aspect of dermatology. This year, the collective body of work proposed by our 2024 award recipients represents progress in the following 38 areas.

+ Atopic Dermatitis + Auto-immunity + Blistering Diseases + Carcinogenesis and Cancer Genetics + Clinical Trial / Therapeutics + Connective Tissue Disease + Contact Dermatitis + Epidemiology + Epidermal Structure and Barrier Function + Genetic Diseases, Gene Regulation and Gene Therapy + Growth Factors, Cell Adhesion and Matrix Biology + Hair Disorders + Healthcare Delivery + Hidradenitis Suppurativa + Immunity and Lymphocyte Biology + Immunotherapy + Inflammation + Melanoma + Microbiology + Microbiome + Mohs Surgery + Mouse Models + Nevi / Melanoma + Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer + Pediatric Dermatology / Children + Pharmacology and Drug Development + Photobiology + Pigmentation and Melanocyte Biology + Psoriasis + Scar + Skin and Hair Developmental Biology + Skin of Color + Stem Cell + Tissue Regeneration and Wound Healing + Tumor Immunology + Vitiligo / Pigmentation + Women's Health + Wound Healing



# Research Award Program

The Dermatology Foundation invests in early and mid-career researchers with novel ideas and the strong potential to achieve scientific discoveries that lead to new treatments and improved patient care. Identifying those promising researchers and their meritorious projects is the role of the DF's Medical and Scientific Committee and the Clinical, Medical, Surgical, Dermatopathology Panel, made up of 19 specialty leaders whose expertise spans the field. The committee and panel members review proposals following a rigorous process based on the National Institutes of Health study section.

# Bristol Myers Squibb Psoriasis Research Award

The Bristol Myers Squibb Psoriasis Research Award supports the research of an outstanding mid-career investigator with an established trajectory of excellence in basic, clinical, or translational science. Funded research is centered on advancing the understanding or treatment of psoriasis. This award provides \$100,000 in research dollars per year for up to three years.

## **Marlys S. Fassett, MD, PhD**

University of California, San Francisco

*Searching for IL-31: Toward Curative Targeting of Psoriasis Skin TRM Cells*



# YEAR ONE

## **Junko Takeshita, MD, PhD, MSCE**

University of Pennsylvania

*Increasing Participant Diversity in Clinical Trials for Psoriasis Through Video Education*



# YEAR TWO

# Sanofi and Regeneron Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mid-Career Award

The Dermatology Foundation and the Skin of Color Society are pleased to introduce the new Sanofi and Regeneron Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Mid-Career Award. The award supports projects that will expand the understanding of dermatological issues impacting underrepresented or underserved groups in medicine. This award provides \$100,000 in research dollars per year to an exceptional mid-career researcher for up to three years.

## Donald Glass, MD, PhD

University of Texas, Southwestern  
*Genetics, Comorbidities and  
Their Associations with Keloids*

# YEAR ONE

Often, investigators struggle at the mid-point of their careers. The research path is incredibly competitive. They have promising data and are trying to compete with large labs and well-established investigators for funding. That mid-career point can be discouraging; it is an inflection point when a little extra encouragement spurs them on to do remarkable things. That is why the DF now offers mid-career research support.

### Janet A. Fairley, MD

DF President

Professor Emeritus, Department of Dermatology, University of Iowa

## Featured Current Award Recipient

The second DF Bristol Myers Squibb Research Award (BMSRA) was awarded to Marlys Fassett, MD, PhD. She received a Dermatologist Investigator Research Fellowship in 2015 and a Physician Scientist Career Development Award in 2017. An associate professor of dermatology at the University of California, San Francisco, she runs a research lab that discovered a transcriptional enhancer encoded near the IL31 gene in human T cells.

### Dr. Marlys Fassett Receives the 2024 DF Bristol Myers Squibb Psoriasis Award

#### Exploring the potential of targeting IL-31+ resident memory T cells to treat psoriasis

**D**r. Fassett is the second recipient of this prestigious award for extraordinary mid-career investigators. The award comes with \$100,000 funding each year for three years to support her research into the role the cytokine IL-31 plays in pro-inflammatory diseases, including psoriasis.

"I've never been so surprised and relieved to win an award," said Dr. Fassett. "The Foundation's support is so important for researchers, especially for a mid-career investigator like me."



Running a relatively new lab can be a budgetary struggle for any faculty, particularly those in California, where unionized salaries for students and technicians have increased dramatically while NIH funding has remained static. The BMSRA takes much of the financial pressure off and allows Dr. Fassett to focus on what she does best—research.

**"This award, with multi-year funding, makes a huge difference in our ability to support and train junior scientists," she said. "I greatly appreciate the large community of dermatologists who have made substantial donations to promote basic and translational research."**

Dr. Fassett is Associate Professor of dermatology at the University of California, San Francisco. She graduated from the Medical Scientist Training Program at Harvard Medical School with her PhD in immunology (2009) and MD (2011). She completed her residency at UCSF and pursued a postdoctoral fellowship in the labs of Dr. Mark Ansel (molecular immunology) and Dr. Allan Basbaum (neuroscience). She is a skin T cell immunologist whose core research involves the neuroimmunology of itching, understanding how the cells of the skin immune system communicate with sensory neurons that mediate itch and pain, and how those neurons modulate the skin's immune cells. Dr. Fassett came to study psoriasis via her interest in itch diseases.

"At the start of my research career, I was interested in the field's big, seemingly unsolvable questions of the last ten years."

Her postdoc culminated in the discovery that IL-31 affects immunoregulation in skin via itch sensory neurons. Dr. Fassett received a three-year DF Physician Scientist Career Development Award (2017-2019) to complete this work. Based on preliminary data from experiments she could perform because of this award, she won a K08 grant from the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS). In 2021, she was recruited for her current position.

Her research has expanded the understanding of the role the cytokine IL-31 plays in atopic dermatitis (Fassett et al. 2023), the activation of sensory neurons in the skin, and



itch. In addition to publishing in journals, Dr. Fassett has written about her work on IL-31 and itch in the popular press and has been profiled by the BBC.

"My interest in itch has led me to research the functional biology of IL-31 and the ways it behaves beyond itch and neurogenic inflammation," said Dr. Fassett. "That's where the BMSPA proposal comes in."

While IL-31 is associated with itch disorders, like atopic dermatitis, it also plays a role in other inflammatory diseases, including psoriasis. Her lab discovered a transcriptional enhancer encoded near the IL31 gene in human T cells, showing that these immune cells can be induced to produce more IL-31. Deleting the murine IL31 gene reduced skin inflammation in a psoriasis model. This showed that IL-31 plays a pro-inflammatory role in psoriasis. Dr. Fassett will use her award funding to ask how IL-31 influences this inflammation in psoriasis. This work partially aims to understand how to target IL-31+ resident memory T cells as a therapeutic approach to psoriasis.

### Becoming a dermatologist

Dr. Fassett was the first in her family to go to medical school. Her childhood interest in botany later morphed into a passion for human biology, particularly immunology.

"I've been doing immunology research since college and teaching immunology since graduate school," said Dr. Fassett. "There are obvious clinical applications for MD and PhD immunologists, like rheumatology or immuno-oncology. But dermatology made sense to me as a specialty when I learned that there are more T cells in the skin than anywhere else."

Dr. Fassett works in a clinic one half day each week and supervises residents in one of the teaching clinics. She collaborates with Dr. Tim Berger, retired from position as professor of clinical dermatology, UCSF School of Medicine Department of Dermatology, and Dr. Sarina Elmariah,

assistant professor in dermatology, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, at a complex med-derm clinic focused on severe itchy dermatosis."Tim Berger has been my mentor for a long time and turned me onto IL-31 near the beginning of my postdoc," said Dr. Fassett. "Tim and I have many things in common besides dermatology. He has an enduring interest in skin immunology, a huge patient population of chronically itchy people, and an interest in supporting the career development of physician-scientists." Dr. Berger received the 2023 DF Lifetime Career Educator Award for this work. "We made a natural match in terms of mentor-mentee. We both love gardening, which also gives us a chance to talk about itching and dermatology."

### Long-standing support

In addition to her DF Career Development Award, Dr. Fassett received a 2023 DF Diversity Research Supplement Award and a DF Dermatologist Investigator Research Fellowship (2015–2016).

"The Foundation's support has played a huge role in my career," said Dr. Fassett. "The transition from residency to being a postdoc and then an investigator with my own lab came with scientific and financial uncertainty. Our department chair is intellectually and organizationally supportive of physician-scientist careers, but we need a way to supplement our salaries so we can support ourselves and do important experiments. From the early days of my career, the Foundation felt like an organization built for people like us. It was an intellectual and financial home for early physician-scientists in dermatology. Virtually all my cohort who finished medical school are still in

**"From the early days of my career, the Foundation felt like an organization built for people like us. It was an intellectual and financial home for early physician-scientists in dermatology."**

scientific dermatology and have received support from the Foundation. When I went to San Diego in March to receive the BMS award, the audience was filled with colleagues funded by Foundation awards."

### Suggestions for the evolution of research funding

Dr. Fassett has noticed a shift in the past decade toward research that has clinical applicability. Journals are asking for more research papers on human subjects and the translational aspects of basic research. Ideally, she knows her T cell immunological research would benefit from having access to specimens from clinical trials or clinical research studies.

"I'd love to have skin biopsies or RNA sequencing tissue from clinical trial subjects to see if what we see in mice bears out in patients," said Dr. Fassett. "Collaborative grants might make sense, connecting researchers who run clinical trials and translational research with those performing basic research like me.

"Getting to choose research questions, design experiments, and interpret results is a huge luxury," said Dr. Fassett. "It's fun, it's interesting, and it's important for the long-term future of medicine and patient care. I feel very lucky to be in this position."

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*This article appeared in Dermatology Focus in June 2024.*

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### References

Fassett MS, Braz JM, Castellanos CA, et al. IL-31-dependent neurogenic inflammation restrains cutaneous type 2 immune response in allergic dermatitis. *Sci Immunol.* 2023;8(88):eabi6887. <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciimmunol.abi6887>

# Career Development Awards

Investing in our specialty's most promising investigators helps them to establish the experience and data needed to secure major federal funding. Each award recipient receives \$55,000 in annual salary support for up to three years.

## Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Career Development Award



**Courtney Johnson, MD, PhD / Year 1**  
Johns Hopkins University  
*Investigating the Role of Cancer-Associated Fibroblasts in Immunodetection of Mycosis Fungoides*



**Jennifer Lo, MD, PhD / Year 1**  
Harvard University,  
Massachusetts General Hospital  
*Characterizing Epitope Spreading and Response to mRNA Melanoma Immunotherapy by In Situ Sequencing*



**Christine Yokoyama, MD, PhD / Year 1**  
Washington University  
*Regulation of Epidermal Homeostasis by Centrosomal Proteins*

## Public Health Career Development Award



**Alexandra Charrow, MD, MBE / Year 1**  
Harvard University,  
Brigham and Women's Hospital  
*Understanding Emergency Room Utilization in Patients with Hidradenitis Suppurativa (HS): A Mixed Met*



**Eric Merrill, MD / Year 2**  
University of California, San Francisco  
*Cutaneous Lymphocyte – Fibroblast Niches*



**Goran Micevic, MD, PhD / Year 2**  
Yale University  
*Identifying CD8+ T-cells Necessary for a Durable Immune Response to Melanoma*

## Clinical Career Development Award in Dermatologic Surgery



**Kristin Bibee, MD, PhD / Year 3**  
Johns Hopkins University  
*Tumor and Stromal Factors Driving Squamous Cell Carcinoma Behavior in the Immunosuppressed Patient*



**Allen Oak, MD / Year 2**  
University of Pennsylvania  
*Defining the Role of Mechanotransduction in Scarring Alopecias for Therapeutic Gain*



**Elisabeth Pedersen, MD, PhD / Year 2**  
University of Michigan  
*Understanding Melanogenesis in Basal Cell Carcinoma*

## Physician Scientist Career Development Award



**Victoria Fang, MD, PhD / Year 1**  
University of Pennsylvania  
*Spatial Dynamics of Tertiary Lymphoid Structures and Plasma Cells in Hidradenitis Suppurativa*



**Dekker C. Deacon, MD, PhD / Year 3**  
University of Utah  
*Genomic Markers of Lentigo Maligna Melanoma Progression*



**Theodora Karagounis, MD, MS / Year 1**  
New York University  
*Contributions of Gastrointestinal Staphylococcus Aureus to Pediatric Atopic Dermatitis*



**Anna Kersh, MD, PhD / Year 3**  
University of Pennsylvania Hospital  
*Understanding the Molecular Pathogenesis of Lichen Planus and Lichenoid Dermatoses*



**Wei-Che Ko, MD / Year 3**  
 University of Massachusetts  
*Defining Fundamental Mechanisms of Human Inflammation in Allergic Skin*



**Benjamin A. Nanes, MD, PhD / Year 3**  
 University of Texas  
 Southwestern Medical School  
*Modulation of Force Generation and Differentiation by Keratin Filaments During Epidermal Remodeling*



**Rivka Stone, MD, PhD / Year 3**  
 University of Miami  
*Identifying Early Genomic Biomarkers of Skin Fibrosis Following Radiation Injury*

### Science of Human Appearance Career Development Award

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**Mio Nakamura, MD, MS / Year 1**  
 University of Michigan  
*Phototherapy in Psoriasis Patients of Skin of Color*



**Eun Kyung Ko, PhD / Year 2**  
 University of Pennsylvania  
*Defining the Role of Human Epigenome in Sebaceous Gland Development and Disease*



**Nicholas Theodosakis, MD, PhD / Year 3**  
 Harvard University,  
 Massachusetts General Hospital  
*Exploring Neurological Disease as a Model for Melanocyte Dysfunction*



**Amy R. Vandiver, MD, PhD / Year 3**  
 University of California, Los Angeles  
*Understanding the Role of Mitochondrial Genomic Deletions in Photoaging*

### Medical Dermatology Career Development Award

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**Jun Kang, MD / Year 1**  
 Johns Hopkins University  
*Defining the Role of NETting Neutrophils and B-cells in Hydroxychloroquine Resistant CLE*



**Christina Kraus, MD / Year 2**  
 University California, Irvine  
*Developing Metrics for Disease Burden and Identification of Biomarkers in Vulvar Lichen Sclerosus*



**Lauren Madigan, MD / Year 2**  
 University of Utah  
*Developing Better Understanding of Adult-Onset Mastocytosis in the Skin*



**Helena Pasieka, MD, MS / Year 2**  
 Uniformed Services University  
*Stevens-Johnson Syndrome and Toxic Epidermal Necrolysis: Improving Clinical Assessment, Pedric*



**Bridget Shields, MD / Year 2**  
 University of Wisconsin  
*Elucidating the Clinical and Molecular Immunometabolic Microenvironment of Granuloma Annulare*



**Brittany L. Dulmage, MD / Year 3**  
 Ohio State University  
*The Impact, Disparities, and Assessment Methods of Alopecia in Cancer Patients*

### Women's Health Career Development Award

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**Michal Kidacki, MD, PhD / Year 1**  
 Yale University  
*TIGIT Signaling in Hidradenitis Suppurativa*



**Erin Theisen, MD, PhD / Year 1**  
 Harvard University,  
 Brigham and Women's Hospital  
*Granzyme K in Autoimmune Skin Disease*



**Jeffrey Gehlhausen, MD, PhD / Year 3**  
 Yale University School of Medicine  
*Characterization and Validation of Type I Interferon-driven Lupus Pathology*

## Research Career Development Award

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**Jeffrey Smith, MD, PhD / Year 1**

Harvard University,  
Brigham and Women's Hospital

*Biochemical Determinants of Chemokine Receptor Signaling*



**William Crisler, PhD / Year 2**

Harvard University,  
Brigham and Women's Hospital

*Discovery of Immunoregulatory Networks in Skin via the Study of Face Transplant Rejection*



**Sakeen Kashem, MD, PhD / Year 2**

University of California, San Francisco

*Circadian Control of Inflammatory Pruritus*



**Yingchao Xue, PhD / Year 2**

Johns Hopkins University

*Defining the Contribution of Skin Stretch to Obesity-Induced Inflammation and Insulin Resistance*



**Martin Prince Alphonse, PhD / Year 3**

Johns Hopkins University  
NLRP12 and Caspase-8 Mediated  
Inflammasome Signaling in Staphylococcus  
Aureus Skin Infections



**Satish Sati, PhD / Year 3**

University of Pennsylvania

*Investigating Neuroimmune Interactions to Promote Scarless Skin Regeneration*

## Dermatopathology Research Career Development Award

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**Julie Deutsch, MD / Year 1**

Johns Hopkins University

*Analytical and Clinical Validation of a mIF Biomarker for Anti-PD-1 Therapy in Melanoma*



**Shadi Khalil, MD, PhD / Year 1**

University of California, San Diego

*Nutrient Metal Sequestration in Inflammatory and Infectious Skin Disease*



**Rony Francois, MD, PhD / Year 2**

University of California, San Francisco

*Targeting Oncogenic NRAS in Melanoma*



**Matthew Hedberg, MD, PhD / Year 2**

University of Pennsylvania

*Cellular Characteristics and Molecular Determinants of SCCIS*

## Pediatric Dermatology Career Development Award

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**Lucinda L. Kohn, MD / Year 3**

University of Colorado, Denver

*Evaluating Disparities in Dermatology for American Indian and Alaska Native Youth*

**It is humbling to be the recipient of a Dermatology Foundation career development award.** This award comes at a critical time in my development as a clinician, collaborator, educator, and woman in leadership. This funding gives me the chance to boldly pursue a passion and provides me with the confidence to know that I can ultimately carry this work forward toward additional opportunities for funding and growth.

**Lauren Madigan, MD**

2024 Research Award Recipient

University of Utah

# Dermatologist Investigator Research Fellowships

Our specialty's newest investigators may begin their academic journey with a with DF fellowship. Investing in them early in their careers makes future innovation possible. This award provides a one-year salary stipend of \$30,000 to the most promising physician-scientists who have recently completed their dermatology residency training.

## **Corbett Berry, MD, PhD**

University of Pennsylvania

*Epigenetic Exploration of Asymmetric T Cell Division and Graft-versus-host Disease*

## **Andrew Johnston, MD, PhD**

Yale University

*Characterizing Neutrophil Phenotypic Heterogeneity in Neutrophilic Dermatoses*

## **Ernest Lee, MD, PhD**

University of California, San Francisco

*Computational Discovery of Therapeutic Candidates for Hidradenitis Suppurativa*

## **Jinwoo Lee, MD, PhD**

Stanford University

*Investigation of XIST as a Driver of Sex-biased Autoimmune Skin Diseases*

## **Eugene Park, MD, PhD**

Johns Hopkins University

*Ribosome-mediated Responses to UV Irradiation in Keratinocytes*

## **Swapneel Patel, MD, PhD**

University of Texas, Southwestern

*Mechanisms of STING Signaling*

## **Sunaina Rengarajan, MD, PhD**

Washington University

*Characterization of Immunogenic and Pathogenic Microbes that Correlate with Treatment Outcomes in HS*

## **Alison Treichel, MD**

Case Western Reserve University

*Decoding the Gut-skin Axis in Psoriasis*

## **Rachel Waldemer-Streyer, MD, PhD**

University of California, San Francisco

*Development and Optimization of 3D Skin Organoids from Whole Adult Skin*

## **Diana Wang, MD, PhD**

University of California, Los Angeles

*Intracellular Regulation of the Sebocyte Lipidome*

## **Leo Wang, MD, PhD**

University of Pennsylvania

*Engineering Hydrogels for Alopecia Areata*

## Basic Research Grants

Each year, the Dermatology Foundation provides grants to support basic science, and medical and surgical studies with great potential. These grants provide \$20,000 to support the non-salary elements of a research project.

### Research Grant

#### **Nathan Balukoff, MD, PhD**

University of Miami

*Tunnels of Hidradenitis Suppurativa: the Role of Activated Cellular Phenotype in the Disease Pathoph.*

#### **Heather Dingwall, PhD**

University of Pennsylvania

*Uncovering Extrinsic Drivers of Ectodermal Appendage Development*

#### **Cheri Frey, MD**

Howard University

*Spatial Evaluation of Immune-stromal Crosstalk in Discoid Lupus Erythematosus in Skin of Color*

#### **Nazgol Sadat Haddadi, MD, MPH**

University of Massachusetts

*Keratinocytes' Innate Immune Response to Ultraviolet Light B in Cutaneous Lupus Erythematosus.*

#### **Tomonori Oka, MD, PhD**

Harvard University

*Exploring How T Helper 2 Cell Immunity Eliminates Pre-cancerous Skin Lesions*

### Patient Directed Investigation Grant

#### **John Edminister, MD**

Wake Forest University

*In Vitro Investigation of Cinacalcet as a Non-Immunosuppressive Therapy for Pemphigus Vulgaris*

#### **Tammy Gonzalez, MD, PhD**

University of Miami

*Changing a Paradigm in Prurigo Nodularis – Protective Role of Facial Skin Commensals*

# Diversity Research Supplement Award

The DF is committed to improving health equity by enhancing diversity in the specialty's workforce. This research award was developed to enable medical students—belonging to a group that is defined by the NIH as under-represented in biomedical research—to participate in a full-time research project. Recent DF career development awardees apply for funding to mentor students to participate on existing research studies for six to 12 weeks.

## **Stewart, Shakeria**

Morehouse School of Medicine

## **Jillian Richmond, PhD**

University of Massachusetts

*Identifying potential natural compounds that could be repurposed for the treatment of morphea*

## **Laura Bou Delgado**

Universidad Central del Caribe  
School of Medicine

## **Junko Takeshita, MD, PhD, MSCE**

University of Pennsylvania

*Evaluating the Urban Community Canvassing Experience for Dermatologic Research Recruitment*

## **Cameron Gudobba**

Perelman School of Medicine at the  
University of Pennsylvania

## **Junko Takeshita, MD, PhD, MSCE**

University of Pennsylvania

*Geographic Access to Dermatology Care in Philadelphia*

## **Yuying Zhang**

University of Massachusetts,  
Chan Medical School

## **Jillian Richmond, PhD**

University of Massachusetts

*Comparative spatial transcriptomics of Discoid Lupus Erythematosus*

## **Joseph Ebriani**

University of California, Los Angeles

## **Steven Chen, MD, MPH, MHPEd**

Harvard University, Massachusetts  
General Hospital

*Investigation biologic medications for the treatment of dermatologic immune related adverse event*

## **Kalina T.L. Machado**

Emory University School of Medicine

## **Howa Yeung, MD, MSc**

Emory University School of Medicine

*Impact of pre-existing serious mental illness on Kaposi sarcoma outcomes: A cohort study*

## **Jagjit Lally**

University of Rochester Medical School

## **Anna De Benedetto, MD**

University of Rochester

*Identification candidate serum biomarkers for severe atopic dermatitis by proteomic approach*

## **Angelica E. Carr**

Penn State College of Medicine

## **Ryan Hobbs, PhD**

Penn State

*Uncovering cellular and molecular roles for AIRE in skin keratinocytes*

## **Lina Ferrari**

University of Miami  
Miller School of Medicine

## **Rivka Stone, MD, PhD**

University of Miami

*Characterizing cellular stress response in a murine model of radiation-induced skin fibrosis*

## **Ana Danko**

University of Hawaii

## **Sakeen Kashem, MD, PhD**

University of California, San Francisco

*Understanding neuronal activation by cutaneous inflammation*

## **Nizhoni Sutter**

University of Washington

## **Cory Simpson, MD, PhD**

University of Washington

*Using an in vitro Hailey-Hailey disease model to define its pathogenic drivers*

## **Rafael O. Homer**

University of Washington

## **Cory Simpson, MD, PhD**

University of Washington

*Modeling Darier disease pathogenesis to define novel therapeutic strategies*

## **Samantha Rojas**

The Ohio State University  
College of Medicine

## **Brittany Dulmage, MD**

Ohio State University

*Hair loss during cancer treatment in Spanish-speaking women with limited English proficiency*

## **Aster Workineh**

Yale University

## **Alicia Little, MD, PhD**

Yale University

*Continuity of Care for CLE Patients During the COVID19 Era: A Retrospective Analysis*

## **Yanel Hernandez**

University of California, San Francisco  
School of Medicine

## **Aileen Chang, MD**

University of California, San Francisco

*Care experiences and social context of Latinx patients living with hidradenitis suppurativa*

(Medical Student) (Project Mentor)

## Featured Past Award Recipient

Accomplished physician-scientist and academic leader, Dr. Aimee Payne, is the past recipient of a Dermatology Foundation Stiefel Scholar Award (2015) and a Physician Scientist Career Development Award (2006). She is now the chair of the Department of Dermatology at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons and the dermatologist-in-chief at New York-Presbyterian. In recent years, Dr. Payne developed tisagenlecleucel (Kymriah) for autoimmune disorders in her research laboratory at University of Pennsylvania.

### The Path to Creating CAAR-T Cell Therapies

#### DF Stiefel Scholar Research Award

In 2011, Aimee Payne, MD, PhD, was running a lab at the University of Pennsylvania, studying pemphigus vulgaris, an autoimmune disease of the skin that results when B cells make antibodies that attack the cell-adhesion protein desmoglein 3. The standard of care for pemphigus was corticosteroids and rituximab, a monoclonal antibody that targets the B-cell antigen CD20 and was originally approved for B-cell lymphoma. Meanwhile, across campus, Dr. Carl June and his team had just published a ground-breaking case series demonstrating long-term remission of refractory B-cell cancers with CAR-T cells that recognized the B-cell antigen CD19, work that led to the first FDA-approved CAR-T cell therapy, tisagenlecleucel (Porter et al. 2011).



**"We were saying in the laboratory that anything that works for B-cell leukemia and lymphoma is going to work for pemphigus," Dr. Payne said. "And all of a sudden, Carl June is reporting cures of B-cell lymphoma. After that, it seemed like every Penn faculty member was turning their favorite monoclonal antibody therapy into a CAR-T therapy. It was an incredibly exciting time, an ecosystem of collaboration and innovation."**

One of the postdoctoral fellows in her lab, Christoph Ellebrecht, MD (also a 2020 DF Dermatologist Investigator Research Fellowship awardee and recipient of a DF Career Development Award in 2021), who is now an assistant professor at Penn, spearheaded a collaboration with the laboratory of Michael Milone, MD, PhD, a co-inventor of tisagenlecleucel. That ultimately led to a further refinement of these innovations in a product known as chimeric autoantibody receptor (CAAR-T) cell therapy. CAAR-T cells are modified CAR-T cells designed to present an antigen recognized by only autoreactive B cells.

### Deep roots at Penn

Dr. Payne was at Penn for 22 years, as a resident, a post-doctoral fellow, and ultimately as a tenured Professor of Dermatology. She is president-elect of the Society for Investigative Dermatology (SID) and co-founder and co-chair of the scientific advisory board of the biotech company, Cabaletta Bio. She became chair of the Department of Dermatology at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons and dermatologist-in-chief at New York-Presbyterian in December 2023.

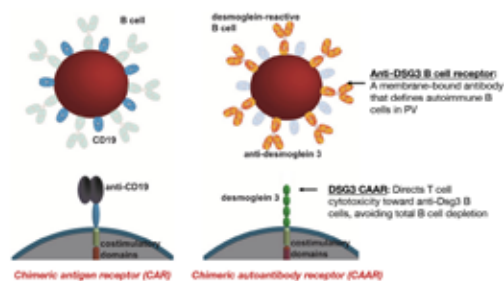
### CAAR-T cell therapy for pemphigus and other autoimmune skin diseases

DSG3-CAART leads to antigen-specific B-cell depletion by binding to the autoantibodies expressed on the surface of autoreactive B cells, also known as a B-cell receptor. "It's the perfect target because it basically declares that B cell as being autoreactive before it ever matures into an antibody-secreting cell."

In a phase 1 dose escalation study, DSG3-CAART thus far has proven to have a tolerable safety profile, with some patients experiencing transient clinical improvements, though those have not been consistently associated with reductions in pemphigus antibody levels. The researchers

#### From CARs to CAARs:

Adapting precision cures of B cell cancers for B cell-mediated autoimmune diseases



**"One of the appealing factors of working with pemphigus is that the autoantibodies are both necessary and sufficient to cause disease," she said. "I decided to use pemphigus as a model system to better understand how organ-specific autoimmunity occurs and how B cells develop autoreactivity to just this one protein. By figuring this out, we hope to develop better targeted therapies for disease as part of the trend toward precision medicines."**

Dr. Payne came to medicine through a love of basic science. She received her BS from Stanford University and her MD/PhD in molecular biology and cellular

biology from Washington University School of Medicine. She was drawn to dermatology because almost every type of cell is found in skin, allowing a researcher to use it as a model to study a broad range of scientific disciplines such as molecular biology, cancer, immunology, neuroscience, or development.

Dr. Payne used her background in dermatology and interest in autoimmunity, piqued during her residency, to explore the etiology of autoimmune skin disorders at the molecular level. She chose pemphigus because, unlike other autoimmune diseases in which the immune system goes awry more broadly (e.g., lupus), it is a focused immune attack on just one protein in the skin.

**A**nother experimental CAAR-T cell therapy developed in Dr. Payne's lab is directed at muscle-specific tyrosine kinase (MuSK) myasthenia gravis. MuSK-CAART underwent preclinical testing in an animal model (Oh et al. 2023) and is now in a phase 1 clinical trial at several sites around the country.

Other preclinical research is looking at PLA2R-CAART, which recognizes phospholipase A2 receptors (PLA2R)

on autoreactive B cells and is a potential treatment for membranous nephropathy. Dr. Payne is also exploring veterinary applications for CAAR-T cell therapy. Since dogs naturally get pemphigus and many other autoimmune diseases that afflict humans, she collaborates with Nicola Mason, PhD, at the University of Pennsylvania, to study dogs as a model to understand human autoimmune disease and cancer therapy.



*Dr. Payne (foreground) with her team of CUIMC dermatology residents.*

are now exploring preconditioning regimens to see if they will enhance the response to DSG3 CAAR-T cells.

“Our hope was that CAAR-T therapy would be as effective as anti-CD19 CAR-T therapy is for B-cell cancers, requiring a one-time infusion leading to durable remission. Even if we find that the therapy is safe, effective and leads to disease control without the risk of global immunosuppression, it would be a substantial improvement to the current standard of care, in which patients often receive maintenance infusions of rituximab every six months.”

This could also sidestep the downside of rituximab treatments, which can be associated with increased risk for infections, and also can prevent effective vaccine responses.

Another experimental CAAR-T cell therapy developed in Dr. Payne's lab is directed at muscle-specific tyrosine kinase (MuSK) myasthenia gravis. MuSK-CAART underwent preclinical testing in an animal model (Oh et al. 2023) and is now in a phase 1 clinical trial at several sites around the country.

“The MuSK-CAART treatment is of interest because we believe those patients may have up to ten-fold lower soluble antibody levels in circulation compared to

pemphigus vulgaris patients,” Payne said. “This makes it an interesting study to determine whether the soluble antibody levels and, more specifically, the reduction in those levels, plays a role in the effectiveness of the therapy.”

### The value of combining academia and entrepreneurship

After she published their proof-of-concept paper in 2016, Dr. Payne wondered how to advance that work to clinical trials. She knew the cost of the next steps—an investigational new drug (IND) application, clinical trials, regulatory approval, and GMP manufacturing—would far exceed typical financial support available through federal grants. Dr. Payne co-founded Cabaletta Bio to advance these promising cellular immunotherapies for autoimmunity to clinical trials. She has found that helping run a biotechnology company in the midst of her academic career has been a great education to learn how medicines in the US are developed and approved. Launching Cabaletta Bio was a way to gather the funds to support this translational work, while also providing the clinical and regulatory expertise to advance the science.

“When I was an MD/PhD student, someone said that nothing we would do in the laboratory would reach a patient in our lifetime because of the time it took to discover, develop, and clinically test a new therapy,” she said. That's no longer true. For tisagenlecleucel (Kymriah), only six years elapsed between the original case studies and FDA approval for the treatment of acute lymphoblastic leukemia. “It's been incredibly synergistic to be involved in both business and research. Entrepreneurship has sharpened the translational focus and rationale for the type of scientific questions we ask in the laboratory.”

Whether a young student is interested in academia or business, Dr. Payne believes investigative dermatology is

an ideal choice for a physician scientist. “There are so many possible career paths, whether in clinical care, education, research, government, or drug development. You’re only limited by your imagination and passion for pursuing that path. You can mix and match those to basically design your career of choice.”

### Crucial DF support

In 2006, Dr. Payne received a physician-scientist Career Development Award and basic research funding from the Foundation. She was also the recipient of a Stiefel Scholar Award in 2015, which recognizes exceptional mid-career researchers studying autoimmune and connective tissue

diseases and the treatment of skin cancers at the cellular and molecular level.

“My message to donors is, thank you for paying it forward. It’s a great investment in the future of our specialty and a way for dermatology to retain its place as a key contributor to the house of medicine.” “I’m incredibly grateful to the Foundation,” she said. “Both these awards occurred during critical times in my career. In 2006, the awards ensured continued research funding that allowed me to receive my tenure track faculty appointment. Similarly in 2015, the Stiefel Scholar Award bolstered my tenure application and led to the great honor of becoming a tenured faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania.

**"The Foundation has a unique niche in our specialty because it encourages physicians and others to give back to our specialty. The Research Award Program has helped so many outstanding young dermatologists and skin researchers, not only financially, but through the professional and scientific mentorship that it affords." She points to invitations to speak at research symposia and the DF's close relationship to SID that let young leaders make their mark in the field.**

*This article appeared in Dermatology Focus in June 2024.*

### Biography

**Aimee Payne, MD, PhD** is chair of the Department of Dermatology at Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons and dermatologist-in-chief at New York-Presbyterian. She has served as chair of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases Board of Scientific Counselors and is Co-founder and Co-chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of Cabaletta Bio, a publicly traded biotechnology company that focuses on engineering cellular immunotherapies for autoimmune diseases.

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**The Dermatology Foundation is essential to progress.** It provides funding to junior investigators doing skin research at a critical time in their careers when few options of support exist. Research dollars are typically used to generate preliminary data important for applying for NIH grants that are necessary for a successful research career in cutaneous research.

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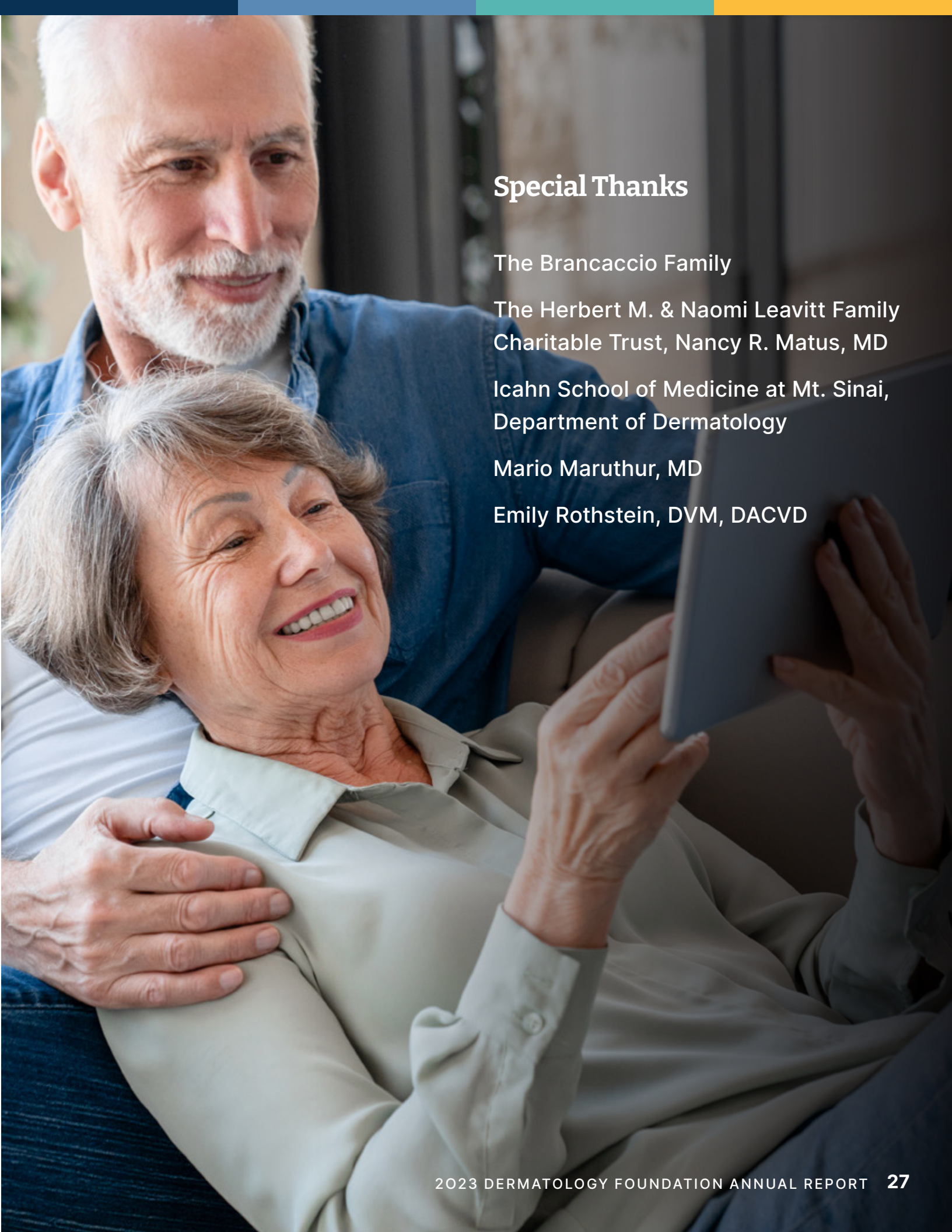
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Joel C. Sunshine, MD, PhD  
Sarah L. Taylor, MD, MPH  
Bruce H. Thiers, MD  
John A. Thompson, Jr., MD  
Oscar W. Thompson, III, MD  
Kenneth J. Tomecki, MD  
Matthew J. Turner, MD  
Georgia A. Tuttle, MD  
Darshan Vaidya, MD  
Tina C. Venetos, MD  
Mary G. Veremis-Ley, DO  
Kimberly D. Vincent, MD  
Dr. Joy Wan, MD, MSCE  
Lee E. Wheless, MD, PhD  
Vivian Wong, MD  
Dakara Rucker Wright, MD  
Cyndi Yag-Howard, MD  
Kara Young, MD



## Special Thanks

The Brancaccio Family

The Herbert M. & Naomi Leavitt Family  
Charitable Trust, Nancy R. Matus, MD

Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai,  
Department of Dermatology

Mario Maruthur, MD

Emily Rothstein, DVM, DACVD

# 2023 Corporate & Society Supporters

The Dermatology Foundation gratefully recognizes our corporate and specialty partners for their investment in the innovative investigative work launched by DF research awardees

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Dermatological Association  
Masters  
Dermatological Association  
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# Financials & Governance

# Financials

The Dermatology Foundation continues to focus on complete and accurate financial reporting in conformity with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles. Following are 2023 financial highlights of the Foundation as noted in the financial statements audited by the independent audit firm of Plante Moran.

## Statement of Financial Position

Year Ended December 31, 2023

### ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 1,093,465
Investments	54,014,630
Receivables - Net of Allowances:	
Accounts Receivable	93,367
Contributions Receivable - Individual	265,250
Contributions Receivable - Corporate and Society	300,000
Other Accounts Receivable	189,591
<b>Total Receivables - Net of Allowances</b>	<b>\$ 848,208</b>
Prepaid Expenses and Other Assets	321,044
Right-of-Use Operating Lease Assets	182,471
Investments Held for Deferred Compensation	192,450
Equipment and Software - Net	31,666
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 56,683,934</b>

### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

#### LIABILITIES:

Accounts Payable and Accrued Expenses	\$ 106,602
Accrued Payroll and Benefits	241,155
Deferred Revenue	266,745
Deferred Compensation	192,450
Lease Liabilities - Operating	186,171
Research Award Commitments	1,483,966
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 2,477,089</b>

#### NET ASSETS:

Net Assets without Donor Restrictions:	
Undesignated	7,400,394
Board Designated	44,657,562
<b>Total without Donor Restrictions</b>	<b>52,057,956</b>
With Donor Restrictions	2,148,889
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>54,206,845</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 56,683,934</b>

## Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

Year Ended December 31, 2023

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
<b>REVENUE, GAINS, AND OTHER SUPPORT</b>			
Contributions - Individual	\$ 1,100,734	\$ -	\$ 1,100,734
Contributions - Corporate and Society	597,350	350,000	\$ 947,350
Meeting Registration Revenue	203,294	-	203,294
Investment Income	7,132,382	-	7,132,382
Net Assets Released from Restrictions	575,500	(575,500)	-
<b>Total Revenue, (Losses), Gains, and Other Support</b>	<b>\$ 9,609,260</b>	<b>(225,500)</b>	<b>9,383,760</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Program Services	3,974,026	-	3,974,026
Support Services	1,649,147	-	1,649,147
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 5,623,173</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,623,173</b>
<b>INCREASE NET ASSETS</b>	3,986,087	(225,500)	3,760,587
<b>NET ASSETS:</b> Beginning of the Year	48,071,869	2,374,389	50,446,258
<b>NET ASSETS:</b> End of the Year	<b>\$ 52,057,956</b>	<b>\$ 2,148,889</b>	<b>\$ 54,206,845</b>

Note: The complete audited financial statements of the Dermatology Foundation for the year ended December 31, 2023 may be obtained by contacting the Foundation, 1560 Sherman Avenue, Suite 500, Evanston, IL 60201. The Dermatology Foundation is a 501(c)3 charitable organization. Contributions are deductible to the extent provided by law.

# Governance

## 2023 Board of Directors and Advisory Council

### Board of Directors

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Janet A. Fairley, MD

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Kishwer S. Nehal, MD

Ginette A. Okoye, MD

John T. Seykora, MD, PhD

Jonathan S. Weiss, MD

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Leslie Robinson-Bostom, MD

Dana L. Sachs, MD

Cory L. Simpson, MD, PhD

Valencia D. Thomas, MD

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Sewon Kang, MD, MPH

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#### Annenberg Circle Vice Chair

Kishwer S. Nehal, MD

#### Leaders Society Chair

Stuart R. Lessin, MD

#### Leaders Society Vice Chair

Renée J. Mathur, MD

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Yvonne E. Chiu, MD

Emily Y. Chu, MD, PhD

George Cotsarelis, MD

M. Laurin Council, MD

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James O. Ertle, MD

Janet A. Fairley, MD

Eric S. Fromer, MD

Sewon Kang, MD, MPH

Joseph C. Kvedar, MD

Megan Noe, MD, MPH

Ginette A. Okoye, MD

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Leslie Robinson-Bostom, MD

Dana L. Sachs, MD

John T. Seykora, MD, PhD

Cory L. Simpson, MD, PhD

Valencia D. Thomas, MD

Joy Wan, MD, MSCE

Jonathan S. Weiss, MD

Kim B. Yancey, MD

## 2023/24 Medical & Scientific Committee & Panel

### Medical & Scientific Committee

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Brian C. Capell, MD, PhD

Sean R. Christensen, MD, PhD

Annemieke de Jong, PhD

Shawn Demehri, MD, PhD

Sherrie J. Divito, MD, PhD

Thomas H. Leung, MD, PhD

Hailey B. Naik, MD

Richard C. Wang, MD, PhD

Peggy S. Myung, MD, PhD

### Clinical, Medical, Surgical & Dermatopathology Panel

#### Chair

Joslyn S. Kirby, MD, MEd, MS

Katrina Abuabara, MD

John A. Carucci, MD, PhD

Elena B. Hawryluk, MD, PhD

Teri Greiling, MD, PhD

Maija Kiuru, MD, PhD

Tiffany T. Mayo, MD

Philp O. Scumpia, MD, PhD

Dawn H. Siegel, MD



The impact of DF funding is profound. As a physician-scientist, I can say that not every specialty has this. It's a real boon to dermatology to be able to provide our pathway of physician-scientists with the support that allows them to keep making the choice to deepen our knowledge of skin disease. These basic observations are then translated into great tools—such as those we now have for psoriasis, atopic dermatitis, and other diseases.

**Tiffany C. Scharschmidt, MD**

Former DF Research Awardee

Professor, UCSF Department of Dermatology



*The Dermatology Foundation is a 501(c)3 charitable organization.  
Contributions are deductible to the extent provided by law.*