

**Fifth International DTRF  
Desmoid Tumor Research Workshop  
September 23, 2018**  
*(revised 5.17.18)*

**Participant Profiles**



**Benjamin Alman, MD, Professor & Chair, Orthopaedic Surgery, Duke University Health System**

Dr. Alman is an orthopaedic clinician-scientist, whose research focuses on understanding role of developmentally important processes in pathologic and reparative process involving the musculoskeletal system. The long-term goal of his work is to use this knowledge to identify improved therapeutic approaches to orthopaedic disorders. He makes extensive use of genetically modified mice to model human disease, and has used this approach to identify new drug therapies for musculoskeletal tumors and to improve the repair process in cartilage, skin, and bone. He also works on cellular heterogeneity in sarcomas, and has identified a subpopulation of tumor initiating cells in musculoskeletal tumors. In this work, he also has identified specific cell populations that are responsible for joint and bone development. He has been recently recruited from the University of Toronto to Duke University to chair the department of orthopaedics, which was established in 2010, and includes a large musculoskeletal research component. He has half his time protected for his research work. Dr. Alman is the Principal Investigator in the DTRF-funded collaborative project, "Collaboration for a Cure: Identifying new therapeutic targets for desmoid tumors." Profile [here](#).



**Mushriq Al-Jazrawe, HBSc, PhD Candidate, Laboratory Medicine & Pathobiology, University of Toronto**

Mushriq received his bachelor of science at the University of Toronto in Genes, Genetics, and Biotechnology. He is currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Laboratory Medicine & Pathobiology, University of Toronto in Dr. Benjamin Alman lab, studying the role of platelet-derived growth factor signaling and microRNAs in desmoid tumors.



**Steven Attia, DO, Assistant Professor of Oncology, Mayo Clinic**

Dr. Steven Attia is a medical oncologist at Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida. He is fellowship trained at the University of Wisconsin. His sole clinical and research focus is patients with desmoid tumor, sarcomas of soft tissue and bone including gastrointestinal stromal tumor (GIST), as well as chordoma, epithelioid hemangioendothelioma (EHE) and other locally aggressive or malignant tumors of soft tissue and bone. He is the research chair for the Mayo Clinic Sarcoma Disease Oriented Group. Aside from clinical trials and patient care, Dr. Attia has an interest in optimizing the way patients with rare tumors are discussed. He chairs a first-in-kind, CME accredited, weekly international sarcoma tumor board which he founded in 2010 that connects 10 sarcoma centers in the United States and Europe by videoconference to review challenging cases seen at these centers. Profile [here](#).



**Eldad Elnekave, MD, Director of Interventional Oncology Clinic, Rabin Medical Center**

Dr. Eldad Elnekave, MD serves as the director of the Clinic for Interventional Oncology at the Davidoff Cancer Institute, Rabin Medical Center, Israel. He obtained his medical degree from Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts and spent two years as a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Research Scholar at the National Institutes of Health in 2003-2005. Dr. Elnekave completed radiology training at Albert Einstein Medical Center and trained in Vascular and Interventional Radiology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center. His clinical and research focus is on the combination of anatomical and molecular targeting to treat disease in the most precise and minimally invasive method possible. His primary clinical focus is treatment of mesenchymal tumors and sarcoma. Dr. Elnekave also serves as the founding Chief Medical Officer of Zebra Medical Vision, LTD.

**Michael A. Freitas, PhD, Associate Professor, Director of CCC Proteomics Shared Resource, Department of Cancer Biology and Genetics, The Ohio State University**



**Mrinal Gounder, MD, Assistant Professor and Medical Oncologist, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center**

Dr. Gounder is a DTRF grant recipient and is the Foundation's Scientific Director. He is an Assistant Professor and medical oncologist at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center specializing in the care of patients with sarcomas of soft tissue and bone and in developing new drugs in all cancers. He has a special clinical and research interest in desmoid tumors and recently showed for the first time that sorafenib is an active drug in desmoid tumors. Dr. Gounder is the Principal Investigator in a trial partially funded by DTRF studying Nexavar/ Sorafenib in desmoid tumors. Profile [here](#).



**Peter Hohenberger, MD, PhD, Professor of Surgical Oncology, Mannheim University Medical Center, University of Heidelberg**

Peter Hohenberger, MD, is Head of the Division of Surgical Oncology and Thoracic Surgery at the Medical Faculty Mannheim, University of Heidelberg. He is a boarded surgeon in visceral and vascular surgery as well as in thoracic surgery and surgical intensive care. He got his professional education at the University of Erlangen and, was trained in psychology and pathology. His surgical qualifications were received at the University of Heidelberg. He held senior positions at the Department of Surgery, University of Heidelberg as well as at Charité, Berlin. He is a surgical oncologist now specialized in the treatment of GIST and soft tissue tumors and is the Past-Chairman of the EORTC Soft Tissue and Bone Sarcoma Group. He is a collaborator to EORTC organisation (GI, melanoma and STBSG) since the 1980s and has been member of the Protocol Review Committee as well as to the Board of EORTC for nine years each. His center has participated in major multinational randomized studies on the treatment of GIST and sarcoma. Trial activities also include the EU-funded EUROSARC and CONTICANET consortia. MITIGATE is a most recently started research network pursuing the treatment of imatinib-resistant GIST. He served on the faculty of the AACR/ASCO/FECS course on Methods of Clinical Cancer Research for seven years and is also member to the advisory board of SPAEN (Sarcoma Patients Euronet), Das LEBENSHAUS and was one of the initiators of SOS-DESMOID. In addition, the Mannheim center hosts the German Interdisciplinary Sarcoma Group (GISG). Profile [here](#).

**O. Hans Iwenofu, MD, FCAP, Associate Professor, Divisions of Head & Neck Pathology and Soft Tissue & Bone Pathology, Department of Pathology, The Ohio State University**

O. Hans Iwenofu, MD is an Associate Professor-Clinical in the Anatomic Pathology Branch and a faculty member of the Division of Bone and Soft Tissue. Dr. Iwenofu earned his M.B., B.S. at the College of Medicine, University of Nigeria in Enugu, Nigeria. He completed his residency in Anatomic and Clinical Pathology at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in Oklahoma City. Dr. Iwenofu then went on to complete a fellowship in Oncologic Surgical Pathology at Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, New York followed by a fellowship in Soft Tissue/Bone Pathology at the University of Pennsylvania Health System in Philadelphia.



**Robert Lefkowitz, MD, Attending Physician, Radiology, Weill Cornell Medical College/Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center**

Dr. Lefkowitz is a radiologist specializing in abdominal and musculoskeletal imaging and he has a particular interest in imaging of soft tissue tumors. Currently, he is involved in several prospective and retrospective research projects evaluating the treatment response of desmoid tumors to medical therapy and the associated changes seen on MRI. Profile [here](#).



**Kelly Mercier, PhD, Adjunct associate, Duke University**

Dr. Kelly Mercier is a research scientist in the Systems and Translational Sciences Center at the non-profit institute, RTI International, and conducts research in the NIH Eastern Regional Metabolomics Research Center (RCMRC). Since joining RTI, Dr. Mercier has used metabolomics in several collaborations with basic researchers and clinicians aimed at determining biomarkers and gaining insights into mechanisms of disease. Dr. Mercier has on-going collaborations in neonatal kidney injury, immune system development and allergies, and Barth Syndrome, a rare disease characterized by genetic condition as mutation of the tafazzin gene. Dr. Mercier received a Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of Nebraska Lincoln in the area of analytical biochemistry and completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences. Her son has suffered from desmoid tumors and she is personally invested in finding a cure.



**Yoshihiro Nishida, MD, PhD, Chairman, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Nagoya University Graduate School of Medicine**

Dr. Yoshihiro Nishida is Associate Professor, Chairman, Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, Nagoya University Graduate School and School of Medicine. He has published more than 100 articles on Orthopaedic Oncology and basic research area. His present specialty is surgical and conservative treatment for patients with bone and soft tissue tumors, and doing translational and clinical research. He graduated from Nagoya University School of Medicine, Japan, in 1988. He was selected as a traveling fellow of Japanese Orthopaedic Association—American Orthopaedic association in 2005. He has been a PI of "Study for understanding of current status and established of treatment guideline for patients with extra-peritoneal desmoid tumors" which is selected by Health, Labour, and Welfare Ministry of Japan.



**Raphael Pollock, MD, PhD, FACS, Professor and Director, Division of Surgical Oncology, Surgeon in Chief, James Comprehensive Cancer Center, The Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center**

Dr. Raphael Pollock is Professor and Director of the Division of Surgical Oncology at the Ohio State University Wexner Medical Center, and holds the Kathleen Wellenreiter Klotz Chair in Cancer Research. He also serves as Surgeon in Chief for the James Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Ohio State University Health System. Dr. Pollock's work focuses on soft tissue sarcoma. His laboratory research activities are examining multiple facets of the molecular drivers underlying soft tissue sarcoma inception focus on soft tissue sarcoma, a rare cancer in adults but rather prevalent in children. He has published widely on sarcoma surgery and treatment, and his funded research includes sarcoma molecular biology and the development of novel therapeutics for this group of diseases. His laboratory work involves the discovery of oncogenes and tumor suppressor genes in soft tissue sarcoma. He is principal investigator of an \$11.5 million National Cancer Institute (NCI) grant to support collaborative sarcoma translational research. The NCI Specialized Programs of Research Excellence (SPORE) grant, awarded to the Sarcoma Alliance for Research for Collaboration, represents the largest award ever to study sarcoma. Profile [here](#).



**Denise Reinke, MS, NP, MBA, President & CEO, SARC**

Denise has been the President and CEO of SARC since 2002. Denise was a Nurse Practitioner for over 30 years, mostly caring for people with cancer in a variety of settings. She received her diploma in nursing from Milwaukee County School of Nursing and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Alverno College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She went on to get her Master of Science from University of Michigan where she graduated with honors. Denise also earned her Master of Business Administration from University of Michigan, Ross School of Business. She has also served as the administrative director of Southwest Oncology Group (SWOG) and is a member of ASCO (American Society of Clinical Oncology), the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, and CTOS (Connective Tissue Oncology Society). Denise has coauthored numerous publications and been a frequent guest lecturer at major conferences across the country providing information and updates on sarcoma diagnosis and treatment.

**Daniel Rushing, MD, Medical Oncology, Indiana University.**



**Kris Vleminckx, PhD, Professor of Developmental Biology, Ghent University**

Dr. Kris Vleminckx is a cell and developmental biologist at Ghent University in Belgium. He was trained as a cancer cell biologist documenting for the first time the invasion suppressor activities of the cell adhesion molecule E-cadherin. He went for a first post-doc to the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York where he initially studied the developmental role of cadherin complexes during early vertebrate development (using the model organism *Xenopus*) in the laboratory of Dr. Barry Gumbiner, who around that time was one of the first groups to show that beta-catenin, a protein associated with cadherins, had a parallel function in the Wnt signaling pathway. Kris Vleminckx studied the role of the tumor suppressor gene APC in *Xenopus* development and has ever since focused on investigating the Wnt pathway, primarily in early development. After a second post-doc at the Max-Planck Institute in Freiburg, Germany, he returned to Ghent in 2000 to start up his research group. He is also associated with the Center of Medical Genetics at the Ghent University Hospital. When the novel revolutionary techniques for genome editing using TALEN and CRISPR/Cas9 emerged, he realized that this created unique opportunities for modeling human disease in the model organism *Xenopus tropicalis* and he generated the first genetic cancer model in this organism by mutating the APC tumor suppressor gene, hence

mimicking the Familial Adenomatous Polyposis cancer syndrome. Since then, modeling human cancer, including desmoid tumors, is the major focus of his research group.



**Aaron Weiss, DO, Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, Maine Medical Center**

Dr. Weiss graduated from the University of Rochester in 1994 and subsequently earned his medical degree from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in 1999. He completed a pediatric emphasis internship at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine/Albert Einstein Medical Center in 2000 followed by a pediatric residency at the AI duPont Hospital for Children in Wilmington, DE in 2003. He then went on to complete a pediatric hematology-oncology fellowship at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, TN in 2006. He subsequently spent six years as an attending pediatric hematologist-oncologist at the Cancer Institute of New Jersey/University of Medicine and

Dentistry of New Jersey and Jersey Shore University Medical Center. In 2012, Dr. Weiss joined the Maine Children's Cancer Program at Maine Medical Center in Portland, ME. Dr. Weiss has particular interest in pediatric sarcomas. He has co-authored a number of publications on this subject and is currently involved in conducting pediatric clinical trials both locally and nationally in the fields of desmoid tumor and non-rhabdomyosarcoma soft tissue sarcoma. He is the Principal Investigator of the DTFR-funded project: Deregulated mTOR in Desmoid-type Fibromatosis: Identification and Validation of a New Therapeutic Target.



**Gerlinde Wernig, MD, Assistant Professor, Department of Pathology, Stanford University School of Medicine**

Dr. Gerlinde Wernig is an Assistant Professor of Pathology at Stanford University Medical Center. After receiving her residency training in internal medicine (Germany) and pathology (US) specializing in hematology/oncology and hematopathology, she sought postdoctoral training in leukemia research and joined Gary Gilliland's lab where she was involved in the discovery of the now famous JAKV617F mutation. She then joined Irv Weissman's laboratory for her second postdoc and also started her

pathology residency training at Stanford University. Now, Dr. Wernig has her own lab which focuses on understanding the pathomechanisms of end stage organ fibrosis with the ultimate goal to help identify new targets for effective therapies. They have found that the transcription factor c-JUN is specifically activated in human idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and many other human fibrotic diseases and that induction of c-Jun in mice mimics the pathological hallmarks of these diseases.