# ASINEWS

MARCH 2023

SYSTEMS IMMUNOTHERAPY HACKATHON **PAGE 3**  CLINICAL TRANSLATION SCHOOL **PAGE 5** 

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In the spirit of reconciliation, ASI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders; past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today Whaiwhia te kete mātauranga (Fill the basket of knowledge)

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Australian and New Zealand SOCIETY FOR IMMUNOLOGY INC.

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### THE INAUGURAL SYSTEMS IMMUNOLOGY GRAND CHALLENGE HACKATHON

### 13-14 September 2022, Gold Coast, QLD

Shalin Naik, The Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research Thomas Ashhurst, Centenary Institute and University of Sydney Fabio Luciani, Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales In some ways, Immunologists were into single cells before they were cool! From 1, to 2, to 3, to 12, then 50-parameter FACS, we really were the pioneers of multiplexed single cell analyses. But then came along single cell RNA-seq and blew us out the water. Many of us were not willing to invest to learn to code nor collaborate with bioinformaticians jump on this new wave of analyses. And, likely, we were slightly uncomfortable with gene expression alone compared to protein-based FACS.

This latter point is especially salient considering what we know as immunologists about the discrepancy between gene and protein expression of our favourite molecules – take how little CD4 and CD8 mRNA can be detected in naïve T cells, or how we know MHC class II levels can be screaming high on activated DCs with no mRNA expression (Thanks, Jose Villadangos).

But along came the ability to ALSO detect protein expression in addition to single cell RNA-seq using such technologies as CITE-seq, Ab-seq and TOTAL-seq. Instead of conjugating an antibody to a fluorochrome, now one can conjugate it to an oligo. This oligo has both a unique barcode that identifies which antibody you're measuring, and a capture sequence for it to fuse with the single cell RNA-seq beads. And, because the readout is sequencing-based, not fluorochrome based with all the vagaries of compensation, we can kiss goodbye to compensation and a limit to the number of channels that can be used.

### Hello unlimited-parameter FACS + RNA-seq!!

Great, so why hasn't this taken off in the immunology community? For sure many labs are incorporating this into their workflow. And Biolegend and BD now sell kits with dozens or hundreds of pooled monoclonals each with a unique barcode that can be used on single cell platforms. But we believed one of the major limitations was the lack of people with the relevant skills being stuck in a room together to ask the big questions. So, we thought, why not pair our world class immunology with our world class genomics communities (who are not necessarily the best of bedfellows).

What was born was a Hackathon where the ASI Quantitative Immunology Special Interest Group teamed up with Oz Single Cell and the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, and hosted at Griffith University Gold Coast just prior to the Oz Single Cell Meeting in 2022: a real multi-omic collaboration!

In the end, our participant list was roughly 50:50 those who primarily identify as an immunologist vs computational biologist, and included 27 male, 14 female and 1 non-binary participants.

We provided several multi-omics datasets that contain both RNA-seq and protein information (for between 64 to 197 markers per cell!!) from the literature



including human PBMCs and mouse BM. In the preceding weeks, through a community-based consultation, we selected 3 grand challenges to be tackled:

- Minimal marker selection: of the 197 antibodies in the multiomics dataset, what are the best 12-15 markers that we should be using by FACS to best capture the full heterogeneity of immune cells?
- Cell-cell interaction prediction: how can we leverage databases of proteinprotein interaction to predict which immune cells might interact?
- Gene expression prediction based on FACS alone: can we use (expensive!) multiomics reference datasets to infer which genes are being expressed by cell types that we assess only by (cheap!) FACS.

When the day finally came, we had 50 participants from all across Australia, spanning pure wet lab immunologists, to pure dry lab computational biologists, and all versions of 'soggy' computational immunologists in between. Everyone was initially sheepish, feeling like they didn't belong and had no great knowledge or insight of multi-omics data integration to make any difference. But that was the beauty. There was no ego, no preconceived notions, just a desire to be part of a team to do something special. And boy-o-boy was it special.

We've never seen such energy in a room. The excitement, the possibilities, the realisation that there were no dumb questions and plenty of willing experts whom we could ask those dumb questions, the ability to explore crazy ideas, and just sink one's teeth into something very cool and relevant made this an experience to remember. We ordered pizza, sushi and drinks, and people stayed up until 11 pm on Day 1 (of 2 days) hashing out solutions, and coming





up with new sub-challenges to solve!!

So what can we show for it? Well, a lot of new collaborations, new ways of thinking around single cell multi-omics, and some papers in the works! Watch this space, because several groups, all of whom had met each other for the very first time there, are working up studies that we are likely to see out soon. Will we do it all again? Yes, that's the hope. This year's Oz Single Cell theme is 'clonal biology' where we hope to leverage information about clones either through TCR, BCR, cell barcodes or natural barcodes to ask: What can we learn about cells with a common clonal origin? How can we reconstruct pedigrees? How intrinsic is functional behaviour and fate? And how can we identify predictors of fate?

Finally, thanks must go all participants who brought their passion, openmindedness and collegiality, and, without whom, would not have been the roaring success it was! Also to our team on the ground: Mehrdad Pazhouhandeh, Jialei (Raymond) Gong, Hongjian (Nick) Sun and Yang Yang, to our host Prof Jing Sun and Griffith University, and finally our funders ASI, Oz Single Cell and Chan Zuckerberg Initiative.

Shalin Naik, Thomas Ashhurst, Fabio Luciani as part of the ASI "Systems Immunology: Technology, Quantification and Application" SIG led by Di Yu and Mark

Chong. **\*** 



ASI CLINICAL TRANSLATION SCHOOL CONNECT | COLLABORATE | INNOVATE

16-18 SEPT 2022

In 2022, after a two year hiatus due to COVID interruptions, we launched the first ASI Clinical Translation School (CTS) which was held at the scenic O'Reilly's Rainforest Retreat in the Gold Coast hinterland from 16-18 September.

Bridging the gap between basic and clinical research is essential and demands a closer alliance between clinicians, clinician researchers and basic researchers – factors driving the development of this new program. The objective was to provide high quality teaching for advanced trainees in the clinical translational space and to bridge the gap in identifying necessary solutions for clinical problems.

Seminars were delivered on delivered by leading national and international faculty (mentors)

in cutting-edge immunology and related areas such as clinical medicine, vaccines, genomics, disease systems biology and medical sciences. This provided clinicians with an intensive micro-update on the latest clinical immunology and a mechanism for basic scientists to connect with clinical peers, as well as to discuss the challenges of balancing the clinician researcher career pathway.

An amazing faculty led the way in mentoring mentees and illuminating the pathway of the conventional and non-conventional clinician researcher pathways utilizing their creative skills to highlight how thinking differently about a problem is pivotal for solutions (thanks Miles for introducing us to the Davenport Scientists-onthe-Spectrum Index or DSS). Professors Rachel Thomson. Glenn Marshall and James McCarthy highlighted the serendipitous and strategic

decisions that provided footholds for successful clinician researcher career development; while Professors Melissa Davis, Tri Phan and Associate Professor Joanne Reed highlighted the new technologies and informatics approaches that will shape future discoveries which will be pivotal for discovering

Here are what mentees said about their experience with the inaugural ASI CTS.

"The diversity of participants was a great benefit not only in terms of learning more about recent developments of various areas of immunology, but also in terms of gaining inspiration of individual career paths, whether of more established experts of the field or early career colleagues."

"I especially like the scale of CTS, which provides a great opportunity and a relaxed environment to communicate with other participants, including mentors."

"It was a small cohort I was able to interact with mostly everyone at the conference which can't happen in large conference settings"

"I was pleasantly surprised at how relevant but also eye opening it was to hear all the different aspects of immunology research from basic science right up to the clinic."

"This was one of the most enjoyable meetings that I have been to in a while and it was wonderful to experience the full spectrum of topics that immunology has to offer on the interface between patient care and research."



From mentees doing basic research, "I was particularly naive in the processes involved in clinical trials so hearing the many different experiences from lab leaders, doctors and even a industry representative was very informative."

From mentees primarily working in the clinic, "As a junior clinician who previously did pre-clinical work as a research assistant, it was a good way for me to keep up to date with different research areas in the field of immunology, make connections and be inspired by the incredible work of PhD and post-doc researchers. It was also great to be able to meet senior clinician-scientists in the field. as there are very few clinicianscientists that I work with directly in the hospital system, making it hard to imagine what my future career will look like."

We especially thank all the mentors for their contributions: Professor Rachel Thomson, Professor Miles Davenport, Professor Kate Seib, Professor Di Yu, Professor James McCarthy, Associate Professor Deborah Strickland, Professor Tri Phan, Professor Melissa Davis, Professor Jing Sun, Dr Seyhan Yazar, Associate Professor Joost Lesterhuis, Professor Robert Weinkove, Dr Adam Wheatley, Dr Siok Tey, Associate Professor Lutz Krause, Associate Professor Joanne Reed, Professor Glen Marshall.

We are grateful to the generous support of our sponsors: Platinum: GSK and CSL; Gold: Milteni Biotec; Silver: University of Queensland, Translational Research Institute, QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, WEHI, Microba, VectorBuilder, Australian Biosearch-Biolegend; Bronze: Qiagen, StemCell Technologies, ELITech Group and Decode Science. This allowed the presentation of multiple sponsor named presentation and travel awards to mentees at the conclusion of the meeting.

Organisation is already underway for future meetings which will be held in September 2024, and a joint clinical translation educational workshop with the Federation of Immunological Societies of Asia-Oceania (FIMSA) in 2026 where we look forward to welcoming both national and international mentees.



Mentees who received presentation awards: Julia Marshall, Imogen Andrews, Milla McLean, Pavitha Parathan, Ashley Firth, Cynthia Turnbull

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Mentees who received travel awards: Shalini Guleria, Marina Yakou, Yan Zhang, Pavitha Parathan, Cynthia Turnbull, Adrian Lee, Gergely Toldi

#### Article written by:

Gabrielle Belz, Frazer Institute, University of Queenslan Di Yu, Frazer Institute, University of Queensland Fernando Guimaraes, Frazer Institute, University of Queensland \*

# Vale Allan Cripps



#### In memory of Allan William Cripps AO (1950 – 2022)

Professor Allan Cripps AO, an internationally recognised expert in the field of mucosal immunology and a leading public health administrator, passed away aged 72 on 20 December 2022. Allan is celebrated for his leadership of the ASI's Special Interest Group for Mucosal Immunology, as the founding editor of the Journal Pneumonia, and for the development of one of Australia's largest University health and medical teaching and research programs.

Allan grew up on a farm in remote New South Wales and would complete his PhD in immunology at the University of Sydney, focusing on defining aspects of the host-parasite relationship at mucosal surfaces and the mechanisms by which antibody is delivered to mucosal sites. These studies provided evidence to support the hypothesis of a common mucosal immune system and his discoveries formed the basis of our understanding of IgA secretion to surfaces of the body.

After completing a post-doctoral fellowship in Sweden, Allan returned to Australia in 1976 to lead diagnostic immunology services, initially at Flinders Medical Centre in Adelaide and then at the Hunter Area Pathology Service in Newcastle, during the period of establishment of the Medical Faculty at the University of Newcastle. He continued his research in mucosal immunology focusing on bacterial infections in children. From 1979 to 1985, he led the most comprehensive longitudinal study ever conducted on the development of mucosal immunity in infants and children. This research informed the future development of mucosal vaccines to prevent childhood respiratory infections and played a pivotal role in understanding the role of respiratory infections in sudden infant death syndrome.

Allan held the several positions at the University of Canberra between 1992-2003 including Dean of the Faculty of Applied Sciences and Pro-Vice Chancellor of Research and International. In 2003, Allan was appointed the inaugural Pro Vice Chancellor (PVC) Health that established the Griffith University School of Medicine for the Gold Coast. During his tenure as PVC, Allan led the Mucosal Immunology Research Group that continued his work on mucosal immunity, vaccine development and diagnostic technology. Allan published over 400 papers and mentored 27 doctoral candidates. On retiring, Allan was made Emeritus Professor at Griffith University.

Allan founded the Australian and New Zealand Society for Immunology's Special Interest Group for Mucosal Immunology (MI-SIG) and served as its Chair for 15 years. To this day, the MI-SIG provides a forum for mucosal immunologists and colleagues with associated interests to meet via workshops, online seminars and symposia, to share and progress their research work and collaborations, and has supported new researchers in the field of mucosal immunology. In 2015, Professor Cripps was awarded the Order of Australia for distinguished service to tertiary education as a senior administrator and to public health as a leading immunologist, academic and researcher in the area of mucosal immunology.

For those that worked with Allan and were lucky to call him a friend, we celebrate a man of great warmth, kindness and compassion, insight of character and wit, and who was an inspiration to all around him. Many of us were privileged to share meals at his home while he opened the treasures of his wine cellar. He will be remembered with great respect and fondness.

Allan is survived by his wife Diana and their two children, Zach and Sophie, without whose support and love his achievements would not have been possible, and three children from his first marriage, Nathan, Dane and Natasha.

> ASI Mucosal Immunology SIG and Nic West \*

# ASI Breakthrough Immunology Award

### **CLAIRE JESSUP** Flinders University

#### I am Head of the

Immunomodulation Laboratory at Flinders University, where I also teach into the Bachelor of Medical Sciences degree as Senior Lecturer. I am a midcareer T cell immunology researcher re-establishing an independent research program following multiple career breaks. My research vision is to unlock the power of the immune system to prevent, treat or reduce impact of human disease. Personally, I am currently in cancer remission due to immune checkpoint inhibitors. This has strengthened my resolve to return to research, and my determination to utilise checkpoint molecules to prevent disease and improve health outcomes.

My interest in Transplantation Immunology was sparked by my fantastic PhD supervisor and life-long mentor Prof Keryn Williams in 2000 during our research into corneal allotransplantation. Following a postdoc in T cell molecular immunology in Oxford on a NHMRC CJ Martin fellowship, I returned to Adelaide in 2008 to continue my research into transplantation and Type 1 diabetes. I was fortunate to work with some superb collaborators and friends, including Prof Claudine Bonder, Prof Damien Keating and Prof Toby Coates, who supported me as an Early Career Researcher to establish my group at Flinders and obtain independent funding. My building research momentum came to a screaming halt in 2016 with a devastating cancer diagnosis.

In 2021, following 5 grueling years of treatment and a remarkable remission, I began to return to research. I've been working with a past colleague and super antibody engineer from Oxford, Dr Ricardo Fernandes, to modulate PD1 signalling during T cell responses. We can augment PD1 signalling to dampen T cell activity and will be applying this in models of Type 1 diabetes.

The ASI Breakthrough Award will support the application of our approach to allotransplant rejection. Funds are supporting



a wonderful Research Officer, Clare Mee, in the lab – with my ongoing reduced work capacity she is vital to ensure progress at the bench. It will also help with purchase of equipment and software to continue the reestablishment of a functional lab along with consumables (to examine PD1 signalling in vitro) and purchase of mice for our islet allotransplant rejection model. Importantly, the award will fund consumer interaction with transplant recipient support groups to inform future project design and grant applications.

I am extremely thankful for the Breakthrough Immunology Award from ASI at this tenuous stage in my career. Support of this project has ensured ongoing interactions with my fabulous collaborators including Prof Helen Thomas and A/Prof Stuart Mannering (St Vincent's Institute). I was honoured to be presented with the Award by outgoing President, Prof Stephen Turner at the recent ASI Annual conference in Melbourne. I feel so lucky to be supported by such a wonderful, engaging research society.

Please follow me: @betacellgirl on twitter or @betacellgirl@mastodon.au or email

Claire.jessup@flinders.edu.au if you are interested in a PhD in the lab. \*





### AMBER PILLAR

The University of Newcastle and Hunter Medical Research Institute



I am very grateful to be a recipient of the ASI Career Development Award, I am a PhD candidate in Immunology and Microbiology at The University of Newcastle (UoN) and Hunter Medical Research Institute, Australia. I began my scientific career by enrolling in a Bachelor of Biomedical Science degree at UoN in 2017. Throughout my undergraduate and Honours (Class I) Degrees, I developed a passion for, and became heavily involved in, respiratory research. I undertook a PhD, in A/Prof Jay Horvat's lab, where I am building on these undergraduate research projects, investigating iron

metabolism in the context of chronic respiratory diseases. During a third-year undergraduate research project we first identified a crucial role for increased iron accumulation in cells and tissues in the airways, in the pathogenesis and severity of asthma and pulmonary fibrosis. These findings were published in the European Respiratory Journal and Journal of Pathology in 2020. I have subsequently shown that the expression of transferrin receptor 1 on macrophages plays a critical role in the pathogenesis of key features of asthma. This manuscript is in preparation for submission to the European Respiratory Journal as a follow-up to these papers. My Honours degree additionally found that low iron dietinduced systemic iron reduction during pregnancy declines lung function of offspring, which was published in Nutrients in 2021.

My PhD builds on these findings, with a focus on gaining a complete understanding of the interplay between type 2 immune responses and iron metabolism in different cell types in the respiratory mucosa and how these responses affect the pathogenesis and severity of asthma, in the presence and absence of bacterial and viral infections (non-typable haemophilus influenzae and Influenza-A). My PhD also investigates how iron metabolism affects these infection-induced disease outcomes

The ASI Career Advancement Award facilitated my attendance at the highly reputable European Respiratory Society Congress this year, in Barcelona, Spain, where I was able to present my unpublished work that demonstrates, for the first time, how immune responses in the asthmatic lung modify iron metabolism in mucosal cells and how this modified iron metabolism plays a crucial role in the immunopathogenesis of asthma. Being able to attend this congress rectified the shortcoming of having limited opportunity to present my findings face to face, after starting my PhD during the COVID pandemic. Additionally, it introduced me to and accelerated conversations around my research with international scientists and health professionals within this field and fostered scientific collaboration during this critical period of my career. **\*** 



### CALVIN XU

Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity

My name is Calvin Xu, and I am a final year PhD student in Professor Dale Godfrey's lab at the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity at the University of Melbourne. I completed a Bachelor of Biomedicine at the University of Melbourne, majoring in Immunology, before rounding off my degree with an Honours year with the Godfrey lab in 2018. Developing a passion for research during my Honours, I stayed on in the Godfrey lab to start a PhD in 2019.

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abundant and have potent yet diverse effector functions. In addition, these cells play an important role in the immune response in a wide range of contexts, including infection, cancer, autoimmunity, and tissue repair. Though MAIT, NKT, and gamma-delta T cells pose as attractive targets in novel immunotherapies, one barrier to this is that their frequencies vary widely between individuals. For example, MAIT cells can represent anywhere between 0.1% to 10% of T cells in our blood. Consequently, there is a good chance that everyone who reads this will all have different MAIT cell levels! Thus, understanding what controls the development, homeostasis, and function of unconventional T cells will be paramount to their manipulation in the immune response. I am very grateful to be awarded the ASI Career Advancement Award and I really appreciate

Throughout my PhD, I have investigated factors that control

T cells. These cells, which

delta T cells, are collectively

the development, homeostasis,

and function of unconventional

include MAIT, NKT, and gamma-

Award and I really appreciate the continual support ASI provides to researchers and graduate research students. As a final year PhD student, I am actively seeking opportunities to present my research to and engage with the wider scientific community. The ASI Career Advancement Award will be



used to support my travel to the American Association of Immunologists (AAI) Annual Meeting in May 2023. After about two (long) years of virtual conferences, I am looking forward to attending one of the biggest and renowned immunology conferences inperson. I am not only keen to present some of the work done in my PhD but to also learn from the research of others beyond my immediate field. In addition, the AAI Annual Meeting will also be a good opportunity to network with immunologists across different career stages and attend lectures by worldleading scientists. This award will strongly underpin my development as a young researcher, and I would like to thank ASI for their generosity and support. \*

CONTENTS



### **KEVIN JOHN SELVA**

University of Melbourne Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunology,

I am Kevin, an Early Career Researcher with A/Prof. Amy Chung's laboratory in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity, University of Melbourne. I am grateful to have received the ASI Career Advancement Award to share and develop my ongoing research focused on local mucosal responses against respiratory viral infections.

My research career began in 2012 at A\*Star and Singapore Eye Research Institute under the guidance of Dr Nobuyo Yawata profiling innate immune responses present at the ocular surface (NK cells. monocytes) during epidemic keratoconjunctivitis – a highly contagious viral infection of the eye caused by adenoviruses. In 2015, I travelled to Melbourne, Australia to begin a PhD with Prof. Stephen Kent focused on understanding how seminal plasma plays an active role in modulating a range of immune responses (NK cells, monocytes, neutrophils, T cells) during the sexual transmission of HIV. On completing my PhD in 2019, I moved to A/Prof. Amy Chung's laboratory to begin my PostDoc career. Here, I broadened my expertise and investigated the impact of mucosal humoral responses during acute respiratory infections (influenza and tuberculosis).

In 2020, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic allowed me to directly apply my specialization of mucosal infections towards understanding local immune responses against the novel SARS-CoV-2. Through active collaborations with Dr Shidan Tosif and Dr Melanie Neeland (Murdoch Children's Research Institute; MCRI), as well as internal collaborations within the Doherty Institute with Prof. Katherine Kedzierska and Prof. Stephen Kent, we were the first to publish that children developed guicker and more robust immune responses against SARS-CoV-2 infections, allowing them to remain mildly symptomatic or even asymptomatic despite being close contacts. We were also the first to highlight that repeated prior exposures to circulating human coronaviruses left "immunological imprints" especially among the elderly, and this hindered them from mounting quick and efficient

humoral responses against the novel SARS-CoV-2.

Late 2020, I also had the opportunity to be a part of the multi-institute collaboration working together on the COVID-19 vaccine developed at the University of Queensland, which unfortunately was halted during development. With COVID-19 vaccine rollouts in 2021, I shifted my focus towards investigating if intramuscular COVID-19 vaccinations were efficient in inducing good mucosal immunity. Sadly, while intramuscular COVID-19 vaccinations are efficient in inducing good systemic antibodies (blood), they are poorer in inducing good mucosal antibodies (tears, saliva) The surge in breakthrough infections throughout the Omicron variant waves of 2022 also raised the opportunity to understand how COVID-19 vaccination-induced preexisting immunity shapes the magnitude and kinetics of mucosal antibody responses induced during acute SARS-CoV-2 breakthrough infections.

The ASI Career Advancement Award allowed me to travel to Los Angeles, United States to attend the 7-day Gordon Research Seminar and Conference, on the Biology of Acute Respiratory Infection. This unique scientific meeting brings together clinicians, virologists, immunologists, and industrial partners for a week of well-rounded discussions around respiratory infections, with key emphasis on active, open sharing of unpublished data. It was invaluable to gain first-hand insights into the cutting edge COVID-19 research done in another continent, and also proudly share our unique observations from Australia, where SARS-CoV-2 was largely contained for the first 2 years of the pandemic. The prevailing culture at the conference also promoted interactions between Early Career Researcher and established leaders of the field and gave rise to numerous valuable opportunities to raise scientific discussions with different experts and initiate future collaborations. Importantly, I was also able to gain knowledge of specialized assays and new molecular targets for further exploring mucosal responses against viral, as well as bacterial respiratory/ oral infections - a field in which I hope to expand my focus into in the upcoming year.

I would like to thank ASI again for supporting my development as an Early Career Researcher specializing on mucosal immunity and establishing presence on the global scientific stage. \*

### **ERIC ALVES**

I started my scientific career with a Bachelor of Science in Anatomy and Human Biology at the University of Western Australia in 2018. As part of this degree I was fortunate enough to complete an undergraduate research project with Dr Silvana Gaudieri, who introduced me to the incredible genetic diversity and evolutionary history of the major histocompatibility complex. This experience sparked my interest in immunology and genetics, so much so that in 2019 I

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Contact: au.orders@abcam.com conducted my Honours degree in the Gaudieri lab examining the mechanisms used by human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) to evade MHC class I presentation and CD8+ T cell recognition.

During my time working on HIV, I came to appreciate that viruses and tumours share similar mechanisms of immune evasion. For example, loss or down-regulation of molecules in the MHC is one such way that both viruses and tumours limit immune detection. In the context of cancer, current immunotherapy approaches, such as checkpoint inhibitors, rely on the presence of MHC class I expression on the tumour cell surface for antigen presentation. Therefore, reduced or absent MHC class I represents a major obstacle to successful immunotherapeutic treatment. This barrier needs to be overcome, so my PhD project, under the supervision of Dr Silvana Gaudieri and Dr Pilar Blancafort, has focused on exploring new ways to rescue expression of MHC class I in order to improve immune responses and immunotherapy efficacy.

I am extremely grateful to have received the ASI Career Advancement Award to support my exchange at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne. Through this Award, I was able to spend one month with the Dolcetti lab learning and conducting vital in vitro assays, as well as



preparing for pre-clinical in vivo assays to be performed in 2023. Coming from a discovery science background, my time spent at the Peter Mac was an extremely enriching experience and an incredible introduction to translational research at a world leading comprehensive cancer centre. Moreover, it was a fantastic opportunity to revitalize collaborative ties between labs following a long period of restricted research activity due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you ASI for supporting students and advancing their research! \*

### JENNIFER HABEL

University of Melbourne at the Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity

I am a 3rd year PhD candidate in Professor Katherine Kedzierska's laboratory at the University of Melbourne. I joined the Kedzierska laboratory in 2019 to complete my Honours degree during which I discovered novel CD8+ T cell epitopes from influenza viruses restricted by the HLA-A\*11:01 (Habel et al, PLoS Pathogens, 2022). From there, I continued to my PhD studies which began in March 2020. Having the experience in CD8+ T cell epitope discovery from my Honours year, I was well-equipped to identify the first known SARS-CoV-2 CD8+ T cell epitope restricted by HLA-A\*02:01 (Habel et al, PNAS, 2020). Currently, my PhD work is focused on investigating immune responses to respiratory viruses, including SARS-CoV-2, influenza viruses and respiratory syncytial virus, during pregnancy. Pregnancy presents a unique

immunological state which allows for the growth of the antigenically-dissimilar foetus. The altered immune state is more tolerogenic, thus impacting the ability to respond to viral infections and causing pregnant women to be a highrisk group for severe disease. The mechanisms causing severe disease are yet to be fully elucidated but are likely linked to the altered immune system during gestation. To date, I have studied the immune response to SARS-CoV-2 infection during pregnancy in comparison to non-pregnant women of reproductive age (Habel et al. manuscript under review). Our findings suggested differential NK cell and  $\gamma\delta$  T cell activation dynamics in the peripheral blood during pregnancy, which could impact immune control of SARS-CoV-2.

Further to changes to immune cell phenotype and function in the periphery, there are also important roles for immune cells in the placenta, the organ responsible for the exchange of nutrients and waste between the mother and foetus. With the funding from the ASI Career Advancement Award, I was able to visit Associate Professor Mainthan Palendira's laboratory located in the Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney to learn the imaging mass cytometry technique and the required analysis on placental tissue from healthy and COVID-19 pregnancies. This work aims to determine key roles of immune cells in placenta tissue and determine any effects COVID-19 may



have on their phenotype and function. Additionally, we can determine cell-cell interactions and localization within the tissue. Overall, we hope to gain new insights on the impact of viral infections during pregnancy and the roles of different innate and adaptive immune cells in the placenta.

My visit to A/Prof Palendira's laboratory was immensely beneficial for advancing my PhD project as well as my career. I learned a new cutting-edge technique that I would not have been able to learn at my home Institute, and I have learned how to analyse imaging mass cytometry datasets, both of which add to my skillset as a PhD student. Not to mention highly impactful images I gained for my PhD thesis!!! Additionally, I met several other researchers at the Charles Perkin Centre which has expanded my network, collaborations and connections in the immunology field. I am very grateful to the ASI for awarding me the Career Advancement Award which enabled me to progress my PhD project as well as career in immunology, and will have a lasting impact on my career trajectory. \*





### ANNABELLE SMALL Flinders University

I'm Annabelle, and I'm an early career Research Fellow at with the Department of Rheumatology at Flinders University, South Australia, under the supervision of Associate Professor Mihir Wechalekar. My current work focuses on investigating the synovial tissue (the tissue of the joints) for immune drivers of rheumatoid arthritis, and how we can use this information at an individual patient level, to apply precision medicine and improve patient outcomes.

I completed my Ph.D. with the University of Adelaide with Professor Antonio Ferrante and Dr. Alex Quach where I developed a passion for immunology and translational research. Throughout this time, I characterised expression of the fifth complement receptor, Complement Receptor Immunoglobulin (CRIg) expression in healthy human immune cells, and gained expertise handling human phagocyte populations; dendritic cells, monocytes, macrophages, and neutrophils. This research laid the foundation for my current work by providing me the required expertise for my current project, examining the pathogenic T cell populations within the rheumatoid arthritis synovial tissue and their interactions with antigen presenting cells within the inflammatory niche.

I'm enormously grateful to have been awarded a 2022 ASI Postdoctoral Career Advancement Award. The support of this award facilitated my travel to Philadelphia, PA, USA from the 9th to 17th of November 2022 to attend the leading worldwide Rheumatology conference, the 2022 American Congress of Rheumatology (ACR) Annual Meeting. The ACR brings together over 10,000 international delegates each year, including world-leaders in rheumatology and immunology research, and provided an opportunity for our ongoing work with the University of Queensland to be presented, and to network with our new and long-term international collaborators. This year, the opportunity to visit Philadelphia also provided me with the unique opportunity to meet with our industrial partners from the Discovery Immunology group at Janssen R&D, Spring House, and to tour the laboratory of our partners from the Immunology Unit at GSK, Collegeville.

Attendance of conferences of this calibre and the strengthening of international collaborations at this stage





of my career are crucial for my development, and this absolutely wouldn't have been possible without the support of this award. I would like to give my deepest thanks to the ASI for supporting me and making such an invaluable opportunity possible.

### LIAM KEALY Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, Australia

I am extremely grateful to have been selected as one of the awardees of the 2022 ASI Career Advancement Award I have so far been a member of this society for 5 years and in that time, the ASI has never failed to provide meaningful opportunities for new friendships to be forged, quality science to be shared as well as guidance for early career researchers hoping to break into the realm of Australian and New Zealand immunology. It has been an honour to be a part of such a kind and supportive

community these last few years.

I recently submitted my PhD thesis on work carried out over the last 4 years in Kim Good-Jacobson's B-cells, Antibody, Memory laboratory. In our lab we study the molecular factors which underpin the fate and formation of long-lived humoral immunity. My project sought to examine the role of a key histone modifier, DOT1L, in remodelling the epigenome during early B-cell development and during a humoral immune response to different types of pathogens. Part of this work was published in Cell Reports in December of 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic severely curtailed my ability to access the lab or to engage in my research as normal. These delays to my progress made it necessary for me to extend my submission date, leaving a gap between the cessation of my scholarship and my PhD thesis deadline. This award will act in lieu of my PhD scholarship to cover my cost of living during this gap and while I write up manuscripts for journal submissions in the near future.





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# Carer Awards

I am a lecturer at Mountain Top University, Nigeria. I completed a Bachelor of Science and Master in Science in Biochemistry at University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria, with second class Honours (Upper Division) and 62.22% in 2010 and 2013 respectively. I also obtained my Doctor of Philosophy at the same University specializing in Reproductive Biochemistry and my research focus was Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS), a lowgrade chronic inflammatory disorder. I won the TWAS-DFG scholarship to undergo my postdoctoral training in Glyoimmunology and reproduction at the Universitatsklinikum Hamburg-Eppendorf (UKE), Hamburg, Germany, and I researched on the role of galectins in Preeclampsia (PE) (pregnancy-induced hypertension). The focus of the research was to shed light into the mechanisms promoting sPE in mouse model by pursuing two specific aims: 1) to investigate the involvement of placental glycocode imbalance in sPE pathogenesis and 2) to characterize changes in the expression profile of stress-sensitive galectins in the placenta associated with progression to sPE.

I am now investigating the role of antioxidants such as alpha lipoic acid on

### FEHINTOLUWA FEMI-OLABISI

Mountain Top University, Nigeria.

proinflammatory cytokines in polycystic ovarian syndrome. Proinflammatory cytokines has been implicated in the pathogenesis of PCOS; this necessitated the drive to research on antioxidants that can serve as a viable treatment option for PCOS.

I sincerely appreciate being a recipient of ASI Carer's grant award. This award will help to alleviate the accrued financial obligations associated with attending ASI 2022 by enabling my 5-year old daughter to be well cared for in my absence. Winning the Carer's grant award has corroborated the fact the ASI is a noble society championing the course of innovative immunological researches and as well as supporting the wellbeing of its members by introducing the award for members with children. Thank you ASI! I am proud to be a member! **\*** 



# Carer Awards

### ZHIJIA YU

John Curtin School of Medical Research ANU



I am a senior PhD student doing research in John Curtin School of Medical Research Institute at ANU. My current research is focused on B cell biology, especially B1a cells. B1a cells are an innate-like B cell subset that makes up a large fraction of B cells in the pleural cavity but is rare in other organs. Through the production of natural antibodies B1a cells provide a crucial first line of defense against pathogens. In mice, B1a cells were also reported as the cellular origin of chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL). To develop a pre-clinical CLL mouse model is my goal.

With this award, I can take my baby with me to the conference city. I am struggling with whether I should take the baby to the ASI2022 conference as it will require my husband to come

with me to take care of the baby. That will increase the cost of this conference trip (mainly flight and accommodation cost). But also, as a breastfeeding mom, I want to be around with the baby as he is still very young when I attend the conference. At the same time, the conference is very important for my own career. So, it is very hard to decide what is the right decision. However, this award will help me reduce the cost pressure of taking care of the baby. So, I can bring my husband to the conference, and he can take care of the baby which then I don't need to be away from my baby while I am attending the conference. When I am in the conference, I can focus on the science and not worry about other things. Therefore, this award is very important for me. \*



### KATHARINA ROBICHON

Victoria University of Wellington

I am an early career research fellow at the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand with a background in biotechnology and viral immunology. During my PhD at the German Cancer Research Centre, I analysed cell signalling and receptor expression in a human viral setting (hepatitis C virus). After my move to New Zealand to join the group of Prof Anne La Flamme as a post-doctoral fellow at Victoria University of Wellington in 2016, I have shifted the focus of my research from virology and innate immunology towards autoimmunity, and gained expertise in multiple sclerosis (MS) immunology.

Recently, I was awarded a prestigious and highly competitive MBIE Whitinga fellowship, to develop my own independent research in translating findings from bench to bedside. The ASI 2022 in Melbourne provided an excellent platform to promote not only my own research in the Australasian community but also a very good opportunity for me to connect with other scientists in similar fields.

Besides being a full-time scientist, I am also the mother of two beautiful daughters, age 4 and 2. Being on maternity leave, a mother and a scientist are both very demanding jobs and sometimes attending a conference is not easy, especially if the rest of the wider family lives in Germany. Being awarded this ASI Women's Initiative Travel Award helped me to increase the hours of my two daughters at daycare while I was away. Even though my husband supports me a lot, he also works long hours.

Even though it was hard to be away from the girls for the first time, being at this critical stage



of my research career, the ASI 2022 in Melbourne provided an essential opportunity to establish new networks to share knowledge, technology and expertise. All of which will be beneficial towards my goal of starting my own research group. Thank you, ASI, for supporting me and made it able to attend this conference.

# Women's Initiative Travel Award

SAPNA DEVI The University of Melbourne

I am grateful to have won the 2022 ASI Women's Initiative Travel Award which has supported my attendance at the Society's Annual conference held in Melbourne. I was able to fully immerse myself into the conference, including catching up with many colleagues outside the day's scheduled program. I could do this without worrying about my toddler's caretaking, as he had his grandparents visiting and caring for him while I was away at the conference.

This was my first meeting since returning to fulltime research and more importantly I was selected to speak about work. I received much interest, feedbacks and developed more ideas about my project. My research focuses on understanding the mechanisms regulating leukocyte activity in different tissue microenvironments, using advanced imaging techniques. My recent work has revealed novel interactions between the nervous system and the immune system (https://www.cell.com/ immunity/pdfExtended/S1074-7613(21)00137-0) and led to me establishing new models to define neural interactions in cancer.

The conference was special as it was the first in-person meeting since 2019 (because of we know what), it was the 50th meeting plus we celebrated the 25th Anniversary of Professors Peter Doherty and Rolf Zinkernagel Nobel Prize winning. They recollected about their start in science and impressions of each other and of course the moment they had uncovered something "worthy" to quote one of them. Another highlight of the conference was definitely the Lafferty's debate. We waved our phones with the lights on, high up in the air repeating "discovery research was not dead". Such a concert vibe it was!

It was a successful meeting for me as I was able interact with many colleagues, listen to top international and local speakers, and be updated with some of the latest research.

Caring for little ones and doing research both requires dedication, and I could not have upheld these without the support of my family and my lab head, Prof Scott Mueller for the advice, understanding and support in working with him. It's fantastic that ASI provides several opportunities to support researchers with carer's responsibilities with the Women's Initiative Award being one of them with the intent to help mothers in research still enjoy their science. #



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### 2023 ADVANCED IMMUNOLOGY SCHOOL

We are excited to announce that the third ASI Advanced Immunology School will be held from 14th-17th August 2023 at Nunyara Conference Centre, Belair, Adelaide, SA. The theme for the 2023 AIS will be 'Immune Diversity'.

The ASI-AIS is designed for early career researchers and RAs with a sound background knowledge in the principles of immunology. All teaching faculty and delegates will live

on site. This format and the small size (42 participants max) provide the platform to foster communication between the participants and teaching faculty and for establishing new collaborations and professional networks. Discuss your burning research question with your peers and the teaching faculty over breakfast, lunch or dinner, enjoy a drink with the expert in your field, compete with your next lab head at trivia, and learn about cutting edge research and advances in basic and clinical immunology.

Confirmed members of the teaching faculty at ASI-AIS 2023

### IMMUNE DIVERSI

include Gabrielle Belz (UQ, QLD), Anne Bruestle (ANU, ACT), Anselm Enders (ANU, ACT), Joanna Groom (WEHI, VIC), Phil Hansbro (USyd, NSW), Susanne Heinzel (WEHI, Vic), Connie Jackaman (Curtin), Joanne Reed (Westmead NSW), Franca Ronchese (Malaghan Institute, NZ), Matthew Sweet (UQ, QLD), David Tarlinton (Monash University, VIC) and Damon Tumes (UniSA). Participants will also have the opportunity to present their own research.

The registration costs for participants will be \$250-300 per person. This fee includes participation at all scheduled

#### 14-17 AUGUST 2023

activities at the School, accommodation (shared rooms), food and drinks.

Applications to attend the 2023 ASI-AIS will open early March 2023 so please keep an eye out for an email.

We are looking forward to welcoming an enthusiastic group of early career Immunologists to ASI-AIS-3.

From the AIS Organising Committee: Susanne Heinzel, Joanne Reed, Ee Shan Pang, Timothy Patton and Annabelle Small **\*** 

#### Testimonials from AIS-2, 2022:

"Everyone who attended or presented has been so friendly and engaged - we all spent the entire meeting giving glowing reviews on the variety & quality of talks, and the overall culture of the meeting."

"I had a fantastic time at the school. This felt like the perfect meeting for someone at my level, who is coming towards the end of their PhD. I found the panel discussions highly informative and immediately relevant for me."

"The ASI AIS was such an amazing experience! I learnt a lot but

more importantly made lots of connections with Immunologists right across Australia!"

"The ASI AIS was a phenomenal experience. Hearing about the wide variety of Australian immunology research from students and faculty alike was incredibly informative and the workshops focussed on professional development were stimulating and insightful. The relaxed nature of the school made it easy to make friends and network with faculty members from all over Australia. I am definitely recommending to all students in my department!"



# The IUIS Corner



### **DID YOU KNOW**?

ASI is one of the 12 founding members of IUIS, which now has over 88 member societies. IUIS was officially founded at a meeting in Belgium on May 5, 1969.

### **IUIS Special Travel** Awards funded by ASI

ASI will be funding IUIS Special Travel awards for 4 early to mid career ASI members to attend IUIS 2023 on Nov 27-Dec 2 2023 in Cape Town.

Applicants need to submit their abstracts to the IUIS 2023 website prior to applying for the Awards. Higher degree students, honours students, research technicians and postdoctoral investigators up to 6 years postdoctoral are eligible to apply.

**Application Round:** March 1st - 31st, 2023

### **IUIS Election Results**

The results are in and IUIS now has a new Executive and Council led by President Prof Miriam Merad (USA) and Vice-President Prof Rita Carsetti (Italy). Check out our elected members here: https://iuis.org/ about/who-we-are/executivecouncil/

ASI has two members elected to IUIS Council, Prof Roslyn Kemp (University of Otago) and me, A/ Prof Joanne Reed (Westmead Institute)

### **IUIS National Gender** Equality Campaign -**Competition4ideas**

The IUIS Gender Equality Committee will provide seed funding for up to 3 projects planned by national immunology societies or federations to promote and foster gender equality. Applications close 31 March 2023, for more information see here: https://iuis.org/news/iuisgec-national-gender-equalitycampaign-competition4ideas/

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International Day of Immunology is almost here! Held on the 29 April to increase global awareness of the importance of immunology, this year's theme is 'Immunology Talks to Public Health'. Join the global effort, plan an event and share your message on social media using the #DayofImmunology media kit available here: https://iuis.org/ events/2023-international-dayof-immunology/

Joanne Reed \*

# Sustaining Member Publications



#### 1. Recombinant Alexa Fluor® 647 Anti-PD1 antibody [EPR4877(2)] ab201825

Csomos K et al., AUG 2022

"Partial RAG deficiency in humans induces dysregulated peripheral lymphocyte development and humoral tolerance defect with accumulation of T-bet+ B cells"

Nat Immunol

DOI: 10.1038/s41590-022-01271-6

#### 2. Recombinant Anti-NCAM2 antibody [EPR12815(B)] ab173297

Susco SG et al., SEPT 2022

"Molecular convergence between Down syndrome and fragile X syndrome identified using human pluripotent stem cell models"

Cell Rep

DOI: 10.1016/j.celrep.2022.111312

#### 3. Recombinant Anti-CD11b antibody [EPR1344] ab133357

Ge C et al., OCT 2022

"Hepatocyte phosphatase DUSP22 mitigates NASH-HCC progression by targeting FAK"

Nat Commun

DOI: 10.1038/s41467-022-33493-5



#### 1. Knockout mouse model (https://www.ozgene.com/services/knockout-mice/)

Lim et al., (2022). Foxe1 Deletion in the Adult Mouse Is Associated With Increased Thyroidal Mast Cells and Hypothyroidism. Endocrinology. doi: 10.1210/ endocr/bqac158.

#### 2. Knock-in mouse model (https://www.ozgene.com/services/knock-in-mice/)

Robinson et al., (2022). Long-lived plasma cells accumulate in the bone marrow at a constant rate from early in an immune response. Sci Immunol. doi: 10.1126/sciimmunol.abm8389. Epub 2022 Oct 28.

#### 3. Targeted transgenic mouse model (https://www.ozgene.com/services/transgenicmice/)

Prasit et al., (2022). Intratumoural administration of an NKT cell agonist with CpG promotes NKT cell infiltration associated with an enhanced antitumour response and abscopal effect. Oncoimmunology. doi: 10.1080/2162402X.2022.2081009. eCollection 2022.

# Thanks to our Sustaining Members



Australian and New Zealand SOCIETY FOR IMMUNOLOGY INC.

### Australian and New Zealand Society for Immunology Inc.

The aim of the ASI is to encourage and support the discipline of immunology in the Australia and New Zealand region.

The Australian and New Zealand Society for Immunology Incorporated (ASI) was created by the amalgamation in 1991 of the Australian Society for Immunology, formed in 1970, and the New Zealand Society for Immunology, formed in 1975. The aim of the Society is to encourage and support the discipline of immunology in the Australasian region.

It is a broadly based Society, embracing clinical and experimental, cellular and molecular immunology in humans and animals. The ASI provides a network for the exchange of information and for collaboration within Australia, New Zealand and overseas. ASI members have been prominent in advancing biological and medical research worldwide. We seek to encourage the study of immunology in Australia and New Zealand and are active in introducing young scientists to the discipline.

The ASI membership directory, listing all current members of the Society is available at http://www. immunology.org.au/asi-membership-directory/

### **REMEMBER:** Renew your ASI membership

To renew your membership, click here. Please note that if you have not held a membership within the last 2 years, you will be prompted to provide 2 Nominators willing to support your application.

#### ASI Member Benefits include:

- Career Advancement Awards
- Bursaries to attend ASI's Annual Meeting
- New Investigator and Student Awards at ASI Annual Meeting
- ASI Women's Initiative to support female scientists
- ASI Member's benefits publishing in ASI Journals ICB and CTI
- Special offers from ASI's Sustaining Members
- Full access to the journals Immunology and Cell Biology, Clinical and Translational Immunology

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### The ASI membership directory, listing all members of the Society is available at https://www.immunology.org.au/members/

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