2020 NCI Cancer Clinical Investigator Team Leadership Award Recipients

Recipient	Cancer Center	Specialty	Disease Focus	CCITLA Activities
Pavani Chalasani, MD, MPH	**University of Arizona Comprehensive Cancer Center**	medical oncology	breast cancer	standardize cancer clinical trials review processes, translational research
Heather Cheng, MD, PhD	**Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, University of Washington**	medical oncology	prostate and bladder cancers	translate clinical trials into media-friendly formats, cancer care delivery, mentoring
Sara Federico, MD	**St. Jude Comprehensive Cancer Center, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital**	pediatric oncology	neuroblastoma, ewing sarcoma	clinical trials, translational research, mentoring
Muhammad Furqan, MD	**Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of Iowa**	medical oncology	lung cancer	improve efficiency of clinical trial throughput, mentoring
Siwen Hu-Lieskovan, MD, PhD	**Huntsman Cancer Institute, University of Utah**	medical oncology	melanoma and skin cancers	clinical and translational programs around immunotherapy
Brian Jonas, MD, PhD	**University of California Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center**	medical oncology	hematologic malignancies, AML, MDS, ALL	improve efficiency of clinical trials, build and lead ALL and MDS programs, optimizing molecular diagnostics, mentoring
Lakshmi Nayak, MD	**Dana Farber Cancer Institute**	neurology	primary and metastatic cancers of the CNS	clinical research program in CNS lymphoma, genomic and immune correlates of response, biorepositories
Rayne Rouce, MD	**Dan L. Duncan Comprehensive Cancer Center, Baylor College of Medicine**	pediatric oncology	leukemia and lymphoma	clinical research, outreach and health disparities, community engagement initiatives to ensure equal access

For a list of past CCITLA awardees, please visit: http://www.cancer.gov/about-nci/organization/ccct/funding/ccitla

Pavani Chalasani, MD, MPH

University of Arizona Comprehensive Cancer Center (UACCC)

Dr. Chalasani is a medical oncologist focusing on Breast Cancer at the UACCC. She graduated medical school from Gandhi Medical College, Hyderabad, India. She went on to get her Master's in Public Health from University of Massachusetts, Amherst. She completed her Internal Medicine residency and Hematology-Oncology fellowship from University of Arizona. She was recruited as a junior faculty member of the breast medical oncology section at the UACCC. She was promoted to Associate Professor of Medicine with Tenure in 07/2019. She has several investigator initiated clinical trials which are hypothesis driven translational clinical trials.

As a recipient of the Cancer Clinical Investigator Team Leadership Award, Dr. Chalasani will lead Scientific Review Committee at the UACCC. In that role she will work on standardizing the scientific review process for all cancer related clinical trials. She will lead efforts to increase efficiency of opening Investigator Initiated Trials at the UACCC. Dr. Chalasani plans to continue her ongoing collaborations and apply for a peer review grant funding. Dr. Chalasani will also continue her collaborations and work within SWOG Breast Cancer and Breast Cancer Translational Research committees.

Heather Cheng, MD, PhD

Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center (FHCRC)
University of Washington

Dr. Heather Cheng, MD, PhD, is an Associate Professor in Medicine (Oncology) at the University of Washington, an Associate Member of the Division of Clinical Research at the FHCRC and is the Director of the Prostate Cancer Genetics Clinic at the Seattle Cancer Care Alliance. She is a medical oncologist specializing in genitourinary cancers, with a clinical and translational research focus on the germline and somatic genetics of prostate cancer. Dr. Cheng completed MD/PhD training in the Medical Scientist Training Program with a PhD in Molecular and Cellular Biology, did Internal Medicine residency and Hematology/Oncology fellowship through the American Board of Internal Medicine research pathway at University of Washington and Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and joined the faculty of the University of Washington and the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

In 2016 she launched the Prostate Cancer Genetics Clinic, among the first of its kind and which serves as a clinical base for genetic counseling, testing, matching prostate cancer patients with precision oncology clinical trials and therapeutic advances, and connecting family member with opportunities for cancer prevention, and early cancer detection as related to hereditary breast and ovarian cancers, Lynch Syndrome and other genetic risk factors for cancer. It serves as a model of care delivery for genetic counseling and testing, patient education and recruitment to targeted clinical trials and therapeutic opportunities. She is an active member of SWOG, and chairs the Germline Genetics Working Group of DOD Prostate Cancer Clinical Trials Consortium, and has been heavily engaged with research within the Pacific Northwest Prostate SPORE, including spearheading one of the major projects centered around offering men with metastatic prostate cancer germline genetic testing, cascade testing for male relatives and an early detection study for men carrying prostate cancer risk mutations. She also leads investigator-initiated trials of platinum and PARP inhibitors for men with prostate cancer who carry pathogenic variants in DNA repair genes such as *BRCA1, BRCA2, ATM* and others, all of which have incorporated many interdisciplinary translational collaborations.

Dr. Cheng's Cancer Clinical Investigator Team Leadership Award (CCITLA) will be used for two complementary objectives: First, Dr. Cheng will work with cancer consortium staff and colleagues to consider the genitourinary cancer clinical trial portfolio and translate clinical trials into media-friendly formats, including, but not limited to: patient friendly single-slide schema, "tweet" friendly, concise descriptions, short videos. These will be IRB-approved and disseminated to patients and referring providers to identify effective formats to increase knowledge of studies, referral and accrual to clinical trials. Second, Dr. Cheng will take cancer genetics care delivery to newer formats such as telehealth and molecular tumor boards to expand delivery of care and disseminate research opportunities to our cancer center catchment and region. Successful formats can be applied to other cancer types to promote cancer center objectives for clinical trial enrollment and education of partnering oncologists in the community. These efforts will also create research and mentoring opportunities for fellows, trainees and junior faculty.

Sara Federico, MD

St. Jude Comprehensive Cancer Center
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

Originally from the Pacific Northwest, Dr. Federico completed her undergraduate training in Human Biology at Stanford University in 1998 and graduated from medical school at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2003. She then returned to Stanford University where she completed her internship and residency in pediatrics at Lucille Packard Children's Hospital. From 2007 to 2011, Dr. Federico completed her pediatric hematology oncology fellowship training at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital where she was a Physician Scientist in Training Awardee in 2011. Additionally, she was a recipient of the NIH LRP grant for her preclinical work in pediatric solid malignancies. During her fellowship, Dr. Federico developed a true passion for neuroblastoma, Ewing sarcoma and developmental therapeutics.

After completing her fellowship, Dr. Federico joined the faculty as an Assistant Member at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in the Division of Solid Malignancies in the Department of Oncology. She quickly established herself as a productive faculty member and was promoted to an Associate Member in 2017. She has authored numerous manuscripts and received competitive funding for her research. She has been active in developing and conducting clinical trials at St. Jude and through the Children's Oncology Group (COG). She is the PI of 4 NCI-funded clinical trials, including an externally funded, multi-site international study for the treatment of high-risk neuroblastoma. Additionally, she is an associate investigator on 4 NCI-funded trials and a site PI for another 3. She is recognized as a leader in clinical trials for neuroblastoma and holds leadership roles nationally (COG's Neuroblastoma Committee) and internationally (Advances in Neuroblastoma Research Association Advisory Board Member for North and South America, International Neuroblastoma Risk Group Committee Member). She is currently developing the next national phase III high-risk neuroblastoma trial and will serve as the PI of this study that will be conducted through the COG. As a clinical researcher she sits on national committees, including the NCI's NCTN Core Correlative Sciences Committee and is involved in reviewing grant submissions with the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program's Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program (CDMRP PRCRP).

As a recipient of the Cancer Clinical Investigator Team Leadership Award, Dr. Federico will continue to impact the field of pediatric oncology through the development and conduct of clinical trials. She is completing an international trial for patients with newly diagnosed high-risk neuroblastoma and will open a multi-institutional phase I/II study evaluating PARP inhibitors for the treatment of Ewing sarcoma. Additionally, she will complete the development of the phase III randomized trial for patients with newly diagnosed high-risk neuroblastoma. Over the next few years, Dr. Federico will collaborate with basic and translational researchers in submitting a multi-PI U24 grant. Finally, she will serve as a mentor in her role as Associate Director of the hematology oncology fellowship at St. Jude and continue to mentor graduate students and junior faculty.

Muhammad Furqan, MD

Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center (HCCC)
University of Iowa

Dr. Furqan is an Associate Professor at the Carver College of Medicine, University of Iowa and a member of HCCC Experimental Therapeutic Program. He graduated from Dow Medical College, Pakistan and completed his internal medicine residency at Seton Hall School of Health and Medical Sciences, NJ. He received training in hematology and oncology at New York Medical College. During his fellowship he participated in various clinical research activities and visited the NCI Cancer Therapy Evaluation Program. Dr. Furqan joined University of Iowa and the HCCC as a thoracic medical oncologist and clinical investigator in 2014. He leads the thoracic multidisciplinary oncology group at the HCCC and plays a critical role in the lung cancer research program.

Dr. Furqan has interest in redox biology of lung cancer. He collaborates with several translational scientist in the development of investigator-initiated trials evaluating pharmacologic ascorbate in selectively increasing the oxidative-stress of lung cancer along with standard therapies. These studies are supported by an NCI-P01 grant and institutional funding. Dr. Furqan initiated a multi-site clinical trial in patients with extensive stage small cell lung cancer to investigate the role of an ATR inhibitor with immunotherapy. He is an investigator on several NCTN and industry trials assessing novel cancer therapeutics. He serves on the Big Ten Cancer Research Consortium (BTCRC) steering committee, Alliance Respiratory Committee and BTCRC Thoracic Research Committee. Through these committees he contributes to policy making for the conduct of clinical trials and assists development of several national and regional studies.

As a clinical investigator, Dr. Furqan recognizes the challenges involved in formulating, activating and completing a successful clinical trial. As a recipient of the Cancer Clinical Investigator Team Leadership Award, Dr. Furqan plans to improve the efficiency of clinical trial throughput at the HCCC. He will work with various institutional committees to streamline the workflow of opening a cancer trial. He was recently appointed as the Director of Clinical Research Services and in this capacity will oversee HCCC clinical trials operations. In addition, this award will help support his mentoring activities for the fellows and junior faculty to promote clinical investigation.

Siwen Hu-Lieskovan, MD, PhD

Huntsman Cancer Institute (HCI)
University of Utah

Dr. Siwen Hu-Lieskovan, MD, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in Medicine in the Division of Medical Oncology at the University of Utah and a Clinical Investigator and translational scientist at the HCI. She completed her hematology/oncology fellowship training at the University of California, Los Angeles in 2014. She was appointed as an Instructor in July 2014 at the UCLA Jansson Comprehensive Cancer Center and promoted to an Assistant Clinical Professor in July 2016. She was recruited to HCI in January 2019 as a Tenure Track Assistant Professor and Director of Solid Tumor Immunotherapy. She also serves as co-Chair of the Immunotherapy Committee at the SWOG Clinical Trial Network, and study chair and translational lead of SWOG initiated Immuno-oncology trials, including the immunoMATCH (iMATCH) trial. She is the co-Chair of the Resources and Useful Tools committee of the SITC Biomarker Taskforce, and leader of the Developmental Therapeutics Track of the 2021 ASCO Educational Committee.

Dr. Hu-Lieskovan specializes in melanoma and skin cancers. Her clinical research focuses on developing and executing clinical trials with an emphasis on combination immunotherapy strategies to improve efficacy and reduce toxicity in solid tumors. Her translation research focuses on elucidating mechanisms of response and resistance to checkpoint inhibitor-based immunotherapy and immune related adverse events, using patient derived samples and immune competent syngeneic animal models. She has contributed to 40 publications in Nature, JAMA Oncology, New England Journal of Medicine, Cell, Cancer Discovery, etc., using samples from patients treated by immunotherapy to elucidate the mechanism of response to immunotherapy and immune escape. Dr. Hu-Lieskovan also serves on HCI Protocol Review and Monitoring Committee which is responsible for evaluating scientific merit and monitoring accrual of all cancer-related research at the University and HCI. Her excellence was recognized by numerous awards, including the AACR Scholar in training award, the ASCO Young Investigator Award and Career Development Award, the SWOG Dr. Coltman Award, among others.

The 2020 Cancer Clinical Investigator Team Leadership Award will help Dr. Hu-Lieskovan to pursue activities and projects as Director of Solid Tumor Immunotherapy at HCI, to establish a clinical and translational program around cancer immunotherapy and provide consultation and assistance to clinical investigators and promote collaborations on immune-monitoring studies, including design and execution of clinical and translational studies as well as result interpretation. It will also help to secure her effort to serve as co-Chair of SWOG Immunotherapy committee (partially) and development of clinical trials at SWOG, including the iMATCH trial.

Brian Jonas, MD, PhD

University of California Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center (UCDCCC)

Dr. Jonas is an Associate Professor in the Division of Hematology and Oncology at UC Davis Comprehensive Cancer Center (UCDCCC), where he specializes in acute myeloid leukemia (AML), myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS), acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL), and other hematologic malignancies. He earned is MD and PhD from UC Davis as part of their Physician-Scientist Training program, and he completed his residency in Internal Medicine and fellowship in Hematology and Oncology at Stanford as part of their American Board of Internal Medicine research pathway. His postdoctoral research fellowship was in the laboratory of Dr. Ravindra Majeti at Stanford and focused on acute myeloid leukemia stem cell (LSC) biology. He was awarded a Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Career Development Award. He was also named a K12 scholar in the NIH/NCI UC Davis Paul Calabresi Clinical Oncology K12 Mentored Clinical Research Program and formed an AML-focused translational research group around studying strategies to diagnose, prevent, or overcome therapy resistance. Dr. Jonas leads a thematic clinical and translational research program in AML, MDS, and ALL with an emphasis on biomarker development, early drug development, and leukemia stem cells. He is PI on several open or pending clinical trials, including multiple investigator-initiated trials and two ETCTN trials on which he serves as the national study chair. He chairs the UCDCCC Hematological Malignancies Working Group, is co-chair of the UCDCCC Data and Safety Monitoring Committee and is Chair of the Laboratory Utilization Committee for the UCD Heath System.

As a recipient of a 2020 Cancer Clinical Investigator Team Leadership Award, Dr. Jonas will continue to build and lead his burgeoning Acute Leukemia and MDS Program at UCDCCC. He plans to lead multidisciplinary weekly clinical care and research group meetings, improve efficiency and operation of the UCDCCC Hematologic Malignancies Working Group that he chairs, and continue to develop and lead high impact and innovative NCI-funded and investigator-initiated clinical trials. His goal is to grow and maintain his program through fostering mentorship of fellows and eventual recruitment of junior clinical and translational faculty. Dr. Jonas also plans to work on optimizing molecular diagnostics for AML at UCDCCC in collaboration with the Department of Pathology and his role as Chair of the Laboratory Utilization Committee. Finally, Dr. Jonas plans to increase awareness of UCDCCC as a major center for innovative and high impact clinical trials in acute leukemia and MDS by applying for MDS Foundation Center of Excellence designation and through continued development of a robust regional referral network, a regional annual Best of ASH meeting, and a regional patient- and caregiver-centered annual Blood Cancers Conference.

Lakshmi Nayak, MD

Dana Farber Cancer Institute (DFCI)
Harvard Medical School

Dr. Nayak is an Assistant Professor of Neurology at Harvard Medical School and the Director of the Center for CNS Lymphoma at DFCI. She received her medical degree from Grant Medical College in Mumbai, India. After moving to the United States, she completed a neurology residency at New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center and a fellowship in neuro-oncology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. She joined the Center for Neuro-Oncology at DFCI in 2011.

Dr. Nayak's research is focused on the development of novel therapeutics for primary and metastatic cancers involving the central nervous system (CNS). She has extensive experience in clinical and translational investigation, having completed several investigator-initiated trials, and ongoing participation in NCI-funded collaborative trials. She has a strong interest in central nervous system (CNS) lymphoma, an orphan malignancy with poor outcomes. Dr. Nayak has brought together a multidisciplinary team of experts within the Center for CNS lymphoma to explore the genetic aberrations of these tumors, develop preclinical patient-derived xenograft models, and define a molecular taxonomy of this disease to inform genotype-based evaluation of novel therapeutics. Findings from her group have established that there are specific genetic alterations and mutations unique to CNS lymphoma that form the basis for targeted and immunotherapy agents in this disease.

As a recipient of the Cancer Clinical Investigator Team Leadership Award, Dr. Nayak will develop a robust and collaborative clinical research program for CNS lymphoma, with flagship clinical trials based on preclinical work performed within her group. Specifically, this will include at least 2 trials using BTK inhibitors and checkpoint inhibitors based on the genetic underpinning of CNS lymphoma including MYD88 and CD79B mutations and 9p24.1 copy number alterations. Additionally, in conjunction with the Cellular Therapies Program at DFCI, she has developed a pilot trial to evaluate CD19 directed CAR T-cell therapy in patients with CNS lymphoma. Under Dr. Nayak's leadership, these trails will utilize the capability of the Center for CNS Lymphoma to prospectively bank blood, cerebrospinal fluid, and brain tumor tissue biopsy samples for evaluation of genomic and immune correlates of response.

Rayne Rouce, MD

Dan L. Duncan Comprehensive Cancer Center (DLDCCC)
Baylor College of Medicine
Texas Children's Hospital

Dr. Rouce is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) and Texas Children's Hospital (TCH). She completed her fellowship training in pediatric hematology and oncology at BCM/TCH where she worked in the translational research laboratories of the Center for Cell and Gene Therapy (CAGT). Dr. Rouce's clinical interests are in leukemia and lymphoma, specifically how to harness the immune system to recognize and attack tumors. She has spent the past six years leading investigator-initiated immunotherapy trials, gaining experience in every aspect of clinical trial development, from study conception (specifically chimeric antigen and virus-specific modified T cells for leukemia and lymphoma) to preclinical laboratory-based validation and ultimately clinical practice. Her additional experience in regulatory aspects such as submission of and conduct of clinical protocols under investigational new drug applications have allowed her to emerge as a leader within the DLDCCC. She has earned a number of peer-reviewed grants to support the investigator-initiated trials she leads, and also serves as a co-investigator on several cooperative grants which she collaborates with translational laboratory scientists on, embodying the concept of "team science" She serves as the Pediatric Clinical Cell Therapy Lead for the CAGT and co-leader of the Gordy Center for Innovative Therapies within the Texas Children's Cancer center, leading efforts to translate novel immunotherapeutic strategies for refractory hematologic malignancies to the clinic. Further, for the past five years she has served on the Baylor College of Medicine IRB. She also serves as the Vice-Chair for the CAGT Peer Review Committee within the Clinical Protocol Research and Regulatory Affairs Office, as well as on the DLDCCC Protocol Review and Monitoring Committee.

As a 2020 recipient of the Cancer Center Clinical Trials Leadership Award, Dr. Rouce plans to work to improve processes in in the conduct of clinical research in the DLDCCC, especially complex innovative research trials, particularly for the treatment of pediatric and adolescent patients. She will continue to be an active member of the Children's Oncology Group (COG), and work collaboratively to develop novel clinical trials for patients treated throughout the US. Importantly, Dr. Rouce has a special interest in ensuring equitable access to interventional clinical cancer trials and is the Associate Director of Community Outreach within BCM's Diveristy Office, thus is leading the DLDCCC Clinical Trials Diversity Task Force, aimed at enhancing accrual of underrepresented minorities to interventional cancer trials. In this role, she leads a dynamic team of clinical researchers, research coordinators, and specialists from the DLDCCC Office of Outreach and Health Disparities, and is excited to spearhead a number of community engagement initaitives aimed at ensuring equal access to cancer prevention and treatment clinical trials.