RESEARCH EDUCATION CORE

NEWSLETTER

Summary
The TUFCCC/HC U54 Partnership continues to provide meaningful opportunities for research, mentorship, and training. This year, we celebrated the contributions of our mentors, recognized the academic and career progress of our trainees, and shared our work through conferences and educational events. With SCRI 2026 ahead, we're excited to continue this progress together!

Scientific Conferences: The TUFCCC/HC Partnership was thrilled to host our 8th Annual SPEECH Regional Cancer Health Conference on May 14th, 2026.

Summer Cancer Research Institute 2026:
Welcome to the newest Summer Cancer Research Institute cohort! Prepare to gain hands-on research experience, mentorship, attend seminars, and enhance your communication skill

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SPEECH Synergistic Partnership for Enhancing Excellence in Cancer Health | Temple University Lewis Katz School of Medicine | Fox Chase Cancer Center Temple Health | HUNTER The City University of New York

CONFERENCES

Eighth Annual SPEECH Conference

On Thursday, May 14th, 2026, the **Eighth Annual SPEECH Cancer Health Conference** was held virtually. The conference featured an enlightening community-based presentation delivered by **Aasma Nuzzi, LMHC-D, PhD,** Chief Operating Officer of the Clinical Director Council of Peoples Organization and a impactful keynote address delivered by **Scarlett Lin Gomez, PhD, MPH,** Professor of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Co-Leader of the Cancer Control Program, Helen Diller Family Comprehensive Cancer Center, and Director of the General Bay Area Cancer Registry.

The conference also featured a riveting and engaging poster session with 45 presenters. **Best Presentation Awards** were distributed to 7 exceptional presentations covering a range of basic science, clinical science, and population science cancer research:

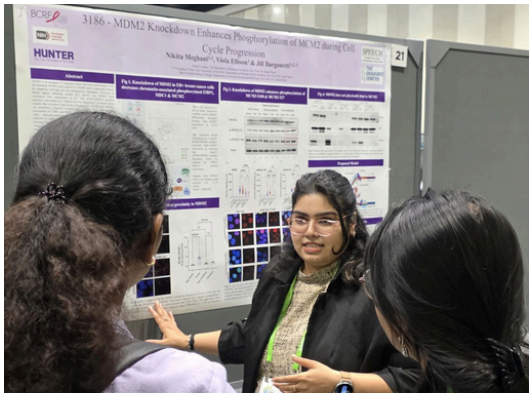
- **Asha Suganthan**
- **Bailey Lisker and Rebecca Rendon**
- **Hadil Gadelrab**
- **Ivy Tran**
- **AnnMarie Gaglio**
- **Tahmina Haque**
- **Moses Kamita**

This conference was a successful platform for scientific presentations, professional development, and meaningful discussions, and served to reinforce the tradition of mentorship and community within the SPEECH partnership.

CONFERENCES

American Association for Cancer Research (AACR) Annual Meeting:

The **AACR Annual Meeting was held in April 2026 in San Diego, CA.** AACR highlights the latest emerging cancer research from population science and prevention; to cancer biology, translational, and clinical studies; to survivorship and advocacy.



Nikita Meghani, a PhD student and U54 trainee under **Jill Bargonetti, PhD** (U54 Mentor), presented her poster titled "MDM2 Knockdown Enhances Phosphorylation of MCM2 during Cell Cycle Progression".

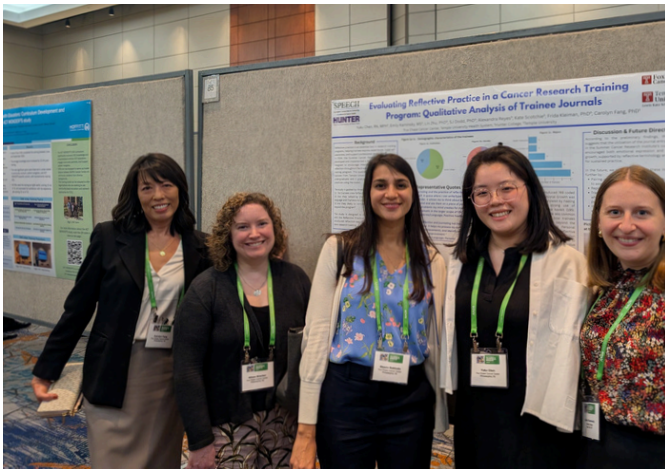
American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting:

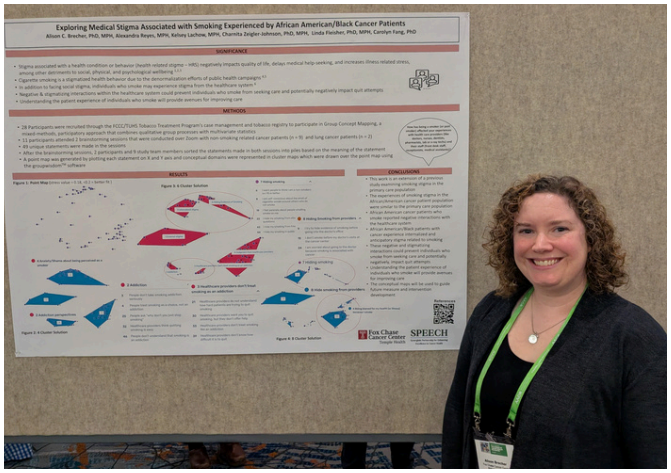
The **APHA (American Public Association) Annual Meeting was held in Washington, DC in November 2025.** Thousands of public health professionals, including members of our U54 team, attended to take part at the largest public health gathering of the year, aimed at promoting cutting-edge public health research and practices.

Members of the U54 team who presented at the Annual APHA Meeting include **Lin Zhu, PhD**(PEC Co-Lead), Yuku Chen, and **Aisha Bhimla, PhD** (U54 Trainee).

AACR Conference on The Science of Cancer Health Disparities:

The **18h AACR Conference on the Science of Cancer Health Disparities was held in Baltimore, MD in September 2025.** This conference brought together cancer researchers, health professionals, patients, caregivers, and advocates dedicated to advancing the undestanding of cancer health disparities.





Members of the U54 team who presented at the AACR Conference on the Science of Cancer Health Disparities, include **Carolyn Fang** (U54 Mentor), **Allison Brecher** (U54 Trainee), Yuku Chen, and Emily Kaminsky

MENTOR SPOTLIGHT

Andrew Wolfe

Assistant Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, Hunter College
Adjunct Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Weill Cornell Medicine

Andrew Wolfe is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at Hunter College and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in the Department of Pharmacology at Weill Cornell Medicine. He received his PhD in Cancer Biology and Genetics at Weill Cornell Graduate School of Medical Sciences while training at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. As postdoctoral fellow at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, Dr. Wolfe worked on isoform analyses of the tumor suppressor protein PTEN in breast cancer.

In 2021, Dr. Wolfe's laboratory launched at Hunter College with the goal of understanding the biology of oncogenes and RNA regulation toward opening new therapeutic possibilities. His lab works on gaining a deeper understanding of how tumors depend on driver oncogenes to reprogram their growth, metabolism, and survival signals. One of the lab's key questions is: "Why do so many cancers recur after seemingly successful treatment?", with a focus on the biology of the Ras signaling pathway and how RNA binding proteins control cell proliferation.

Recently, Dr. Wolfe's lab published a study about the biological effects of glycosylation of Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor (EGFR), a key regulator of proliferative signaling, on the function of EGFR. They found that mutation of a specific glycosylation site impacted inhibitor binding, ligand response, and dimerization capacity. These findings highlight the importance of understanding post-translational modifications for predicted oncoprotein function and inhibition with cancer therapeutics.

Over the years, Dr. Wolfe and his trainees have been supported by the U54 on several Pre-Pilot and Pilot Awards. Dr. Wolfe noted that having a major cluster of cancer research projects has created an environment where young investigators such as himself can thrive and make discoveries with the capacity to impact cancer patient wellbeing. He looks forward to continuing to collaborate with Hunter College, Temple University, and Fox Chase Cancer Center research communities.

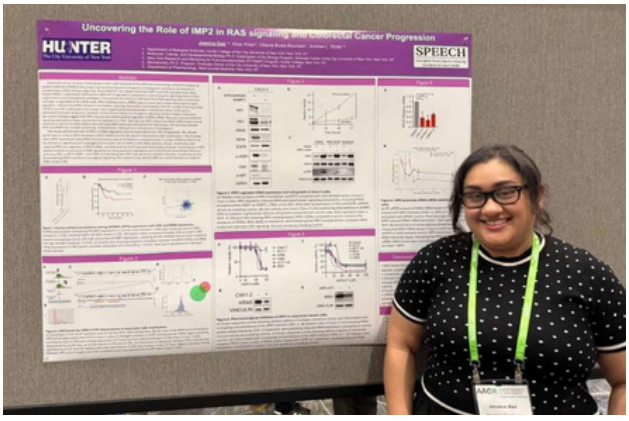
Andrew Wolfe, pictured, with members of the Wolfe Lab at Hunter College.

MENTEE HIGHLIGHTS

We are proud to recognize the accomplishments of our trainees and extend our warmest congratulations as they continue to advance in their careers and academic pursuits!

If you are a former U54 trainee and have any updates to share, we'd love to hear from you! Please contact Kate Scotchie (kate.scotchie@hunter.cuny.edu).

Valery Chavez, a member of **Jill Bargonetti's lab** (U54 Mentor) lab, succesfully defended her thesis titled "Studies on the Role of Mutant p53 Gain-of-Function C-Terminal Poly-ADP Ribose Interacting Amino Acid Residues".



Jessica Das (Pre-Pilot 2024), a member of **Andrew Wolfe's lab** (U54 Mentor), presented her poster, titled, "Unconvering the Role of IMP2 in RAS signaling and Colorectcal Cancer Progression" at the AACR Special Conference in Cancer Research: RAS Oncogenesis and Therapeutics held in Los Angeles, CA.

SCRI Alumni Updates

Following the completion of SCRI, trainees have continued to take strides in their academic and professional journeys through new roles and opportunites.

Savannah Schlafani (SCRI 2025) has started two new positions as a Dietectic Intern at Lenox Hill Hospital and as a Teaching Assistant for a Nutrititon Research Graduate Hunter College course

Nathacha Cruz Perdomo (SCRI 2025) has continued with scientific research as an undergraduate Research Aide in the Brady Lab at Rockefellar University in New York.

Elesha McGrath (SCRI 2023) has started a new position as a Clinical Research Coordinator at Harvard Medical School coordinating studies, and collecting data on cancer patients undergoing anesthesia and its potential relationship to Alzheimer's disease and dementia.

Welcome, SCRI 2026 Trainees!

SCRI Summer Cancer Research Institute

Supported by TUFCCC/HC Regional Comprehensive Cancer Health Disparity Partnership from NCI Grants U54CA221704(5) (Contact PIs: J. Erblich and G. Ma)

We received over 100 applications for the 2026 SCRI Program. A Selection Committee comprised of 33 reviewers from Temple University, Fox Chase Cancer Center and Hunter College participated in the review of student applications. Ultimately, 13 students were selected for this highly competitive program.

Hunter College Trainees:

Sajid Ahmed

Mohamed Hamad

Alana Liu

Janey Liu

Menatalla Mahmoud

Millie Nathanson

Matthew Pinos

Eljay Watts

Temple University Trainees:

Aissata Balde

Milo Friedman

Jonatan Lopez

Jason McClean

Brittney McLarty

The 2026 curriculum includes exciting lectures ranging from cancer prevention and control, to cell culture methods, to career pathways in cancer research. The summer will conclude with a Symposium on Friday, July 31st, during which students will present their research projects.

We look forward to meeting the new trainees!

Pilot & Pre-Pilot 2025-26 Awardees

We are excited to spotlight the The 2025-2026 Cohort of Pre-Pilot and Pilot awards. Each awardee presented their exciting research to members of the U54 community during our monthly webinar series.

2025-2026 WEBINARS:

- **December 17, 2025**
  - **Andrew Wolfe (Pilot) -**Mechanisms of action of the RNA-binding protein IMP2 in colorectal cancer
- **January 21, 2026**
  - **Sandali Perera (Pre-Pilot) -** Development of self-therapeutic inorganic nanoparticle systems; Mechanotransductive control of oncogenic protein expression on breast cancer cells via magnetic reorganization of extracellular matrix (ECMs)
  - **Xinpei Jiang (Pre-Pilot) -** Deciphering the mechanism of brain metastasis and roles of aging in Small Cell Lung Cancer Metastasis
- **February 18, 2026**
  - **Okkeun Jung (Pre-Pilot) -** Identification of Epigenetic and Transcriptional Regulators driving Metastatic Osteosarcoma
  - **No'ad Shanas (Pre-Pilot) -** The Role of Mitochondria in Esophageal Squamous Cell Differentiation
- **March 18, 2026**
  - **Megan Wirtz (Pre-Pilot) -** Cancer Awareness and Reproductive Empowerment (CARE): Research Strategy
  - **Pooja Rao Prakash (Pre-Pilot) -** Riluzole as a Dual Targeted Radiosensitizer For Osteosarcoma: Targeting Tumor Cells and Angiogenic Vasculature to Enhance Single High Dose Radiotherapy Efficacy
- **April 15, 2026**
  - **Daniel Okpattah(Pre-Pilot)** - The in vitro and in vivo evaluation of [18F]ENL30 as a potential PET radiotracer for 5-HT7R in prostate cancer models.
  - **Aitziber Buque Martinez (Pilot)** - The Impact of Metabolic conditions on immunity and Breast Cancer Progression

STAY CONNECTED

Research Education Core Leaders:
Carolyn Fang, PhD - Fox Chase Cancer Center
Frida Kleiman, PhD - Hunter College

Program Coordinators:
Kate Scotchie, BA - kate.scotchie@hunter.cuny.edu
Elisabeth Bozzola, BS - elisabeth.bozzola@fccc.edu

For questions regarding the Research Education Core and any upcoming events, please contact one of our coordinators or core leaders via email.

TUFCCC_HC
Research Education Core

@REC_U54

@REC_U54

The Synergistic Partnership for Enhancing Excellence in Cancer Health (SPEECH) is a highly collaborative and mutually beneficial initiative between Temple University/Fox Chase Cancer Center (TUFCCC) and Hunter College (HC). It is part of the NCI-funded U54 CPACHE (Comprehensive Partnerships to Advance Cancer Health Program). Building on the robust research infrastructure that has been established since the Partnership began in 2018, SPEECH seeks to advance cancer health research, training, and community-informed interventions through innovative, multidisciplinary projects led by basic, clinical, and population science researchers, alongside outstanding and promising trainees.

SPEECH
Synergistic Partnership for Enhancing
Excellence in Cancer Health