



Edited by Anastasia Gorelova

BGSA Newsletter

December 2017



Pitt BGSA



@PittBGSA

Upcoming Events

- January 16.....How To Write a Successful Grant Proposal Seminar Series: How to Impress the Study Section
- Jan 20.....Ski Trip
- March 2-3.....SciPhD: Preparing Scientists for Professional Careers workshop

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Letter from the President



Jennifer Boatz
jcb122@pitt.edu
BGSU President,
2017-2018

Dear fellow students and faculty,

It is an honor to be elected as the president of the BGSU. I strongly value the lessons that BGSU has taught me and I am looking forward to serving this year with an aim of helping new graduate students flourish and build their own leadership skills.

Our biggest event of the semester was BGSU's 22nd Annual Symposium, which was hosted by the Neuroscience program (CNUP). Sarah Najjar and Matt Rich did an amazing job organizing and the entire day was a tremendous success! We also have had a strong focus on giving back to the community. First year students in the Program in Microbiology and Immunology (PMI) independently collected items for Hurricane Harvey relief, and worked with mayor Bill Peduto to get these items delivered to Texas. Sigma Xi and Dan Evans from PMI helped the BGSU organize a campaign that helped raise \$2,600 for hurricane disaster relief in Puerto Rico. BGSU also collected an entire shopping cart full of donations for the Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry.

We will be having our annual ski trip this year on January 20. Our first year Interdisciplinary Biomedical Graduate Program (IBGP) representatives Nicole Martucci, Nicole Kaminski, and Nolan Carew are organizing this trip. Keep an eye out for an email announcement about ticket sales!

I am also proud to announce that BGSU has a new page on our website that lists several mental health resources available to students in the Pittsburgh area. Check it out at <http://www.bgsu.pitt.edu/mental-health.html>

Jennifer C. Boatz

BGSU Representatives, 2017-2018

Executive Board

- **President:** Jennifer Boatz
- **VP of Records:** Shelby Hemker
- **VP of Finance:** undetermined
- **VP of Communications:** Anastasia Gorelova
- **VP of University Relations:** Andrew Bradshaw
- **VP of Programming:** Ryan Staudt, Benjamin Warner

Program Representatives

- **IBGP First Year:** Nicole Martucci, Nicole Kaminski, Nolan Carew
- **Cell Biology and Molecular Physiology:** Rachel Wills, Paige Rudich
- **Molecular Pharmacology:** Ravi Patel
- **Cellular and Molecular Pathology:** Kyle Sylakowski, Anthony Otero, Abby Stahl
- **Immunology:** Aliyah Weinstein
- **Molecular Genetics and Developmental Biology:** Daniel Zuppo
- **Molecular Virology and Microbiology:** Mondraya Howard
- **Integrated Systems Biology/PIMB:** Kate Shipman, Ricardo DeMoya
- **Molecular Biophysics and Structural Biology:** Sara Whitlock and Stephen White
- **Biomedical Informatics:** Michael Ding
- **Neuroscience (CNUP):** Sarah Najjar and Matt Rich
- **Computational Biology:** Bentley Wingert
- **Clinical and Translational Sciences:** Francisco Javier Bonilla-Escobar
- **PMI:** Hiroshi Yano, Helen Rich, Azia Evans
- **Biomedical Master's Program (BMP):** John Gote

BGSA Symposium 2017



The poster for the BGSA Symposium 2017 at the University of Pittsburgh. It features the university's logo and name at the top. The main text reads: "BGSA SYMPOSIUM SAVE THE DATE! HOSTING GRADUATE PROGRAM: CENTER FOR NEUROSCIENCE (CNUP) DAISUKE NAKADA LECTURE". Below this, it identifies the guest lecturer: "PROFESSOR OF PSYCHIATRY, CO-DIRECTOR OF MOLECULAR & BEHAVIORAL NEUROSCIENCE INSTITUTE, UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN HUDA AKIL, Ph.D. WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2017". The location is listed as "THE UNIVERSITY CLUB, 123 UNIVERSITY PLACE, PITTSBURGH, PA 15260" with a note "Schedule TBA". A circular portrait of Huda Akil is on the left. At the bottom, it says "For more information visit <http://www.bgsa.pitt.edu/symposium>" and includes logos for BGSA and the University of Pittsburgh.



Sarah Najjar, CNUP

Thanks to many volunteers and many hours of planning, this year's Symposium went off without a hitch! The day was full of exciting talks and an impressive showcase of student research from an array of biomedical disciplines. Six students were selected to give short presentations about their research: Shelby Hemker (MGDB), Zheqi Li (Pharmacology), Nicole Scharping (Immunology), Adetunji Fayomi (MGDB), Mark Murdock (Pathology), and Pritika Dasgupta (Biomedical Informatics). Each of them did a lovely job! The poster sessions were lively and included a lot of networking and discussion. Over 120 posters were presented and we had an amazing turnout of poster judges. Thank you to the faculty and post-docs who participated. Several awards were presented and we had the pleasure of listening to two of the award recipients.

The winner of the Stephen L. Phillips Award, Abigail Overacre-Delgoffe, told us about her exceptional recent publication in *Cell*. The Distinguished Mentor Award was given to a true inspiration, JoAnne Flynn, who said a few words about her values as a mentor. Additionally, the Most Well-Rounded Student Award was given to Amie Barda. The runner-up for this award was Morgan Preziosi and an honorable mention was given to Matthew Wexler. Congratulations to these well-deserving recipients. The highlight of the day was the Nakada Lecture given by Dr. Huda Akil, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Michigan. She delivered an impressive talk that was also fun and accessible. It was an honor having her at the symposium and spending time with her was a blast! Thanks to all who came out to support this event and thank you again to the amazing volunteers who put it together.

Symposium Happy Hour

The BGSA and friends gathered for a Happy Hour after the BGSA Symposium on Wednesday, October 11th. About 20 graduate students enjoyed plenty of pizza, beer, and fun at Peter's Pub in Oakland! This event was a great way for everyone who participated in the Symposium to unwind after a long day. For many, the evening lasted from just after the Symposium to well into the night!

Meghan Mooring, IBGP, 1st year

BGSA Symposium



Past Events



Abby Stahl, CMP

Pitt Football Home Opener Tailgate

The Pitt Panthers kicked off the 2017 football season with a head-to-head matchup against Youngstown State at Heinz Field over Labor Day weekend. The BGSA assembled right outside Gate C at Green Lot 21 for some pre-game fun, including grilled hamburgers and dogs, sparkly orange juice, and games! Despite the early morning rain, we had a solid turnout of six football fans. By kick-off at 1pm, the sun was shining, and everyone had a wonderful experience taking in the college football game with the city of Pittsburgh in the backdrop. Pitt narrowly defeated Youngstown with a fourth quarter touchdown, for a final score of 28-21. The BGSA is looking forward to tailgating again next year, at the Pitt vs. Penn State showdown, as a fun way to foster school spirit!

BGSA Picnic

On August 22, the BGSA hosted the annual summer picnic at Schenley Park to welcome incoming graduate students. The rain did not stop the School of Medicine faculty and students from enjoying the barbeque, drinks, and games. Turnout was high among graduate students in various programs throughout the School of Medicine. Incoming graduates were able to mingle amongst faculty and older student over cornhole and other board games. There were plenty of hot dogs and hamburgers accompanied by beer and sangria to go around. This was a great event to integrate new graduate students into not only their respective programs but the School of Medicine community.



Nicole Kaminski, IBGP, 1st year

Past Events

Goonies at the Row House

Hey, you guys! On September 21st, BGSA rented out the Row House Theater to host two events: a Leona's ice cream social and a screening of one of the greatest 80's adventure films, The Goonies. The audience was very lively, made up of over twenty BGSA members and guests with a range of familiarity of The Goonies; from those who had never seen it to those that could (and did at times) quote the movie. Attendees received cinema snacks including popcorn, pretzels, and four wonderful flavor options of Leona's ice cream sandwiches, which enhanced the movie-going experience. Everyone had a great time and like the end of The Goonies, attendees also got to walk away with some loot in the form of extra Leona's ice cream sandwiches.

Mondraya Howard, MVM

BGSA Puerto Rico Fundraiser

During the week of October 16th, students involved with the BGSA and the Pittsburgh chapter of Sigma Xi donated their time and baking talents to raise money for Puerto Rico in a campus-wide bake sale. Dozens of cookies, cupcakes, brownies, and fall-themed treats were lovingly prepared and bagged by the graduate students and enthusiastic researchers, and then sold throughout the week at Scaife Hall, Bridgeside Point II, and Hillman Cancer Center. Proceeds from the fundraising event totaled over \$2600 after BGSA's contribution of \$500 and Sigma Xi's donation of \$200, all of which was directly donated to the Hispanic Federation to support Puerto Ricans who were impacted by Hurricane Maria.



Ryan Staudt, Mol Pharm

Pumpkin Fun!



Lisa Clark, Mol Pharm



The BGSA hosted two events during the rainy Halloween Weekend! On Saturday, October 28, the BGSA celebrated the arrival of autumn weather [finally] at Trax Farms. Although the rain did not allow for pumpkin picking and hayride, attendees enjoyed the scenery, shopped at Trax Farms' massive store, and sampled free cider and apples. The next day, we congregated in 1018 BST3 to carve and decorate pumpkins and gourds. Participants enjoyed candy and warm apple cider while listening to spooky tunes. The final creations were awesome, and everyone had a great time!

BGSA Game Night

On Friday the 13th of October, the BGSA gathered to play some spooky games at the Upper Room in Squirrel Hill. The stage was set with over 30 games, tons of pizza, and lots of good company. As a group, we played a round of Incan Gold where we tested our resolve on a quest for riches in ruins, Hanabi where we used our teamwork abilities to create the perfect fireworks show, and finally a Texas Hold'em tournament, which was dominated by Jennifer and Abhishek. During the event, we also collected donations for the Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry! Next time we plan to play Constellations, a game designed by BGSA's very own honorary member, Ian Zhang.



Abby Stahl, CMP

BGSA visits Stress-Free Zone

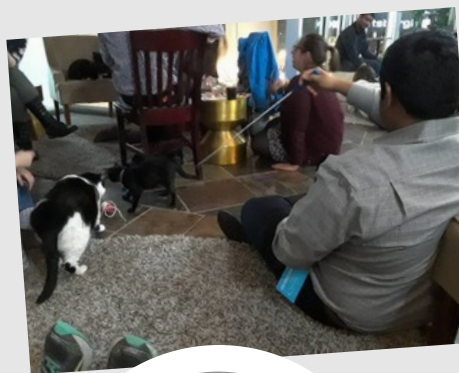
Do you feel like you don't have a minute to spare in your busy day? Are you overwhelmed by everything that's going on in the world these days? What if I told you that all it takes is four minutes to help you feel less stressed and overwhelmed? Just close your eyes, listen to your breathing, and focus on slowing it down. This was one of several exercises that Hallie Stotsky, the director of Pitt's Stress-Free Zone, walked us through during the Get Organized event on November 13. The Stress-Free Zone provides free classes and quiet spaces for meditation, yoga, and Tai Chi as well as resources for students to help with time management and dealing with stress. The major take-away from the event was simple: you do have time to focus on yourself for at least a few minutes a day. Your reagents, cells, and papers can wait five minutes while you all yourself to clear your mind and breathe.



Stephen White, MBSB

Night with cats at the Colony Cafe

On November 30, 20 of us visited the Colony Cafe, a coffeehouse/wine bar + cat cafe on Penn! For only \$5, attendees enjoyed appetizers, a drink of their choice, and time in the upstairs cat loft. The cat loft houses at least 10 cats, all of which are available for adoption! Visitors enjoyed cuddling and playing with the kitties. It was a great way to relax and take a break during the busy end of the semester.



Lisa Clark, Mol Pharm

Check out the Colony Cafe's website:
<https://www.colonycafepgh.com>.



Nicole Kaminsky,
1st year, IBGP



End of Foundations happy hour

On Friday December 8, the BGSA hosted a happy hour to celebrate the end of fall semester and conclusion of the IBGP first year foundations class. This was the first event that the IBGP first year representatives organized. The happy hour was held at the Thirsty Scholar, in Oakland, where there were plenty of beverages and food to go around. Over 50 students in various programs throughout the School of Medicine attended. This event provided a great opportunity to mingle with students in different programs and reminisce over the experiences of the fall semester.

Grant writing workshop

On November 27th, BGSA students eager to learn about the grant writing process filed into a lunchtime seminar led by Dr. Carolyn Coyne. The seminar, which was the first part of an ongoing “How To Write a Successful Grant Proposal Seminar Series” sponsored by the BGSA, served as a general introduction to different grant mechanisms, the format in which they’re written, and how they’re reviewed and scored. In addition to providing a comprehensive overview of grant writing, Dr. Coyne drew from her extensive grant-writing and teaching experience to provide tips for students gearing up to start their F31 and T32 applications.



Ryan Staudt, Mol Pharm

Food drive for Squirrel Hill Food Pantry

From November 13 – December 1, the BGSA collected nonperishable food and paper goods on behalf of the Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry. Donation boxes were available at Biomedical Science Tower 3, Scaife Hall, Bridgeside Point II, and the Pharmacology Department. The Squirrel Hill Community Food Pantry operates via a client-choice model and is the only food pantry in Western Pennsylvania that provides a complete array of kosher foods. Several people donated during the drive, and numerous items were collected! The BGSA sincerely thanks everyone for pitching in and helping out.

On December 11 at 9:30 am, members of the BGSA delivered the donations to the Squirrel Hill Food Pantry, took a tour of the facilities, and learned about volunteer opportunities.



Jennifer Boatz,
MBSB

Student Spotlight



Mondraya Howard, MVM

Mondraya is an active graduate student both in the laboratory and in the greater community. Mondraya's hard work in the lab has resulted in her inclusion on several publications over the past few years and the attainment of an F31 award. She is currently working on a first author manuscript, and she just had the opportunity to present at the American Society for Microbiology Vibrio meeting in Chicago.

Outside of the laboratory setting, Mondraya has been involved in planning MVM day and the Julius Youngner lecture. She is a member of the GPSG event planning committee, and she has served as the head of the community outreach committee for the BGSA. In this position, she has actively participated in helping middle and high school students explore opportunities in STEM related fields, encouraging them to think about pursuing higher education and careers in the sciences.

James Bina, PhD



**Gregory Rompala,
Neuroscience**

Greg has rapidly developed into an outstanding scientist who is not afraid to tackle novel, difficult, high risk projects. His work is focused on the persistent effects of alcohol exposure that extend not only to individuals directly exposed to alcohol, but also on their adult offspring. Greg has demonstrated that paternal preconception alcohol exposure results in offspring with altered sensitivity to alcohol, alcohol consumption, and response to stress. He is currently pushing the field forward by elucidating the role of sperm small noncoding RNAs as mediators of these intergenerational phenotypes. Greg's work has already resulted in four publications and several more are in the works. He has presented his work with talks at the annual meeting of the Research Society on Alcoholism, a Gordon Conference, Pitt, Rutgers, and Mount Sinai. Greg is currently supported by an individual NRSA from the NIAAA.

Gregg E. Homanics, PhD

Travel Grants

Congratulations to BGSA Travel Grant awardees!

Congratulations to Andrew Bradshaw (CMP, Laboratory of Dr. Alan Wells), **winner of the BGSA Travel Award for December!** Andrew is attending **American Society for Cell Biology/EMBO International Meeting in Philadelphia, PA.**

November: Matthew Rich (Center for Neuroscience, Laboratory of Mary Torregrossa) attended Society for Neuroscience Annual Meeting in Washington, DC and **Aliyah Weinstein** (Immunology, Laboratory of Dr. Walter Storkus) attended Immune Imaging Symposium in Rochester, NY

October: Kaitlin Stanley (Clinical Research, Laboratory of Dr. Rakesh Sindhi) attended International Society of Pediatric Oncology in Washington, DC and **Rebecca Kritschil** (Interdisciplinary Biomedical Science, Laboratory of Dr. Nam Vo) attended Philadelphia Spine Research Society (PSRS) and the Orthopedic Research Society (ORS) meetings at Poconos, Lake Harmony, PA

September: Anastasia Gorelova (Molecular Pharmacology, Laboratory of Dr. Patrick Pagano) attended American Heart Association Council on Hypertension in San Francisco, CA and **Aliyah Weinstein** (Immunology, Laboratory of Dr. Walter Storkus) attended International Cancer Immunotherapy Conference in Mainz/Frankfurt, Germany

The BGSA will award **TWO** travel grants of **\$250** per month to two eligible students within School of Medicine's graduate programs. **BGSA Travel Grants can be used to reimburse travel and lodging costs, and event-specific fees.** To learn more and to submit an application, please go to <http://www.bgsa.pitt.edu/travel-grants.html> or email BGSATravelGrants@gmail.com.

Recent Student Publications

Cell Biology and Molecular Physiology

Willett, Rose, José A. Martina, James P. Zewe, **Rachel Wills**, Gerald RV Hammond, and Rosa Puertollano. "TFEB regulates lysosomal positioning by modulating TMEM55B expression and JIP4 recruitment to lysosomes." *Nature Communications*, no. 1 (2017): 1580.

Cellular and Molecular Pathology

Russell JO, Monga SS. "Wnt/ β -Catenin Signaling in Liver Development, Homeostasis, and Pathobiology." *Anna Rev Pathol*. 2017 Nov 9.

Han S, **Olonisakin TF**, Pribis JP, Zupetic J, Yoon JH, Holleran KM, Jeong K, Shaikh N, Rubio DM, Lee JS. A checklist is associated with increased quality of reporting preclinical biomedical research: A systematic review. *PLoS One*. 2017 Sep 13;12(9):e0183591.

Tolani Olonisakin, Janet S. Lee. Fighting Bacterial Pathogens in the Lung: Platelets to the Rescue? *American Journal of Respiratory Cell and Molecular Biology*, in press. Accepted October 2017.

Molecular Pharmacology

Lorenz-Guertin JM, Wilcox MR, Zhang M, Larsen MB, Pilli J, Schmidt BF, Bouchez MP, Johnson JW, Waggoner AS, Watkins SC, Jacob TC. "A versatile optical tool for studying synaptic GABAA receptor trafficking." *J Cell Sci.* 2017 Nov 15;130(22):3933-3945. doi: 10.1242/jcs.205286. E pub 2017 Oct 12.

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Lorenz-Guertin JM, Jacob TC. "GABA type a receptor trafficking and the architecture of synaptic inhibition." *Dev Neurobiol.* 2017 Sep 13. doi: 10.1002/dneu.22536. Review.

Bahreini Amir*, **Zheqi Li***, Peilu Wang, Kevin M. Levine, Nilgun Tasdemir, Lan Cao, Hazel M. Weir et al. "Mutation site and context dependent effects of ESR1 mutation in genome-edited breast cancer cell models." *Breast Cancer Research* 19, no. 1 (2017): 60. (* cofirst author)

Li, Zheqi, Kevin M. Levine, Amir Bahreini, Peilu Wang, David Chu, Ben Ho Park, Steffi Oesterreich, and Adrian V. Lee. "Upregulation of IRS1 enhances IGF1 response in Y537S and D538G ESR1 mutant breast cancer cells." *Endocrinology* (2017).

Molecular Virology and Microbiology

Kwun HJ, **Wendzicki JA**, Shula Y, Moore PS, Chang Y. "Merkel cell polyomavirus small T antigen induces genome instability by E3 ubiquitin ligase targeting." *Oncogene.* 2017 Oct 9. doi: 10.1038/onc.2017.389.

Molecular Biophysics and Structural Biology

Zimmermann K, **Eells R**, Heinrich F, Rintoul S, Josey B, Shekhar P, Lösche M, Stern LJ. "The cytosolic domain of T-cell receptor ζ associates with membranes in a dynamic equilibrium and deeply penetrates the bilayer." *J Biol Chem.* 2017 Oct 27;292(43):17746–17759. PMID: PMC5663876

Beckwitt EC, Van Houten B. "Molecular cartography of mutational landscapes in melanomas." *EMBO J.* 2017 Oct 2;36(19):2812–2814. PMID: PMC5623845

Cassidy CK, **Himes BA**, Luthey-Schulten Z, Zhang P. "CryoEM-based hybrid modeling approaches for structure determination." *Curr Opin Microbiol.* 2017 Nov 3;43:14–23. PMID: 29107896

Biomedical Informatics

Lee, S., & Jiang, X. (2017). Modeling miRNA-mRNA interactions that cause phenotypic abnormality in breast cancer patients. *Plus one*, 12(8), e0182666.

Tsui, F., **Ye, Y.**, Ruiz, V., Cooper, G. F., & Wagner, M. M. (2017). Automated influenza case detection for public health surveillance and clinical diagnosis using dynamic influenza prevalence method. *Journal of Public Health*, 1-8.

Posada, J. D., **Barda, A. J.**, Shi, L., Xue, D., Ruiz, V., Kuan, P. H., ... & Tsui, F. R. (2017). Predictive Modeling for Classification of Positive Valence System Symptom Severity from Initial Psychiatric Evaluation Records. *Journal of Biomedical Informatics.*

Clinical and Translational Sciences, Institute for Clinical Research Education

Click B, Anderson AM, Koutroubakis IE, Rivers CR, Babichenko D, Machicado JD, Hartman DJ, Hashash JG, Dunn MA, Schwartz M, Swoger J, Barrie A, Wenzel S, Regueiro M, Binion DG. Peripheral Eosinophilia in Patients with Inflammatory Bowel Disease Defines an Aggressive Disease Phenotype. *Am J Gastroenterol*. 2017. Accepted for publication.

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Anderson AM, **Click B**, Ramos-Rivers C, Koutroubakis IE, Hashash JG, Dunn MA, Schwartz M, Swoger J, Barrie A, Regueiro M, Binion DG. The Association Between Sustained Poor Quality of Life and Future Opioid Use in Inflammatory Bowel Disease. *Inflamm Bowel Dis*. 2017. Accepted for publication.

Anne S, **Juarez JM**, Shaffer A, Eleff D, Kitsko D, Sydlowski S, Woodson E, Chi D. Utility of intraoperative and postoperative radiographs in pediatric cochlear implant surgery. *Int J Pediatr Otorhinolaryngol*. 2017 Aug;99:44-48. doi: 10.1016/j.ijporl.2017.05.018. Pub 2017 May 26.

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Carter-Brooks CM, Lowder JL, Du AL, Lavelle ES, Guigale LE, Sheperd JP. Restoring genital hiatus to normative-values after apical suspension alone versus with level III support procedures. *Female Pelvic Med Reconstr Surg* [Accepted for publication]

Bonilla-Escobar FJ. Fighting blindness with a Guerrilla: The Guerrilla Eye Service of Pittsburgh. *International Journal of Medical Students* 5 (1), 2017

FJ Bonilla-Escobar, L Espandar, JC Puyana. Chemical Ocular Burn Epidemiology—Dealing With Missing Values. *JAMA ophthalmology* 135 (8), 892-893, 2017

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Bonilla-Escobar FJ, Osorio-Cuellar GV, Pacichana-Quinayáz SG, Sánchez-Rentería G, Fandiño-Losada A, Gutiérrez MI. Do not forget culture when implementing mental health interventions for violence survivors. *Cien Saude Colet*. 2017 Sep;22(9):3053-3059.

Osorio-Cuellar GV, Pacichana-Quinayáz SG, **Bonilla-Escobar FJ**, Fandiño-Losada A, Gutiérrez-Martinez MI. Perceptions about implementation of a Narrative Community-based Group Therapy for Afro-Colombians victims of Violence. *Cien Saude Colet*. 2017 Sep;22(9):3045-3052.

Bonilla-Escobar FJ, Bonilla-Velez J, Tobon-Garcia D, Angel-Isaza AM. Medical Student Researchers in Colombia and Associated Factors with Publication: A Cross-Sectional Study" (MEED-D-17-00738R1). *BMC Med Educ* [Accepted for publication]

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Immunology

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PMI

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Verma, A. H., Richardson, J. P., **Zhou, C.**, Coleman, B. M., Moyes, D. L., Ho, J., ... & Waisman, A. (2017). Oral epithelial cells orchestrate innate type 17 responses to *Candida albicans* through the virulence factor candidalysin. *Science Immunology*, 2(17), eaam8834.

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Frias, A. B., Buechel, H. M., Neupane, A., & D'Cruz, L. M. (2017). Invariant natural killer T-cell development and function with loss of microRNA-155. *Immunology*.

Computational Biology

Wingers BM, Orleans R, Camacho CJ. "Optimal affinity ranking for automated virtual screening validated in prospective D3R grand challenges." *J Compute Aided Mol Des*. 2017 Sep 16.

Spagnolo, Daniel M., Yousef Al-Kofahi, Peihong Zhu, Timothy R. Lezon, Albert Gough, Andrew M. Stern, Adrian V. Lee et al. "Platform for Quantitative Evaluation of Spatial Intratumoral Heterogeneity in Multiplexed Fluorescence Images." *Cancer Research* 77, no. 21 (2017): e71-e74.