



Congratulations to Awardees of the 2025 Verspeeten Family Cancer Centre Translational Cancer Catalyst Research Grant Competition

The Catalyst Grants for Cancer Research Review Panel recently recommended funding for eleven research projects submitted to the 2025 Competition. This program supports translational cancer research with potential to attract external funding and to lead to clinical applications that reduce the burden of cancer. We gratefully acknowledge our community fundraisers, generous donors and the diligent efforts of the London Health Sciences Foundation for the support required to offer these Catalyst Grants to our cancer researchers.

The Review Panel has approved funding for the following awards. Please join us in congratulating the successful applicants:

Dr. Alison Allan (Depts. of Anatomy & Cell Biology, Oncology)

Decoding the hypoxia-driven integrin networks underlying organ-specific breast cancer metastasis

Amount Funded: \$25,000 (Breast Cancer Canada Translational Breast Cancer Research Grant)

Dr. Vanessa Dumeaux (Depts. of Anatomy & Cell Biology, Biochemistry, Oncology)

Co-Applicant: Yubing Xia, (M.Sc. Student, Dept. of Anatomy & Cell Biology)

Translating tumor-immune biology into predictive tools for HER2-positive breast Cancer

Amount Funded: \$25,000 (Breast Cancer Canada Translational Breast Cancer Research Grant)

Dr. John Ronald (Depts. of Medical Biophysics, Oncology, Microbiology & Immunology).

Tracking off-the-shelf NK cell immunotherapies for pancreatic cancer

Amount Funded: \$25,000 (Translational Pancreatic Cancer Research, Baker Centre for Pancreatic Cancer)

Drs. Jim Petrik (Department of Biomedical Sciences, University of Guelph; Western Dept. of Oncology).

Co-PI: Dr. Leslie Jefferies (Department of Biomedical Sciences, University of Guelph)

Co-Applicants: Dr. Trevor Shepherd (Depts. of Anatomy & Cell Biology, Ob/Gyn, Oncology)

Investigating the mechanisms by which hypoxia impairs Natural Killer cell function in the ovarian tumor microenvironment

Amount Funded: \$25,000 (Translational Immuno-oncology Research Grant provided by the Centre for Translational Cancer Research & the Translational Immuno-Oncology Research Group, TIORG)

Dr. Silvia Penuela (Depts. of Anatomy & Cell Biology, Oncology)

Co-PI: Dr. Kathryn Roth (Department of Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery Chair, Cutaneous Oncology)

Panx1 proteoforms as new targets in melanoma

Amount Funded: \$25,000 (Keith Samitt Translational Cancer Research Grant)

Dr. Rohann Correa (Dept. of Oncology)

Co-PI: Dr. Ricardo Fernandes (Dept. of Oncology)

Co-Applicants: Dr. Alp Sener (Dept. of Surgery), **Dr. L. Gunaratnam** (Department of Medicine), **Dr. Stephen Pautler** (Dept. of Surgery), **Dr. Cathy Wang** (Department of Urology), **Dr. Jason King Talao** (Dept. of Oncology)

KIMERA: A prospective study of KIM-1 as a biomarker of response to surgery and stereotactic ablative radiotherapy (SABR) in renal cell carcinoma (RCC)

Amount Funded: \$25,000 (Keith Samitt Translational Cancer Research Grant)

Dr. Sam Asfaha (Depts. of Medicine, Physiology and Pharmacology, Oncology)

EZH2 in human colon cancer tumorigenesis

Amount Funded: \$25,000 (Keith Samitt Translational Cancer Research Grant)

Dr. Fred Dick (Depts of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine, Oncology)

Spatial Transcriptomics of Dormant Ovarian Cancer

Amount Funded: \$25,000 (Ovarian Translational Cancer Research Grant, London Run for Ovarian Cancer)

We graciously acknowledge the generous support of Mr. Keith Samitt, Breast Cancer Canada, The London Run for Ovarian Cancer, The Baker Centre for Pancreatic Cancer, and our other generous supporters of cancer research in London and the greater Southwestern Ontario region.

We also thank the members of the peer-review committee for their time, effort and diligence in conducting the reviews, which is essential for ensuring that these funds support the highest quality translational cancer research: **Dr. Chris Pin (Chair of the Review Panel), and the reviewers: Drs. Nathalie Berube, David D'Souza, Rod Dekoter, Joe Mymryk, Matt Cecchini, Dan Breadner, and Eugene Wong.**

We are grateful to Gail McConnell (Cancer Research Laboratory Program, VFCC) for providing essential administrative support!

Congratulations and well done!

Chris Pin Ph.D., Chair-2025 Catalyst Grant Review Panel
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