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AT THE FOREFRONT

UChicagoMedicine

Comprehensive Cancer Center

Trainee Associate Member Monthly Newsletter



Join us on LinkedIn, where we
share timely career, fellowship,
and funding opportunities



Not yet a TAM Member? Enroll
today!



Questions? Feedback? Email us!

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UCCCC PhotoVoice

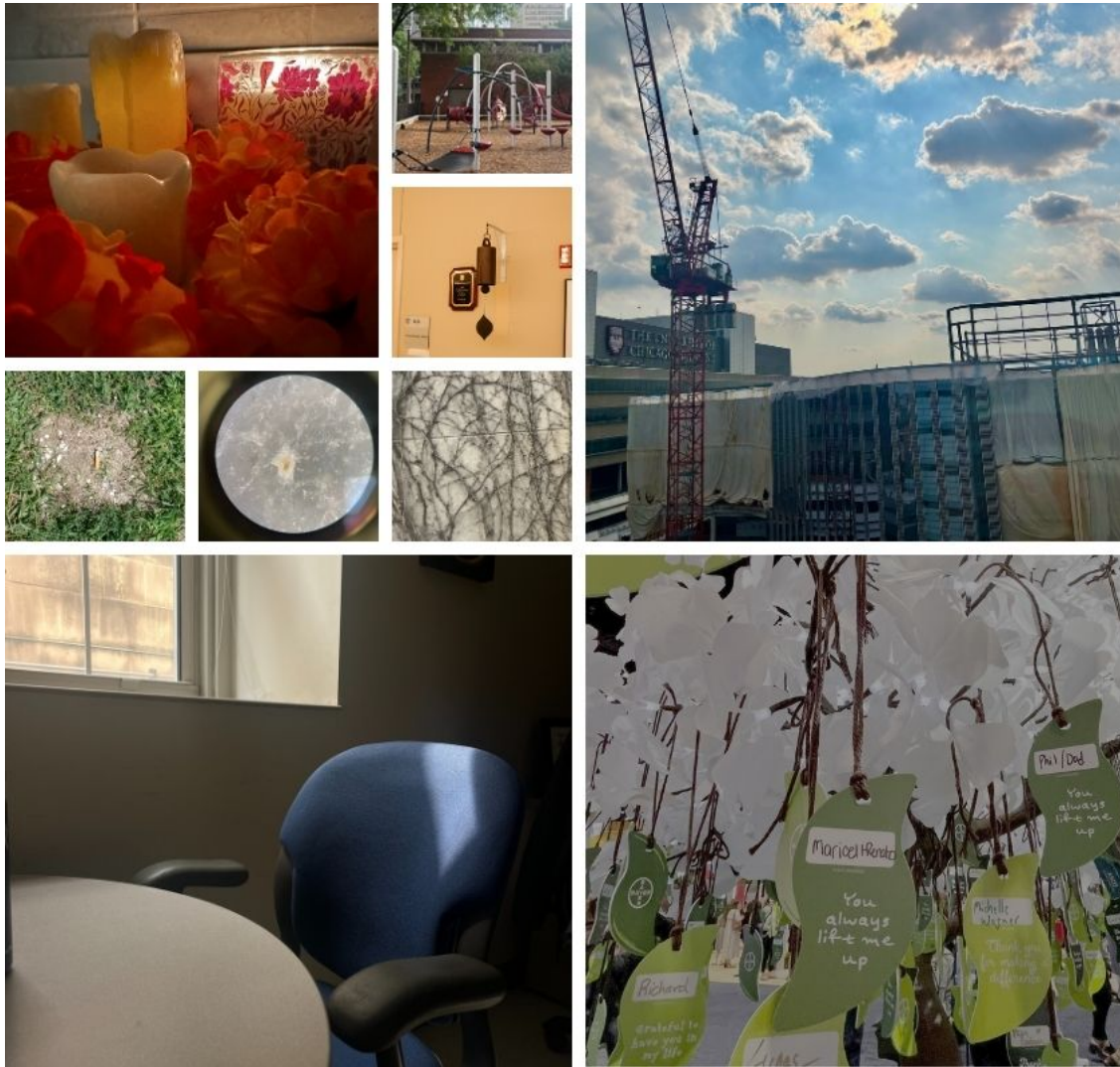
IGNITE Symposium

Free Poster Printing

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Share your story: Office of Education and Career Development seeks photos for trainee-driven project

The UCCCC Office of Education and Career Development invites trainees to submit photographs and short captions exploring how cancer touches our lives at the individual, family, and community level. From scientific images to abstract themes, the project aims to build a powerful visual collection that reflects the ways cancer shapes our world.

Submissions are always welcome, and contributing is simple: take a meaningful photo, write a caption of 100 words or less, and upload your entry at <https://redcap.link/PhotoVoice>.

PhotoVoice submissions will be displayed periodically at OECD symposia, including our upcoming UCCCC Pathway Programs Symposium on August 6th. A printed selection was previously displayed at the DuSable Museum in August 2025. In the future, we hope to expand the reach of this project to more community events in our catchment area.

Check out our existing compilation of PhotoVoice submissions [here](#).



The University of Chicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center invites you to join the **2026 Ignite Cancer Research Symposium**. This retreat is for the UChicago cancer community to learn about exciting new advances in cancer research with a focus on team science, investigator-initiated clinical trials and developing multi-investigator grants.

Monday, August 24, 2026

Check-in & Lunch 11:30 AM-12:00 PM | Symposium 12:00-4:30 PM
Networking Reception 4:30-5:30 PM

Knapp Center for Biomedical Discovery (KCBD), 1st floor
900 E. 57th Street, Chicago, IL



KEYNOTE SPEAKER:

Eileen White, PhD

Deputy Director and Chief Scientific Officer,
Board of Governors Professor,
Department of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry
Rutgers Cancer Institute at Rutgers University

TALK TITLE:

CANCER METABOLISM



2026 Ignite Symposium is generously sponsored
by the Cancer Research Foundation.

Registration deadline:
August 14, 2026



For questions and accommodations contact
rspirossoff@bsd.uchicago.edu



PROJECT TITLE

Authors
¹Your department

*Your Department
Logo*

ABSTRACT Enter Text Here	MATERIALS AND METHODS Enter Text Here	SUMMARY Enter Text Here
BACKGROUND Enter Text Here	RESULTS Enter Text Here	FUTURE DIRECTIONS Enter Text Here
HYPOTHESIS/OBJECTIVES Enter Text Here		ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS Enter Text Here
		LITERATURE CITATIONS Enter Text Here

[Funding statements] Poster printing was provided by the UChicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center Office of Education and Career Development.

Need a poster printed for an upcoming conference?

The Office of Education and Career Development is pleased to support UCCCC affiliates' participation in conferences through complimentary poster printing: <https://redcap.link/UCCCCPosterPrinting>

Poster Printing Guidelines

1. You must request a poster at least 2 weeks in advance of the date by which you need the poster. *Your poster doesn't need to be ready when you request, so just submit your request as soon as you know you are presenting!*
2. You must be affiliated with the UChicago Medicine Comprehensive Cancer Center.
3. You must be the presenting author on the poster.
4. You must be presenting work related to cancer.
5. Poster dimensions must be 48in x 36in (width x height).

For additional information, please contact Michelle Domecki (mdomecki@bsd.uchicago.edu).

UCCCC Member of the Month



Pallavi Surana, PhD
Postdoctoral Fellow

I am part of the AI Pillar of the UChicago AI-Driven Cancer Drug Discovery and Development Program, where I focus on biological discovery and AI method development. My research emphasizes regulatory mechanisms in the tumor microenvironment, metabolism, and systems-level modeling, with the goal of developing large-scale AI models to better understand cancer biology. My background is in bioinformatics, and the central hypothesis driving my PhD research is that the tissue-specific regulatory logic of the healthy human genome can reveal the regulatory aberrations that occur in cancer. By focusing on the non-coding genome and its regulatory elements, I develop

computational frameworks to decipher these mechanisms and advance precision oncology.

You recently attended the ISMB 2026 Conference. How was that experience?

During the conference, I presented an oral talk in the Varl COSI titled "PGViS: Personal Genome Variant Interpretation Score for Lung Cancer Genomes." Our work introduces a statistical framework that integrates genome foundation models (DNABERT) with population variant statistics to quantify individual non-coding germline regulatory risk in non-small cell lung cancer.

Presenting at ISMB provided an excellent opportunity to receive valuable feedback from experts in computational biology, AI, statistical genetics, and cancer genomics. I attended sessions spanning variant interpretation, genome foundation models, machine learning, and precision medicine, which broadened my perspective on emerging approaches for interpreting non-coding variants and developing clinically relevant AI models. The conference also enabled networking with researchers from academia, national laboratories, and industry, fostering discussions that may lead to future collaborations.

The TAM Professional Development Award played a key role in making this experience possible, and I sincerely appreciate UCCCC's support in advancing my professional development and research in cancer genomics and precision oncology.

This conference is the flagship event by ISCB (Society for Computational Biology) and has a good lineup of topics. Anyone in the bioinformatics, biophysics, computational genomics, etc fields should attend the conference. It also has a track to submit manuscripts and get faster peer review. The manuscripts are usually novel methods or applications for ideas centered in basic biology to precision medicine. Every year they have workshops to kickstart the conference where you learn the recent advancements and how to use them. I have benefited from other ISCB sister conferences like GLBIO in the past.

What was your first job?

My first job was a 10-month co-op at GSK after completing my master's degree and before starting my PhD. There, I worked on developing computational frameworks using reference-based tumor deconvolution methods to better characterize the cellular composition of tumors.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I enjoy taking long walks and hiking on the weekends. I am also a student of

Indian classical vocal music and regularly take exams as part of my training. In addition, I enjoy playing tennis occasionally and going kayaking whenever the weather is nice.

What's the best advice you've ever received?

Someone once told me that even if you're not the smartest or the best today, nothing can beat resilience and consistency. If you keep showing up and putting in the work, you'll eventually surprise yourself. Once you experience that progress, the consistency you've built becomes its own motivation to keep going.

What meal reminds you of home?

My roots are in the deserts of northwestern India, I was born in eastern India, and I was raised in southern India, so my connection to food reflects all of those places. My ultimate comfort meal is sambar/dal (a savory lentil stew) with rice, spicy pickle, and fresh herb chutneys. Every time I cook this simple meal, my apartment in America fills with the aroma of home.

What's something you wish more UCCCC Trainee Associate Members knew exists at UChicago?

UChicago offers excellent resources to support early-career development. I became more aware of these opportunities while looking for funding to attend a conference, and with Dept. of Fellowship's guidance, I received a personalized list of resources that matched my background and career goals. I also encourage fellow Trainee Associate Members to ask questions proactively, the UCCCC community has been incredibly helpful and responsive. Finally, keep an eye out for announcements, as many valuable opportunities are shared through them.

Member Accomplishments

Recently published a paper, presented at a conference, or received a fellowship/award? Have an upcoming thesis defense or a new job? Let us know so we can celebrate you!

Submit here: https://redcap.link/UCCCC_TAM_Accomplishments

Publications

Pallavi Surana et al.: "[TSProm: Deep learning framework to predict tissue-specific regulatory logic](#)." NAR Genomics and Bioinformatics, 2026.

PhD Defenses

Jonathan Dowgielewicz will defend his PhD work on August 13th: "Reprogramming of cellular metabolism by the stress hormone glucocorticoid."

Benjamin Nicholson will defend his PhD work on August 13th: "Oncogenic PIK3CA coordinates tumor microenvironment-directed and tumor cell-intrinsic programs of immune evasion."

Conferences

Pallavi Surana attended and presented at the International Society for Computational Biology (ISMB) Conference in Washington, DC.

Professional Development & Outreach Opportunities

Bookmark these tabs to stay in the loop:

[Main UChicago calendar link](#)

[UCCCC calendar link](#)

Check out this week's [UCCCC OECD Bulletin Board](#) for current opportunities!

Your 2025-2026 TAM Representatives

Please contact your TAM reps with any questions about TAM membership, suggestions for member programming and benefits, and upcoming events!



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