2025 SMDP Biotech Mentors

Andrew Adams, PhD, Group Vice President - Molecule Discovery & Director of Lilly Institute for Genetic Medicines, Eli Lilly

Andrew serves as the Group VP Molecule Discovery & Director of the Lilly Institute for Genetic Medicine. Andrew is responsible for leading the discovery of new therapies across Lilly, including small molecule, antibody, peptides and genetic medicines. Andrew also serves as head of research in core strategic areas of pain and neurodegeneration.

In his work leading the institute for genetic medicine, Andrew is responsible for developing a growing portfolio of genetic medicines at Lilly, spanning RNA, gene therapy and gene editing.

Andrew holds a degree in biology and a doctorate in zoology from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. Prior to joining Lilly in 2011, Andrew was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard Medical School. During his time at Lilly, he has served in a number of roles in discovery, external innovation and as a leader of Lilly's early discovery teams, spanning diabetes & complications, neuroscience, genetic medicine and most recently molecule discovery broadly.

Khary Adams, MBA
Senior Director, Discovery Program Manager, Incyte Corporation

Khary has built a distinguished career in Discovery Research within the pharmaceutical industry. Currently serving as Senior Director and Discovery Program Manager at Incyte in Wilmington, DE, Khary plays a crucial role in driving process improvement initiatives, including project and risk management, while also nurturing high-performance teams. Prior to this, Khary served as Senior Director of Laboratory Animal Resources at Incyte, where he expanded his organizational responsibilities to oversee the management and operations of research facilities and laboratory animal care/research programs.

Khary's professional journey began as an Assistant Scientist at Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceuticals Research and Development (JJPRD), where he immersed himself in pharmaceutical research, contributing significantly to the development of medicines and deepening his understanding of industry intricacies, thus laying a solid foundation for his subsequent achievements in Discovery and Pre-clinical Research. Following his tenure at JJPRD, Khary assumed the role of US Head, Laboratory Animal Sciences (Associate Director) at AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals. Here, he led efforts to develop and enhance partnerships with therapeutic areas to align his department with in vivo/science strategy and objectives, ensuring the maintenance of high-quality animal models for seamless study conduct.

In addition to his professional pursuits, Khary holds an MBA in Pharmaceutical Management from Drexel University's LeBow College of Business, an MS in Laboratory Animal Science from Drexel University College of Medicine, and a BS in Animal Science Biology from Virginia State University. He is also actively engaged in various professional affiliations, holding board roles in organizations related to laboratory animal science, research, and pharmaceutical management.

In his leisure time, Khary enjoys the adrenaline rush of distance and trail running, attending live concerts and comedy shows, exploring new destinations through travel, and passionately cheering on all Philadelphia home sports teams.

Toni Ajavon Hartmann, PhD, Director, Clinical Pharmacology, Bristol Meyers Squibb

Antoinette (Toni) is currently a Director for Clinical Pharmacology and Pharmacometrics with Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS) in NJ. Toni earned her PhD from Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus and began her career in academia at the Touro College of Pharmacy in New York City and then transitioned to industry. Her industry career began in Bayer HealthCare in Whippany New Jersey, and she later relocated to join Bayer in Berlin, Germany. At Bayer she supported different phase Oncology studies.

Toni returned to the United States in 2021, joining the Cardiovascular Clinical Pharmacology and Pharmacometrics department at BMS, where she now supports programs in the thrombosis space. She is a co-lead of the Internal Engagement Pillar under the Black Organization for Leadership Development (BOLD), a People & Business Resource Groups (PBRGs) at BMS. Toni is also a member of the American Society for Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics, where she also serves as a member of the Board of Directors. During her free time, Toni loves spending time with family, traveling, watching/playing sports, watching soap operas and cooking.

Omobolaji Akala, Sr, MD, PhD
Associate Vice President, Clinical Research, Merck

Omobolaji "Bolaji" is the Executive Director for Early Oncology Clinical Development at Merck. Bolaji earned his MD and PhD from the University of Michigan and Stanford. His undergraduate degree in Cell and Molecular Biology is from the University of Maryland. Bolaji has lived in Nigeria, Manchester, the United Kingdom as well as Maryland, Michigan, California and New York. He is a "Rabid Manchester United Fan" and enjoys Marvel Comics and Afrobeats.

Maria Alvim Gaston, PhD, Executive Director, Talent Development Academy, Molecule Discovery, Eli Lilly

Maria is an Executive Director in the Talent Development Academy organization, part of Lilly Research Laboratories. She is a result-oriented Talent Acquisition professional and recruiting manager with experience across STEM fields. Her professional career spans over 25 years in the biopharmaceutical industry, serving in roles across therapeutic areas, computational chemistry, research IT, discovery operations, open innovation, and talent acquisition. Experienced in the pharmaceutical industry, she is proficient at driving and building innovative platforms to achieve tangible results. Maria is an impactful and driven leader focused on developing a diverse group of young, emerging scientists from the early stages of their careers. She is a flexible, creative thinker, able to operate both strategically and tactically. Passionate about innovative business models and their execution, she has a track record of high productivity based on her ability to work in a team environment. At present, Maria has the responsibility for the Talent Development Academy, identifying the next generation workforce for Eli Lilly R&D. This work requires strong partnerships with internal and external partners. She is passionate about science and its use to create new medicines that improve the lives of patients around the world. Maria is dedicated to creating an environment where everyone has a sense of belonging. She loves mentoring students, early career professionals, and helping individuals achieve their best throughout their careers.

Dozie Amuzie, PhD
Head JLABS Canada, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine

As Head of Johnson & Johnson Innovation, JLABS in Canada, Dozie is responsible for external engagement, innovation sourcing, company onboarding, portfolio management, operational excellence, educational programming and P&L. He catalyzes and supports the translation of science and technology into valuable solutions for patients and consumers across the pharmaceutical, medical device, consumer and healthtech sectors.

Dozie earned a dual PhD in Comparative Medicine and Integrative Toxicological Sciences at Michigan State University and, thereafter, completed a residency in Veterinary Pathology at Michigan State. He also received a D.V.M from University of Nigeria and is a Diplomate with American Board of Toxicology, as well as a Diplomate of American College of Veterinary Pathologists.

Luciano Apponi, PhD, Associate Vice President, Head of RNA Biology, Molecule Discovery, Eli Lilly

Luciano went to Pharmacy school then earned a PhD in Biotechnology working in mRNA metabolism in yeast in the Sao Paulo State University in Brazil. After that he went to Emory University for a postdoc working on muscle disease caused by errors in mRNA metabolism. Since then, Luciano has worked in Research and Early Drug Discovery in a wide range of oligonucleotide modalities in liver and muscle diseases at Dicerna, Wave Life Sciences, Sarepta and at Tessera Therapeutics working on gene editing for rare liver disease indications. He currently heads the RNA Biology team at Lilly Genetic Medicine site in Boston.

Paul Ardayfio, PhD
Associate Vice President, Global Patient Safety, Medical, Eli Lilly

Paul started his Lilly career as a postdoctoral scientist in Neuroscience Discovery. He currently works in neuroscience clinical development as Associate Vice President, Global Patient Safety (GPS) Medical-Neuroscience. In GPS Medical, he has supported neuroscience molecules across development phases from early phase to post-marketing.

Paul completed his undergrad studies at Wayne State University and PhD in Neuroscience at Harvard University.

Raka Basu Kong, PhD, Executive MSL, Breast Cancer, AstraZeneca

As an Executive Medical Science Liaison (MSL) in the Breast Oncology Medical Affairs Team at AstraZeneca, Raka is dedicated to contributing to meaningful advancements in breast cancer treatment. With over 6 years in the MSL role at AstraZeneca, her focus has been on launching therapies that improve patients' lives by combining scientific insight with practical applications. Raka's journey began with a PhD in Genetics from Tufts Medical Center, where she discovered her passion for medical affairs within the pharmaceutical industry. Before joining AstraZeneca, she served as a Medical Director at Tesaro, which enriched her understanding of medical affairs and other cross-functional roles within the industry.

Outside of her professional pursuits, Raka enjoys a vibrant life in Boston with her husband, energetic 3-year-old son, and beloved 12-year-old dog. In her free time, she indulges in baking and traveling the world with her family. As a mentor, Raka is eager to share her journey and insights with SMDP academic scholars, offering guidance and support as they navigate their own paths.

Jim Beck, PhD
Vice President, Investigative ADME & Toxicology, Eli Lilly

Jim has been at Eli Lilly for over twenty years. He currently is the Vice President, Investigative ADME & Toxicology. Jim received his Bachelors of Science at University of Missouri-Columbia and went on to get a PhD in Organic Chemistry at Indiana University Bloomington.

Richard Besingi, PhD
R&D Manager, Skin Health Upstream Innovation, Kenvue

Richard is a rising R&D leader in Kenvue. He holds a PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Notre Dame, where he focused on the secretion and folding mechanisms of autotransporter proteins, and a postdoctoral fellowship from the University of Florida where he investigated the role of amyloid proteins in bacterial biofilms.

At Kenvue Richard has advanced through roles with increasing levels of responsibility and leadership. His journey began in Oral Care, where he made significant contributions to the Listerine brand. He then expanded his expertise to Self Care/OTC , supporting brands such as Tylenol, Motrin, and Zarbee's. In these roles, he led the technical identification and assessment of new technologies, advanced key programs to support business strategies.

Currently, Richard is at the forefront of global innovation strategies for resilient skin, hydration, and moisture barrier. His work has significantly enhanced the product pipeline and market positioning for the Neutrogena, Aveeno and Lubriderm brands. He has developed and executed go-to-market strategies, managed a diverse team of scientists, and fostered an environment of continuous learning and innovation.

Richard is a 2016 SMDP Biotech alum and has been actively involved as a member of the SMDP Outreach & Planning Committee. He has fostered strategic partnerships, managed candidate and mentor selection, and developed mentorship and career development programs for SMDP alumni.

On a personal note, Richard is married to Cecile, and their son Jason was born a few days after Richard attended the SMDP Biotech 2016 training.

Pascal Bonaventure, PharmD, Senior Director, Team Leader
Neuropsychiatry Discovery, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine

Pascal is the Biology Team Leader for Neuropsychiatry Discovery at Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine, based in San Diego, CA. He leads the team's efforts to utilize cutting-edge molecular biological techniques to enhance our understanding of brain disorders and to discover innovative treatments aimed at alleviating the burden, disability, and devastation caused by neuropsychiatric diseases.

Pascal earned his Doctor of Pharmacy degree from the University of Liège (Belgium), a Master's degree in Pharmacology/Toxicology from the University of Montpellier (France), and a doctorate in Neuroscience from the Vrije Universiteit of Amsterdam (The Netherlands). He began his career at Johnson & Johnson in 1999 and has since authored or co-authored over 90 research papers.

Outside of his professional pursuits, Pascal enjoys spending time with his family and is an avid mountain biker.

Yannick Boni, PhD, Senior Research Investigator, Chemistry, Incyte

Yannick was born and raised in Tanguieta (Northern Benin/West Africa). He obtained his Bachelor of Science in Biology in 2011 before moving to the United States that same year. After spending time honing his English skills in the Spring of 2012, his academic journey in the US began at Alabama A&M University culminating into a Bachelor of Science with a double major in Chemistry and Physics minoring in Mathematics. In Fall 2017, Yannick transitioned to Emory University where he completed his PhD in Organic Chemistry.
His research largely focused on Asymmetric C-H bond transformations using dirhodium carbenoids. He held a short postdoctoral fellowship to investigate small molecules for the treatment of sickle cell anemia. Among his proud accomplishments, Yannick is a co-founder of Emory's NOBCChE-chapter.

In 2022, Yannick joined Incyte corporation as a medicinal chemist where he now holds the position of Senior Research Investigator.

Sean Bowen, PhD, Associate Director, Discovery Chemistry, Incyte

Sean was born in northern California and moved to Indiana at an early age. He earned his BS from Purdue University and a PhD in analytical chemistry from Texas A&M University. After completing his graduate studies, he undertook a postdoctoral fellowship at the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) in Copenhagen, which led to a research faculty position in the Center for Magnetic Resonance at DTU.

In 2017, Sean transitioned to industry, joining Merck Research Labs in West Point, Pennsylvania, as a senior scientist specializing in structure elucidation using a range of analytical techniques. Since 2020, he has been with Incyte Research Institute in Wilmington, Delaware, where he leads analytical support for projects across both chemistry and biology. Sean currently serves as Associate Director in the Discovery Chemistry department.

Outside of work, Sean enjoys traveling, cooking, home improvement, and exploring modern technologies such as 3D printing.

Francesca Casano, PhD, Senior Scientist, Oncology, AstraZeneca

Francesca has been employed at AstraZeneca since Nov 2020, supporting several new ADCs at the preclinical stage to successfully advance their development for hematological indications. She has had key responsibilities in driving preclinical studies of new assets to understand MOAs, payloads sensitivity, surface target expression, DNA Damage response signaling cascade triggered by ADCs, bystander activity, combinations studies, and resistance mechanisms. She had the opportunity to strengthening project leadership skills across the portfolio, delivering full data packages for milestone progression and building a cross-functional network of colleagues from different functions. Francesca has presented at project reviews and governance interactions.

In her previous role of Senior Research Scientist at Bristol-Myers Squibb, Princeton, NJ, Francesca has been advancing the implementation and validation of assay endpoints in clinical samples of RA, SLE, IBD and IO targets to support translational studies and biomarker's discovery for novel therapeutics. Francesa is looking forward to mentoring and guiding a SDMP scholar, honing her skills and extensive experience in the pharmaceutical environment, focusing on providing guidance, establishing a strong, trusting relationship, and fostering growth. She will work with her mentee to define his/her goals, providing constructive feedback, periodically reviewing progress, adjusting plans as needed, reflecting on the learning journey, encouraging to embrace challenges, learn from mistakes, and continually strive for improvement.

Upendra Dahal, PhD
Scientific Director, Pharmacokinetic and Drug Metabolism, Amgen

Upendra is currently a Scientific Director in Pharmacokinetic and Drug Metabolism (PKDM) Department at Amgen. He represents PKDM in multi-disciplinary teams from discovery to development, oversees small molecule projects and outsourcing of ADME studies, and supervises scientists and PTRs. Proficient in designing in vitro and in vivo studies to characterize/understand PKDM properties of the drug candidates, provides recommendations to the teams to design better compounds with minimal metabolic and DDI liabilities.

Leading the biotransformation group for small molecule drugs, Upendra reviews data, monitors studies, and addresses PKDM challenges to mitigate risks. His role involves preparing as well as reviewing regulatory documents for IND and NDA submissions. Previously worked at Celgene and Pfizer, Upendra boasts diverse research interests, evidenced by a strong track record of peer-reviewed publications across various domains. Upendra received his PhD focusing on enzyme kinetics and drug metabolism from Washington State University.

Christina de Zafra, PhD, Associate Research Fellow, Drug Safety R&D, Pfizer

Christina is an Associate Research Fellow within Drug Safety R&D at Pfizer. She received her PhD at University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry. Christina went on to do her post doc in the Pharmacology department at University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus. She is a Board-certified safety assessment scientist with 20+ years of experience in the development of multi-modality biotherapeutics (including mAbs, fusion proteins, ADCs, oncolytic viruses); specialization in oncology, experience in neuroscience-, ophthalmic- and infectious disease-focused drug development.

Ken Dower, PhD, Research Fellow, Fibrosis Group Head, Pfizer

Ken is a PhD Scientist with a background in molecular and cell biology, inflammation, and fibrosis, and 10 years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry. Ken currently works at Pfizer as a Research Fellow, Fibrosis Group Head. He received his Bachelors in Molecular and Cell Biology at University of California Berkely. Ken went on to Brandeis University where he earned his PhD.

Jim Dunleavy, PhD
Senior Scientist, Antibody Drug Conjugates Oncology, AstraZeneca

Jim leads the development of novel targeted therapies for solid tumor treatment. He earned his PhD at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill studying mechanisms of melanoma neovascularization, then completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the National Cancer Institute making antibody based therapeutics for solid tumors, including antibody drug conjugates and CAR-T cells. He was awarded multiple grants and awards as an academic researcher including pre- and post-doctoral fellowships, institutional grants, and a US Department of Defense Horizon award before moving to biopharmaceutical research.

Jim has been at AstraZeneca for 3 years leading bioscience discovery of antibody drug conjugates and radioimmunoconjugates. He has served as a mentor for multiple PhD and postdoctoral fellows and was an invited speaker on careers in pharma at the University of Virginia in 2024. He is passionate about training the next generation of scientist-researchers and has led outreach to multiple external partners to introduce AstraZeneca science throughout Maryland.

English Dupree Willis, MD
Executive Director, Drug Safety CSRM, Merck

English is a pediatrician and graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine. She joined Merck in 2008 after a long career in academic medicine teaching medical students and residents and providing direct patient care to children, teens, and young adults. As a clinician, she believes that pediatricians should advocate and care for the whole child which includes mentoring and supporting children and teens in all things that encourage their continued growth and success. During her years in academic medicine, she volunteered on several not-for-profit community boards serving underserved populations and volunteered for over a decade in an academic capacity with the National Board of Medical Examiners; serving as a member of their Board of Directors and as the first chair of their Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce.

English works within Merck Research Laboratories (MRL) in the division of Clinical Safety and Risk Management. She is currently an Executive Director in the General and Specialty Medicine group and serves as the Executive Sponsor of Merck's Health Literacy Community of Practice. She also serves as MRL on the Skills First champion. During her time at Merck, she has added to her bibliography by publishing 5 original articles and 3 abstracts. Her passion for mentoring, health literacy and enhancing consumer and patient communications remains central to her work at Merck. This will be English's 4th year as a SMDP mentor.

She loves to garden!

Eileen Engelberg, Director of Business Performance & Head of PD Business Strategy Integration, Amgen

Eileen is the Director of Business Performance and Head of PD Business Strategy Integration. She runs the business office and serves is the Chief of Staff for this function. Eileen leads budgeting and financial management, goal and KPI tracking, Continuous Improvement, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging, and department-level strategic initiatives. Eileen joined Amgen in 2017 and worked in Business Analysis and External Process Development and Final Product Technologies prior to her current role. She was a Graduate Intern in the Operations Leadership Program in the summer of 2016. Before Amgen, Eileen worked within various academic research labs studying Alzheimer's, Schizophrenia, and breast cancer. She holds a bachelor's degree in neuroscience and psychology from the University of Colorado at Boulder and a master's degree in business and bioscience from the Keck Graduate Institute. Eileen is passionate about advancing early technology in the healthcare space.

Carl Erwin Johnson, MD, Principal Scientist, Outcomes Research, Merck

Carl is a pediatrician trained at Boston Children's Hospital. He earned a BS in chemistry from The Ohio State University, where he was a varsity lettermen in Men's Gymnastics, a MD from The Mount Sinai School of Medicine, a Master of Education from The Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a Master of Science in Clinical Research from New York University/Mount Sinai. Carl completed post-residency training fellowships in Pediatric Emergency Medicine (Boston Children's) and Medical Education (Harvard Medical School). Before joining Merck in 2018, Carl was a physician executive in the healthcare information technology (Cerner) and healthcare analytics (Optum) industries. Carl has held faculty positions as a health services researcher conducting mixed methodology studies to address pediatric asthma health disparities in underserved communities at Harvard Medical School, The University of California at San Francisco, The Ohio State University, and The Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

Carl is a Fellow of the American Medical Informatics Association (FAMIA), where he will complete his role as Chair of the AMIA Public Policy Committee at the end of 2024. He is a Principal Scientist in the Biostatics and Research Decision Sciences (BARDS) division in Merck Research Laboratory (MRL) focusing on digital healthcare data policy and strategy and its relevance to real world data (RWD) used to generate real world evidence (RWE) across the healthcare ecosystem. When not helping to transform healthcare. Carl enjoys tea, playing tennis, wine, cooking, improving his French (and traveling to France), taking photographs, reading historical fiction, listening to music (jazz, opera, classical, R&B, lounge), and watching Ohio State Football. Carl and his partner are proud cat dads of pandemic rescues, Pinot and Grigio.

Ryan Esquejo, PhD, Principal Scientist Internal Medicine, Pfizer

Ryan is a Principal Scientist in the Internal Medicine Research Unit at Pfizer Inc. in Cambridge, MA.
He is part of a cross-functional team that studies mechanisms that are involved in the regulation of energy balance with the aim to identify novel therapeutics for patients with obesity. Ryan received his BA in Biology from Swarthmore College and his PhD in Biomedical Sciences from Sanford Burnham Prebys, studying lipid metabolism. He completed his postdoctoral training at Pfizer studying glucose metabolism

Ryan enjoys photography, traveling, running, playing pickleball and exploring new restaurants.

William Faria, Global Head of Belonging & Inclusion Business & People Solutions, Millipore Sigma,Merck KGaA

Bill is the Global Head of Belonging & Inclusion Business and People Solutions for MilliporeSigma, a business of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany. His main responsibilities include leading a team that drives inclusion training and events globally, coordinating global Employee Resource Groups and contributing to HR process and systems to embed belonging and inclusion principles.

Prior to that he spent 6 years in manufacturing, as the Head of Danvers Operations at MilliporeSigma, running the 1,000+ person, 24x7 primary Mobius manufacturing site as well as Quality, Design Engineering and Process Engineering. Bill led the site during COVID-19 where the site supplied critical assemblies to multiple suppliers that enabled vaccine production globally, opening and staffing a new production building in record time (6 months vs 2-3 years).

Bill's first role at MilliporeSigma was the Head of Operational Excellence from 2010-2016, responsible for 30 global full-time process improvement project resources across the Integrated Supply Chain Organization. The team drove process improvement projects using Lean and Six Sigma tools and methodologies while also coaching, teaching and mentoring projects across the entire division.

Bill started his career in GE Plastics on the Information Management Leadership Program (IMLP), a 2-year rotational leadership program with 4 rotations across different sites. He spent a 13-year career with GE in a variety of roles including Lean and Six Sigma Black Belt and Master Black Belt roles, customer service management, IT, sales, and purchasing. He graduated from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst with a BBA in Operations and Information Management.

Bill is passionate about people and continuous improvement. He received the Respect award from MilliporeSigma in 2019, acknowledging his efforts to create an open, honest, inclusive work environment at the Danvers facility. He is married to wife Ellen and has 2 dogs, a ten-year-old Boxer named Benny, and a two-year-old French Bulldog named Archie. He enjoys spending time with family, traveling to Charleston, South Carolina and is an avid basketball and football fan.

John Ferbas, PhD, Senior Director, Amgen

John received an MS (1989) and PhD (1993) from the University of Pittsburgh School of Public Health & completed a post-doctoral fellowship at the UCLA School of Medicine in 1996. After service at the UCLA School of Medicine and Greater Los Angeles VA Medical Center as an Associate Professor, John joined Amgen (1999), where he has held positions of increasing responsibility. He currently works in the Research Technologies group as the Senior Director of the Cytometry and Imaging Sciences Team, which represents an integrated core laboratory facility comprised of flow cytometers (analyzers and sorters), single and multiphoton confocal microscopes and label free detection strategies that can measure fluorescence, bioluminescence and label-free cell attributes.

John oversees a group of approximately 14 scientists and one post-doc at Amgen laboratories located in Thousand Oaks, San Francisco CA and Rockville MD. He interacts with hundreds of research scientists across these sites. He is a former reviewer for the NIH Small Business Innovation Research / Small Business Technology Transfer Research Study Section and also served as an Editorial Board Member for the Journal of Clinical Vaccine Immunology (Formerly Clinical and Diagnostic Laboratory Immunology). Johns' current interests are centered on high-dimensional, innovative analyses of cell biology as applied to important questions that address discovery, development and commercialization of biologic therapeutics.

Maria Fernanda Scantamburlo Fernandes, MD
Associate VP, Global Patient Safety, Medical, Eli Lilly

Maria is from Brazil. She became as an OBGYN at Federal University of Medicine in Salvador. Maria focused her professional life in Obstetrics and Gynecology and broadened her abilities after she pursued a fellowship in Pathology of the Lower Genital Tract, where she continued to explore infectious disease, mostly HPV related diseases.

Working in the pharmaceutical industry allows her to continue helping patients and focusing on science at the same time. Maria has been at Eli Lilly for over 8 years. She currently is the Associate Vice President of Global Patient Safety-Medical.

Marelys Figueroa, Associate Director, Regulatory Affairs, Kenvue

Marelys is an Associate Director, Regulatory Affairs responsible for the Skin Health Global Face portfolio at Kenvue Inc., Skillman, New Jersey. Marelys has 20 years of industry experience in Consumer. She has significantly contributed to the largest growth years in Skin Care history by launching five transformational platforms (Aveeno® Absolutely Ageless, Aveeno® Positively Radiant, Neutrogena® Hydro Boost, Neutrogena® Bright Boost and Neutrogena® Rapid Wrinkle).

In June 2004, Marelys joined Johnson & Johnson Consumer Inc as a Regulatory Affairs Associate. Within a few years, Marelys was promoted to Senior Regulatory Affairs Associate for the Skin Health Beauty franchise, and then Lead Regulatory Strategist (ie, Manager, Regulatory Affairs). In her current position, Marelys governs the Skin Health Global Face portfolio and manages a high performing, forward-thinking regulatory team.

Marelys obtained her Biomedical Engineering Degree from Rutgers University, School of Engineering, in New Brunswick, New Jersey. She holds a Beauty Industry Essentials Certificate from the Fashion Institute of Technology, State University of New York. Marelys is a graduate of the elevAte Regulatory Affairs Leadership Development Program and the IGNITE Development Program: Shaping Future Leaders. She has received the Global Standards of Leadership Award for outstanding regulatory leadership integrating a new business model. Marelys is an active member of the Cosmetic Executive Women Organization (CEW).

In Marelys' free time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, loves beauty and fashion and enjoys salsa dancing.

Sheng Gao, PhD
Executive Director, Immunology Translational Science, Johnson & Johnson

Sheng is currently Executive Director, Immunology Translational Science at Johnson & Johnson.
He joined the company in 2020 and leads the Translational Science team dedicated to the Rheumatology and Autoantibody Diseases portfolio. His team advances translational research and supports clinical development for several marketed products, including STELARA, TREMFYA, IMAAVY, as well as ongoing preclinical and clinical programs.

Prior to his tenure at Johnson & Johnson, Sheng spent over 10 years at Merck and Bristol Myers Squibb, where he led discovery programs and translational research across multiple disease areas.

Sheng earned his PhD in Genetics from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and completed his postdoctoral training at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, focusing on signal transduction in oncogenic pathways.

Anthony Geonnotti, PhD, Head of R&D, Global Baby, Kenvue

Anthony leads the global R&D team responsible for all product innovation and maintenance for Kenvue's Baby portfolio. This portfolio includes products sold under the Johnson's Baby and Aveeno Baby brands in over 175 countries. As part of this role, he closely collaborates with colleagues from marketing, regulatory, quality, supply chain, and medical affairs. Anthony also has the privilege of working with pediatricians, dermatologists, and academic researchers to ensure Kenvue is developing products that exceed medical expectations and are recommended by health care professionals.

Prior to his current role, Anthony has had innovation roles across the Kenvue business, including in oral care, skin health, digital health/diagnostics, and nutritional products. He is a strong advocate for talent development: in addition to being a multi-year mentor in the Scientist Mentoring & Development Program (SMDP), he has led several career development initiatives for new hires, co-ops, and interns.

Anthony joined J&J as a postdoc in 2010. He holds a PhD in Biomedical Engineering from Duke University. Prior to joining J&J, he led research in viral immunology at Duke University Medical Center to understand how to best stimulate the creation of anti-HIV neutralizing antibodies in vaccine trials.

Eleonora Goldberg, PhD, Vice President, Medical Affairs, Arrowhead Pharmaceuticals

Eleonora is the Vice President of Medical Affairs at Arrowhead Pharmaceuticals, where she established the cardiometabolic team to prepare for the commercialization of the first siRNA molecule for the organization. Eleonora has extensive experience in Medical Affairs, having strategically developed and transformed Medical Affairs teams at the local, regional, and global level. She has led matrixed and dynamic teams, partnering cross-functionally to enhance the impact and scientific knowledge.

Prior to joining Arrowhead, Eleonora served as Senior Vice President for Global Medical and Scientific Affairs at Karyopharm, where she led her team in Strategy, Field Medical, Medical Capabilities (MedCom and MedInfo), Publications, Medical Education, Advocacy, and HEOR. She had an accomplished tenure at Amgen for a decade, where she led all aspects of Medical Affairs in a variety of therapeutic areas as she advanced in her career with increasing levels of responsibility and complexity. She began her career in industry as a Medical Scientific Liaison (MSL), understanding the importance of scientific exchange with key stakeholders.

Eleonora is originally from Argentina and is bicultural and bilingual. She earned a PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California and a BS in Molecular Biology from University of California, San Diego. Eleonora is happily married and excited about the next stage of life as an empty nester. She looks forward to having time to enjoy the outdoors and travel around the world.

Monica Goss, PhD, Senior Director, Process Development, Amgen

Monica is a Senior Director in Amgen's Drug Product Technologies department in Process Development. Her team develops drug product formulations and processes for late-stage biological products. Monica's technical interests include interactions between formulations and primary containers, and aggregation/particulation of antibodies. She received her Bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Arizona and PhD in Chemical Engineering from the University of Wisconsin-Madison where her research focused on kinetic modeling of beta-amyloid aggregation. She enjoys RV camping with her family, including 2 dogs and looks forward to exploring more national parks

Barbara Green, Head of Global Upstream Research & Innovation, Skin Health & Beauty, Kenvue

Barbara is Head of Global Upstream Research, Skin Health & Beauty, Kenvue where she is responsible for global scientific strategy and technology innovation to enable a compelling product and science pipeline for the company's skin health and hair brands including Neutrogena®, Aveeno® and OGX®. She builds internal and external research capabilities ensuring leading-edge, differentiated and ownable ingredient/technology claims and publishable, robust science.

Barbara is a registered pharmacist in the state of New Jersey and maintains an industrial advisory position with the Rutgers University Professional Science Master's Program. This her third time participating as a mentor with SMDP and she is excited to be back!

Rachel Groppo, PhD, Director, mRNA & Targeted Vector Engineering Cell and Genetic Medicines, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine

Rachel leads the mRNA and Targeted Vector Engineering team within Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine, Therapeutics Discovery, to develop targeted vectors for cell therapy and explore therapeutic mRNA applications.

Prior to Janssen, Rachel was a Director at Pioneering Medicines where she managed research programs in cystic fibrosis with a cross-company collaboration for discovery of novel CF therapeutics in the RNA, gene editing, and delivery space. Prior to Pioneering Medicines, Rachel worked at Sanofi Pasteur for 10 years in positions of increasing responsibility in the area of infectious disease. She was the Project Head & Research Lead for a respiratory pathogen vaccine program.

Rachel received her PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Her post-doctoral training was at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Outside of work, Rachel enjoys moderate day hikes and gardening.

Michel Guiraldell, PhD
Lab lead for the Department of Biology and Pharmacology Group, Pfizer

Michel received his BS in Biology from the University of Franca, Brazil. He later joined the University of Sao Paulo where he obtained a Master's degree and a PhD in Molecular and Cellular Biology. During his PhD, Michel was accepted to the Graduate Partnership Program at the National Institutes of Health, where he later continued as a post-doc. At NIH, Michel studied the origin of mast cells in embryos and participated in the screening of a siRNA phosphatase library to identify modulators of mast cell activation.

After his time at the NIH, Michel joined the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, where he studied several proteins involved in homologous recombination during meiosis. Prior to joining Pfizer, Michel was part of a biotech that focused on identifying small molecules modulators of microRNA biogenesis or activity in cancer and fibrosis. At Pfizer, Michel has utilized his broad background to drive assay development and plate-based screening for diverse therapeutic approaches in rare disease, oncology, and neuroinflammation. His work includes both cell-based assays and biochemical approaches, with a particular interest in mRNA modulation, targeted protein degradation, and transcriptomics. Michel has successfully led the establishment of decision-making screening funnels, developed robust assay workflows, and implemented splicing screening methods, all the while collaborating closely with colleagues and mentoring emerging scientists. Michel enjoys reading sci-fi books and watching supernatural shows, but cooking is one of his favorite hobbies.

Alankar Gupta, MD, Vice President, Medical Affairs Americas, Kenvue

Alankar's role as Vice President encapsulates shaping Medical Affairs and Clinical strategies and advancing safety protocols across the Americas. With a robust background in Medical Affairs, Digital Health and Clinical Development, he contributes to commercial success through diligent lifecycle management and a strong commitment to compliance.

Marco Gymnopolous, PhD, Senior Director, Antibody Drug Conjugates Portfolio Oncology, AstraZeneca

Marco received his PhD in Neurobiology from the Max-Planck Institute of Experimental Medicine in Göttingen, Germany. He started his post-doc in a Oncovirology lab at the Scripps Research Institute in 2004 where he worked on activating mutations in the catalytic subunit of PI3K (p110α). Marco has nearly 15 years of experience in the ADC field building and advancing ADC portfolios for AMBRX and Tanabe Research Laboratories. He has been at AstraZeneca for 4 years within Early Oncology OTD leading with his groups the bioscience efforts of the solid tumor ADC portfolio and ADC target identification.

Sabrina Henry, Associate Director, Face Moisture R&D, Kenvue

In her role of Research and Development (R&D) Associate Director at Kenvue, Sabrina leads the Global Facial Moisture – Hydro Boost and Ultra Gentle platforms for the Neutrogena® brand. Sabrina joined Johnson & Johnson Consumer Personal Products Worldwide in 2009 as a Research and Development Scientist. Over the span of her career, she has developed, launched, and set the formulation and claims strategies for new and innovative skin care products across various brands, such as, Johnson's Baby®, Aveeno®, Neutrogena®, and Clean & Clear®. Today with Kenvue, as she has grown in responsibility and scope, Sabrina leads a team of scientists to create innovative products and manage life cycle activities of commercialized products from regulation implementation to cost improvement initiatives for Neutrogena® Hydro Boost and Ultra Gentle platforms.

In addition, to her technical leadership, Sabrina proudly serves as the brand ambassador for Aveeno® elevating the science behind the brand to consumers, healthcare professionals, and industry professionals. Sabrina is featured on Aveeno®'s TV commercial Healthy. It's Our Nature alongside Jennifer Aniston. With her innovation expertise and growing media presence, Sabrina presents

the science of formulating skincare products across various media platforms, such as, Instagram, TikTok, ESSENCE magazine, and USA Today. To catch her latest events, interviews, and activities, be sure to check out Sabrina on Instagram at sabrina_thescientist.

Overall, Sabrina is a dynamic innovation leader committed to creativity, authenticity, and is driven by collaboration. Her passion helps to blazes the trail for diversity and inclusion within her industry for the next generation of women in STEM. Sabrina is the proud recipient of 2024 Harold R Fee 1920 Stevens Institute Alumni Achievement Award and 2022 NJHaitiPartners Career Trailblazer Award. She holds a Master of Engineering in Engineering Management and Bachelor of Engineering in Chemical Engineering from Stevens Institute of Technology. She is currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration at Rutgers Business School. Sabrina, her husband, and their two daughters live in New Jersey.

Sonal Humane, Senior Director, Program Management, Merck

Sonal studied biology at Rutgers University. She has been at Merck for 30 years and has held various roles within the research division of Merck (Merck Research Labs) within GCTO. Prior to this, her role involved meetings, as she was a Program Manager for various drug and vaccine clinical studies.

Since 2007, Sonal been the head of the GCTO Meeting Management group which plans and delivers 500+ industry leading meetings in the Clinical Trials space in a consistent and compliant manner that promotes the highest degree of excellence in the execution of Merck clinical trials. She is in charge of the management of the GCTO New Employee Onboarding program.

Outside of work, Sonal is a mother of 2 children (23-year boy and 26-year girl). She loves to spend time with family, cooking, traveling and listening to music. She can speak 5 different languages and would love to learn a few more!

Pangi Johnson, PhD, Director, Toxicology & LAR, Incyte

Pangi is Toxicologist with over 25 years of experience in the pharmaceutical industry. Originally from White Plains, New York, she started her career in tox as a lab animal technician at a large contract research organization; conducting non-clinical non-GLP and GLP in vivo studies in a variety of animal models. Pangi obtained her PhD in Toxicology and Pharmacology from Duquense University in Pittsburgh, a Master's degree in Toxicology from American University in Washington, DC and a Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science/Pre-Vet from Virginia State University in Petersburg, Virginia. She is an avid solo-traveler having visited over 40 countries thus far and she loves plants and animals!

Denise Johnson Sura, Associate Vice President, Clinical Trial Design Diversity & Inclusion & Patient Engagement, Eli Lilly

Denise is a recognized leader in drug development. Her background has driven a strong patient focus and desire to find innovative ways to deliver new therapies to those burdened by disease across the globe. She has extensive clinical trial experience with specific expertise in global operations and data and analytics. Denise holds a Bachelor's degree in Toxicology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is the current Associate Vice President for Patient Engagement at Eli Lilly and Company, with accountability for enabling access of clinical trials across Lilly's portfolio. In her free time Denise enjoys traveling with her family, baking and spending time in the outdoors.

Nedra Joseph, PhD, Director, Scientific Affairs, New Products & IRA SEPR, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine

Nedra is a Director for New Products Value and Evidence in the Scientific Affairs team at Johnson & Johnson (Titusville, New Jersey office). Her work experience includes 10+ years in the pharmaceutical industry (Johnson & Johnson, GSK, Amgen), and roles at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the University of Chicago Comprehensive Cancer Center. In her current position leading Solid Tumor Oncology pipeline products, Nedra is responsible for providing strategic input to shape the clinical development program (including trial design), generating Real World evidence for US market access needs and launch preparation, and working closely with Global and US teams on asset planning and strategy. Nedra earned PhD and MS degrees in Epidemiology from the State University of New York at Buffalo (Buffalo, NY). In her spare time, Nedra enjoys traveling with her family and is looking forward to some road trips this summer.

Akash Kaushik, PhD, Principal Scientist, Pfizer

Akash is a Principal Scientist in the Internal Medicine Research Unit (IMRU) at Pfizer, Cambridge, MA. He earned his PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, and completed his Postdoctoral research in cancer metabolism at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas, Texas. At Pfizer, Akash leads the biology strategy and manages a team of scientists to support both early and advanced obesity projects. Akash has a very positive personality and is passionate about advancing scientific knowledge into leading therapies. Outside of his professional life, he enjoys spending time with his daughter, wife, and dog, and is a fan of Sci-Fi movies and TV shows.

Alexander Kennan, Director RWVE IRA EPP, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine

Alex is the Director New Products, Value and Evidence, Scientific Affairs, leading the market access scientific strategy, evidence generation, and dissemination plans for early pipeline products supporting the Immunology portfolio. He has over twenty years of evidence generation, market access, pricing, commercial and business analytics experience.

Alex joined Jonhson & Johnson in 2007 and held positions of increasing responsibility across different functions including global business analytics, global pricing, global market access, and real-world value and evidence teams. Prior to joining Johnson & Johnson, Alex held leadership positions in forecasting, analytics, pricing, and business development across several different industries, including roles at the International Monetary Fund, AT&T, and GlaxoSmithKline. He received his Masters in Economics from Rutgers University and his Masters of Health Policy from Thomas Jefferson University.

Lindsay King, PhD, Executive Director & Head of Clinical & Translational Biomarker, Pfizer

Lindsay is currently Executive Director and Head of Clinical and Translational Biomarkers at Pfizer. He leads a team responsible for the end-to-end clinical translational biomarker and assay strategies as well as execution for Internal medicine, Inflammation and Immunology, and Anti-Infective clinical programs. Lindsay has held multiple roles at Pfizer over the last 17 years in clinical and preclinical departments including in GLP Bioanalytics, as ADME department project representative for Antibacterials, Neuroscience and Oncology BioTx programs, as Biotherapeutics PK and immunogenicity Lab head focused on ADCs, as well as developing novel flow/imaging cytometry biomeasures methods to support Modeling and Simulation for candidate selection and first in human dose predictions.

Lindsay has served as chair of the Ligand Binding Assay Bioanalytical Focus Group within American Association of Pharmaceutical Scientists and continues to be active in this and other external scientific communities. He received his PhD in Zoology from the University of Toronto, Cananda and began his career working at a number of small biotech startups including at HDM Diagnostics which was later acquired by Ibex Technologies where he led efforts to commercialize academic biomarker research in arthritis and cancer. In his free time, Lindsay enjoys almost anything outdoors and particularly gardening and time spent in a river or by the sea with his family.

Xinlan Li, Director, Program Leader, Preclinical Development, Moderna

Xinlan is a business professional in the biopharmaceutical industry, with a career spanning consulting, product strategy, and program leadership across multiple therapeutic areas and modalities. Her career has focused on guiding critical program and portfolio-level decisions from discovery through late-stage clinical development. She currently serves as Associate Director, Program Leader at Moderna Therapeutics, where she leads mRNA therapeutic programs through preclinical development to IND filing with a focus on oncology. Prior to that, Xinlan was an Associate Director, R&D Strategy at Moderna, where she led strategic thinking in the therapeutics discovery space and supported early commercial decisions such as target product profile development, competitive analyses, and portfolio strategy.

Prior to joining Moderna, Xinlan held positions at BeiGene on the Product Strategy and Valuation team, and at ClearView Healthcare Partners as a Consultant, advising life sciences clients on key strategic decisions and projects. She earned her AB in Neurobiology from Harvard University, with a Secondary Field in Economics.

In her free time, she enjoys knitting, playing video games, and going on long walks with her rescue dog, Yuzu.

Carl Lowe, PharmD, Medical Science Liaison, Respiratory, AstraZeneca

CJ received his Doctor of Pharmacy at The University of Mississippi and University of Mississippi School of pharmacy, respectively. Upon completing his Doctorate, he completed a 2-year fellowship in COPD with Rutgers University. He is also a practitioner with +5 years of community pharmacy, ambulatory care and hospital experience. CJ has been a MSL since the beginning of 2023.

In his spare time, CJ enjoys running, hiking, mountain biking, snowboarding, and photography. He recently started surfing and will take all the tips he can get! CJ is originally from Kennett Square, PA. If he is not on an adventure, you can find him enjoying time with his family and dog in PA. CJ is an avid sports fan and loves all things Philadelphia sports.

Janice Lozada Delgado, PhD, Process Development Senior Scientist, Amgen

Janice currently is a Process Development Senior Scientist at Amgen's Process Development, Attribute Sciences Drug Substance Area in the Juncos, Puerto Rico facilities. She also serves as Method Reliability Lead (MRL) for the Neupogen and Corlanor molecules. Her responsibilities include performing initial evaluations for method troubleshooting trends and investigations. In addition, Janice provides support in executing analytical assays within the Attribute Sciences Laboratory.

Janice, originally from Fajardo, Puerto Rico, earned her BS in Biology from the University of Puerto Rico, Humacao Campus and her PhD in Pharmacology from the University of Puerto Rico, Medical Sciences Campus. Her studies focused on Molecular Pharmacology, researching the effects of losartan on mitochondria and prediabetes in rhesus monkeys (Macaca mulatta).

Janice is passionate about mentorship and collaboration. At Amgen, she is part of the strategic planning team for WE2 Global, an Employee Resource Group (ERG), where she impacts Amgen's Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (DI&B) strategy and serves communities. In 2024, she was part of the organizing committee of AML PD Science Symposium, demonstrating her leadership skills. Additionally, in 2025, she has been selected as Amgen's Wellness Champion, emphasizing her engagement to inspire and motivate others to achieve their maximum potential.

David Lutness, Director, R&D Documentation, Kenvue

Dave is the Head of R&D Digital Platforms at Kenvue. This includes ownership over R&D's digital strategy and related external partnerships, digital product management, and data architecture. Inclusive of the role, he also serves as the Kenvue liaison and partnership lead between Kenvue and the MIT Media Lab.

An engineer by training, Dave is obsessed with making it easier to innovate and execute by equipping scientists with fit-for-purpose technologies. Throughout his career, he has held several leadership roles in the Consumer Health industry [x-Johnson & Johnson, x-GlaxoSmithKline]. As former Chief of Staff of R&D, Dave led global operations and strategic programs for two Chief Scientific Officers - learning the ins and outs of the organization and giving him the ability to build bridges across functions and teams to streamline workflows and improve common problems with shared solutions. This led to the creation of a CSO-appointed 1st ever digital R&D lead role.

Dave started with Johnson & Johnson as a co-op, eventually leaving for a company-first hybrid role designed to bridge across Supply Chain, Packaging, and Design - where he created digital simulations of packaging structures and scaled manufacturing lines to improve upstream design for downstream manufacturing efficiency gains, all while preserving the original design intent. His expertise straddles both R&D and Supply Chain, and includes roles in upstream innovation, supply chain management, and digital strategy. Dave is equally passionate about improving the communities where he lives and works. He has worked with FIRST Robotics high schools for several years, developing future leaders across multiple science, engineering, and technology fields. He is a big fan of modular education and has completed several online courses with accredited universities and online platforms ranging from aspects of emerging business models and systems engineering to the latest modalities being applied across artificial intelligence. He earned his undergraduate credentials in Engineering from the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Ricardo Macarron, PhD, Vice President of Myeloid Disease, Incyte

Ricardo is Vice-President of Applied Technologies Group at Incyte, a department within the Discovery Biology department responsible for compound management, molecular biology, structural biology, biochemical and cellular assay development and screening for hit identification and lead optimization.

Prior to joining Incyte, he worked in different GlaxoSmithKline drug discovery groups from 1992 to 2019. In 2007 he co-founded a start-up, ID Diagnostics, which closed in 2010.

Ricardo received both Bachelor's degree in Biology (1987) and PhD in Biochemistry (1992) from the University Complutense of Madrid (Spain). He also completed a Master's degree in Technology Management from the University of Pennsylvania (2006}.

Brian Macomson, PharmD, Scientific Director Federal Channel, Johnson & Johnson

Brian is a member of the J&J Innovative Medicine Value & Evidence Scientific Engagement Team and Scientific Director for the National Federal Team supporting VA, DOD, USPHS.

Brian has been with J&J for 23 years, primarily as a field-based scientific liaison but also worked in-house on the Real World Value & Evidence team supporting outcomes research in the GU oncology space. Brian graduated from The University of Georgia & The Medical College of Georgia with a Doctor of Pharmacy degree and completed post-graduate training in the Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

Kevin Maloney, PhD, Executive Director, Process Chemistry, Merck

Kevin earned a BS in Chemistry and Biochemistry from Stetson University in 2022 and then moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he earned a PhD in Organic Chemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 2007. His graduate research focused on developing novel immoacetonitrile cycloadditions as a general strategy for natural product synthesis.

In 2007, Kevin moved to New Jersey and began his professional career at Merck. Over the ensuing 17 years, he has developed his experience and expertise over a range of roles in Process Chemistry, Discovery Process Chemistry and Enabling Technologies, culminating in his current Executive Director position leading the Process Chemistry group. He excels at delivering value to the company and patients alike, spearheading innovation on both the current and future pipeline, and developing the next generation of talent in the organization that will allow Merck to continue to invent for life.

Kevin's success in Process Chemistry is exemplified by his pursuit of breakthrough innovations using enabling technologies in synthetic organic chemistry to develop the simplest, greenest and most cost-effective commercial manufacturing processes for Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients. His teams have employed chemocatalysis, flow chemistry and biocatalysis to develop green and sustainable commercial manufacturing processes for ceftolozane sulfate (the antibiotic in ZerbaxaTM), gefapixant (an investigational candidate for the treatment of chronic cough), and islatravir (an investigational candidate for the treatment for HIV). Through Kevin's leadership, a revolutionary advance in nucleoside synthesis for islatravir was developed utilizing an enzymatic cascade process that has changed the way chemists think about making nucleosides. Building on this innovative approach, a green and sustainable three-step process utilizing a novel biocatalytic cascade was developed for molnupiravir (LagevrioTM).

In addition to his Merck pipeline accomplishments, Kevin has collaborated on a research program developing new synthetic methodologies focused on a novel hydroxylation reaction to prepare complex phenols (Maloney-Fier Hydroxylation) and on transformation of sulfonamides for late-stage functionalization, resulting in five publications in top-tier journals.

Kevin is a champion for Green Chemistry and, as the leader of Merck's Green & Sustainable Science Team. He has co-authored 6 successful EPA Green Chemistry Challenge Award nominations, organized the annual Merck Green & Sustainable Science symposium, and established API sustainability targets for small molecules as part of Merck's corporate sustainability goals. Lastly, Kevin is influential in the science community with more than 45 publications, several invited lectures, and he was recently awarded the inaugural ACS Division of Organic Chemistry Mid-Career Industrial Investigator Award and the SCI Gordon E. Moore Medal.

Outside of work, Kevin enjoys spending time with his family, playing sports and video games with his son Brady, walking his dogs, and riding his Peloton.

Tizita Mammo, Senior Director, Scientific Writing, AstraZeneca

Tizita is a Senior Director and Group Lead at AstraZeneca. She leads a team that manages the preparation of global CMC regulatory submission documents for biologics and combination products, advancing AZ's medicines to benefit patients. She has over 16 years of experience in the biopharmaceutical industry spanning CMC biologics process development, drug product development, technology transfer, lab automation, and the preparation of regulatory submissions. Tizita is mission focused to contribute to the world through supporting the delivery of medicines to patients. She has significantly contributed to the commercialization of multiple products, including the COVID-19 emergency use authorization. She is also passionate about mentoring the next generation of biotech students and junior professionals in their career development.

Tizita holds a Master's in Chemical Engineering from Villanova University and a Bachelor's in Bioengineering from University of California, Berkeley. She holds a United States Regulatory Affairs Certification. Outside of work, Tizita enjoys spending quality time with her husband and two young children, traveling to learn about other cultures and experiences, and she enjoys being outdoors in nature. Fun Facts: Tizita snorkeled in Bali, is a salsa dancer and she skydived over Ocean City, MD.

Mutsa McFarlane, Associate Director, Global Project Management, AstraZeneca

Mutsa has a MS in Chemical & Biochemical Engineering and has over a decade of experience in the biopharmaceutical industry. She also is a certified Project Management Professional, and Certified Supply Chain Professional. Her experience spans downstream bioprocess development, global supply chain management and project management.

Carl McMillan, PhD
Senior Vice President, Toxicology/Drug Disposition/PK/PD, Eli Lilly

Carl is currently Vice President for Lilly Research Laboratories. In this role he leads the disciplines of Toxicology, Drug Disposition, Laboratory of Experimental Medicine Veterinary Resources and PK/PD for Eli Lilly and Company in Indianapolis. This research function plays a crucial role in enabling delivery of Lilly's R&D portfolio from all therapeutic areas of focus and spans early discovery to post approval.

Carl has over 25 years of industry experience as both a scientist and an administrative leader within Lilly's R&D organization. Additionally, he has held multiple internal roles involving R&D governance/portfolio management, strategic planning, operational oversight, and alliance oversight. He is engaged in a number of industry and professional associations and is a recognized expert in non-clinical safety assessment, drug metabolism, and pharmacokinetics.

Prior to joining Lilly, Carl completed both his Bachelor's (Pharmacy '87) and PhD (Medicinal Chemistry '93) at Auburn University (Auburn, AL). He is also engaged in support of a number of local (Indianapolis) organizations including serving as a member of the Board of Directors for Providence Cristo Rey High School. He also served as a board member for Indiana Clinical and Translational Sciences Institute (CTSI).

Audrey Mosley, Executive Director Clinical Operations, Merck

Audrey has served for over 30 years at Merck. Her journey began as a Research Biochemist before transitioning into roles such as an HIV Specialist in Human Health and eventually finding her niche in Clinical Development. She has thrived for more than 26 years in roles of increasing responsibility and recently she took on the role of Global Clinical Trial Operations Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DE&I) Lead, where she has played a pivotal role in shaping organizational strategy. Her commitment to fostering inclusivity extends beyond her professional duties, as she actively participates in university events and external conferences, sharing insights gained from her own journey. Now serving as the Clinical Sciences and Study Management Vaccines Therapeutic Area Lead, Audrey remains dedicated to advancing the DE&I agenda and collaborating across departments to ensure continued organizational success.

Audrey resides in the Greater Philadelphia area with her husband. She is the mother of two daughters and an awesome dog. She spends her spare time knitting, praise dancing and performing community service with her sorority

Zach Motz, PhD, Sr Medical Science Liaison, Respiratory, AstraZeneca

Zachary is a Senior Medical Science Liaison with AstraZeneca, specializing in respiratory, particularly in asthma therapeutics. In his current role, Zach serves as a scientific resource, bridging the gap between clinical research and healthcare providers to enhance patient outcomes. With four years in this position, he leverages his scientific expertise - grounded in his PhD and Master's in Biomechanics and a strong foundation in Biochemistry - to advance respiratory care.

Zach is committed to mentorship, returning for his third year with SMDP and his second as a full mentor. Driven by gratitude toward the mentors who guided him, he finds fulfillment in helping emerging scientists and professionals achieve their goals and reach their full potential. Outside of his professional pursuits, Zach enjoys spending time with his family, including his two young children, ages three and five. His many interests span golf, fitness, carpentry, automotive projects, outdoor adventures, and travel.

Edel Mullen, PhD, Director, Drug Product Technologies, Amgen

Edel holds a PhD in Proteomics and Biochemistry from the National University of Ireland Maynooth (NUIM), where her doctoral research focused on proteomic profiling synovialcytes and immune signalling. She also earned a BSc in General Science from NUIM, graduating with double honors in Biology and Chemistry, and later completed an MBA at the Isenberg School of Management, University of Massachusetts Amherst, enhancing her leadership and strategic management skills. Her employment history includes senior scientific and leadership roles at Horizon Therapeutics, Pfizer, and the National University of Ireland Galway, where she contributed extensively to biopharmaceutical development and innovation.

Sergio Nanita, PhD, Research Fellow, Analytical Development, Incyte

Sergio is an analytical chemist/mass spectrometrist with a career in industry R&D spanning 19 years. He is currently a Research Fellow at Incyte Corporation, where he provides analytical chemistry and molecular structure elucidation expertise for the development of new pharmaceutical products.

Sergio was born in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, earned a BS in Chemistry from the University of Puerto Rico in 2001, and a PhD in Analytical Chemistry from Purdue University in 2005. He has been a member and avid volunteer at the American Chemical Society (ACS) since the 1990s, and currently serves on the ACS Committee on Economic and Professional Affairs. Sergio was named one of the "Top 40 under 40" in the Power List of the Analytical Scientist magazine, in both 2014 and 2018, and was honored as a Fellow of the American Chemical Society in 2020.

Tony Ndifor, PhD, Distinguished Scientist PSTS NCSL, Johnson & Johnson

Tony is a Distinguished Scientist in the Preclinical Sciences and Translational Safety department at Johnson & Johnson based in San Diego, CA. In his current role, he provides nonclinical safety [toxicology] expertise and leadership to global drug discovery and development teams.

Tony has over 20 years of drug development experience across various modalities and therapeutic areas. He holds a MSc degree from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, and obtained his PhD at the University of Liverpool in England. Tony is passionate about mentoring and ensuring the next generation has the knowledge and resources to make informed career decisions. He has served as a Mentor with the Scientist Mentoring & Diversity Program since 2001 and what keeps him coming back is the immense value SMDP continues to give and that is gained by alumni of the program.

Ericka Noss, MD, PhD, Senior Medical Director, Translational Medicine, Johnson & Johnson

Erika first joined Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine in 2021 as a Translational Medicine program lead (TMPL). She has served as the TMPL for several early asset programs and also led Sjogren's Disease and Lupus working groups for the Rheumatology DAS. She now serves as the Translational Medicine lead on the Rheumatology Disease Area Stronghold (DAS), responsible for ensuring robust translational strategies are in place to advance DAS objectives.

Prior to joining JNJ Innovative Medicine, Erika was a physician scientist faculty member, first at Harvard University/Brigham and Women's Hospital and then later at the University of Washington. In those roles, she maintained a clinical practice in adult rheumatology and ran basic and translational research laboratory focused on fibroblast biology and joint diseases.

Erika earned her MD and PhD from Case Western Reserve University and completed her Internal Medicine residency and adult Rheumatology fellowship at Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Mawuli Nyaku DrPH, Executive Director, Immunology and Communicable Diseases, R&D Data Science and Digital Health, Johnson & Johnson

Mawuli is an Executive Director at Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine, where he leads strategic initiatives in drug discovery and the generation of real-world evidence for the immunology and communicable disease portfolios within the Data Science & Digital Health function. Mawuli previously provided overall leadership for the vaccines health economics and outcomes research strategy within the Center for Observation and Real-world Evidence and served as the Global Director Medical Affairs for the pediatric vaccines portfolio at Merck and Co. Inc. He led several global health projects including in the neglected tropical diseases, infectious diseases, and immunization across multiple centers within the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and served in the Epidemic Intelligence Service fellowship program.

Mawuli holds a Doctor of Public Health with a concentration in Epidemiology and International Health from the University of Alabama in Birmingham, a Master's in Business Administration with a concentration in Management and Strategy from Western Governors University, a Master of Public Health with a concentration in Environmental Health from Tufts University, and a Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in Biochemistry, Cellular and Molecular Biology from Connecticut College. In his spare time, Mawuli enjoys reading, gardening, and playing soccer.

Michael Olsen,PhD, Clinical Development & Design, Amgen

Michael is an immunologist with over a decade of experience advancing immunotherapy research in both academic and industry settings. He is currently a Scientist at Amgen in the Translational Immunology and Safety Sciences group, where he develops preclinical assays to assess immunotoxicities of large molecule immunotherapies within oncology and inflammation pipelines. His passion for immunotherapy began during his undergraduate and postbac research, where he studied chemotaxis and immune checkpoint blockade in the contexts of cancer and autoimmunity.

Michael further pursued his interest in immunotherapy by earning a PhD at the University of Utah, focusing on novel CAR T cell strategies for B cell lymphomas. He expanded on this work during a postdoctoral fellowship at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, engineering apoptosis-resistant CARs and investigating mitochondrial cell death pathways in T cells. Throughout his career, Michael has authored over a dozen peer-reviewed publications, secured more than $1.3 million in competitive funding, and contributed over ten years of mentorship and teaching. With particular expertise in T cell biology, cancer immunology, and protein engineering, he is dedicated to translating fundamental immunological insights into next-generation immunotherapies.

Outside of work, Michael enjoys biking, running, thrifting, and playing video games.

Yusuf Oni, PhD, Associate Scientific Director Drug Product Development, Bristol Meyers Squibb

Yusuf is an Associate Director at Bristol Myers Squibb where he is involved in all aspects of primary packaging & device development in the parenteral product development space. Prior to joining BMS, Yusuf was a Senior Engineer with the Materials Science and Technology group at BD Medical. There, he led the design and development of material solutions for various medical products and packaging applications. Yusuf is also involved in academic instruction. He currently serves as an Adjunct Faculty in the Biomedical Engineering department at New Jersey Institute of Technology.

Yusuf holds a BSc degree in Chemical Engineering from New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology and a PhD in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering (with a concentration in Materials Science) from Princeton University. In his spare time, he likes to spend time with his family. Beyond that, he enjoys watching sports, reading Psychology and Philosophy books, and catching up on technological advances.

Ashley Orillion, PhD, Associate Director, Translational Sciences Immunology, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine

Ashley is a strategic translational scientist with over eight years of industry experience specializing in autoimmune diseases, particularly SLE, lupus nephritis, and maternal-fetal immunology. As Associate Director for Clinical Sciences Biomarkers at Johnson & Johnson's Innovative Medicine, she leads cross-functional teams in the design and implementation of biomarker strategies and the planning and execution of clinical trials.

Ashley's academic journey began with a Bachelor's Degree from the University of Rochester, followed by a Master's Degree from the Rochester Institute of Technology. She earned her PhD in Cellular and Molecular Biology from Roswell Park Cancer Institute, where her thesis focused on the response to immunotherapy in prostate cancer following dietary methionine restriction. Throughout her career, Ashley has developed a robust skill set in building and managing relationships with key academic opinion leaders, fostering collaborations, and facilitating initiatives that advance clinical research. She has made significant contributions through her participation in global academic collaborations and her leadership in diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within clinical trials.

In addition to her professional achievements, Ashley is passionate about health equity and enhancing diversity in research initiatives. Outside of work, she enjoys volunteering in community service programs and mentoring upcoming scientists, reflecting her commitment to the advancement of science and the betterment of society. In her downtime, Ashley enjoys Capoeira, running, and traveling the world with her husband and son.

Tola Oyetunde, PhD, Principal Data Scientist, Amgen

Tola is a Principal Data Scientist at Amgen's R&D Center for Research Acceleration by Digital Innovation (CRADI). He collaborates with leading experts in industry to develop innovative methods for extracting insights from complex and heterogeneous biological data sets, facilitating rational decision-making in drug discovery and development. With over a decade of experience, Tola has a proven track record of creating solutions that unlock the business value of data at scale for life sciences and engineering applications. His expertise spans hybrid mechanistic and AI/ML modeling, computational systems biology, and mathematical optimization.

Tola has authored over 20 peer-reviewed publications and presentations, developed and taught an introductory AI/ML summer course at the University of Minnesota for the past few years. He holds Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD degrees in Chemical Engineering, as well as an MBA from the University of Illinois. Outside of his professional life, Tola is an avid reader, fitness enthusiast, and soccer fan. He is multilingual, speaking English, French, and a smattering of three Nigerian languages.

Luis Felipe Padilla, PhD, Process Development Scientist, Amgen Manufacturing Limited

Luis Felipe is an accomplished Principal Scientist at Amgen Process Development, Drug Substance. With 10+ years of experience in biotechnology and 15+ years in bio laboratory operations, he boasts a wealth of expertise. His team is pivotal in the characterization and development of commercial manufacturing processes through innovation and scientific experimentation. At the Juncos, Puerto Rico facilities, Luis's team develops technologies that modernize current manufacturing operations and support continuous commercial manufacturing by providing critical laboratory data. His teams also support operations both in Juncos and across the broader Amgen Network.

Born in Naranjito, Puerto Rico, Luis Felipe developed an interest in science during high school at Academia Santa Teresita. He earned a Bachelor's degree in Chemistry from the University of Puerto Rico – Recinto of Rio Piedras, and completed his Doctoral degree there, collaborating with the Scripps Research Institute and Argonne National Laboratory. During his doctorate studies, he joined several distinguished research teams, contributing to advancements in biochemistry and biophysical research. His work has been published in scientific journals, and he has presented at multiple international conferences.

Throughout his career, Luis Felipe has contributed to the scientific community, working as a researcher at multiple universities and scientific facilities in Puerto Rico and the US. His tenure at Amgen has been marked by numerous achievements, including enhancing manufacturing processes; developing and implementing new technologies, leading teams in managing safety aspects within the work environment and implementing initiatives focused on continuous process improvement. Luis Felipe is also a dedicated mentor for young scientists and actively participates in various educational outreach programs.

In his personal life, Luis Felipe enjoys traveling, motorsports and spending time with family and friends. He is a firm believer in the importance of education, knowledge, and effort in providing young people with opportunities to contribute to the betterment of society.

Pan Pan, PhD, Associate Director, Target Discovery Oncology, AstraZeneca

Pan received her PhD in Pharmacology from the University of Kansas, focusing on diabetic peripheral neuropathy. After graduation, she continued her post-doc research at the Medical College of Wisconsin, focusing on cancer research by dietary approach. She joined AstraZeneca Oncology Targeted Discovery in December 2020 and currently leads a team of 4 in vivo scientists to provide pre-clinical support for portfolios in heam malignancy.

Pan and her husband love spending time with their 2 dogs, Boss and Lily, and visiting national parks (26 and counting).

Prashant Panchal, Director, Business Planning and Operations, AstraZeneca

Prashant has over 15 years of experience in the biopharmaceutical industry. His background includes roles in science, project management, and strategic business planning. At AstraZeneca, he oversees capacity planning, capital expenditure, contracts, portfolio, and governance for a department with over 1,100 employees and 100 drug projects. Previously, Prashant worked at Eisai Pharmaceuticals, Teva Biopharmaceuticals USA, and AGC Biologics. He also serves on the board of The Pinkney Innovation Complex for Science and Technology at Montgomery College and mentors students and young professionals.

Prashant holds a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences from the University of Maryland and a Master of Science in Biotechnology Management and an MBA from the University of Maryland Global Campus.

Aarti Patel, PharmD, Group Dir V and ESE POP Health Research Scientific Director, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine

Aarti is a Group Director at J&J Innovative Medicine within the Scientific Partnership and Population Health team. She collaborates with stakeholders to generate evidence and develop solutions aligned with the Quintuple Aim. Previously, Aarti was part of the health economics and outcomes research (HEOR) team at Boehringer Ingelheim. With nearly two decades of experience in real-world evidence, HEOR, and population health, she is a seasoned professional. Aarti holds degrees in PharmD and MBA from Mercer University, completed a Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research Fellowship at the University of Connecticut, and earned her Masters of Health Care Innovation from the University of Pennsylvania in 2024.

Aarti is also a proud mom of an energetic 8-year-old boy, enjoys cooking, is a Peloton rider, and uses the Calm app for relaxation.

Chetan Patel, PhD, Senior Director, Lead Optimization Core, BioTDR, Molecule Discovery, Eli Lilly

Chetan earned his PhD in Biological Chemistry from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where he characterized protein-protein interactions involved in apoptosis. He then completed post-doctoral training at Stanford University where he studied the effect of protein aggregation on the ubiquitin-proteasome system in neurodegeneration.

In 2009, Chetan joined Eli Lilly as part of the Biotechnology Discovery Research group where is served as a Lead Biochemist on multiple discovery teams across a range of therapeutic modalities (mAbs, BsAb, peptides, fusion proteins) and disease states. He is currently the Executive Director of the BioTDR Lead Optimization Core Group and has technical and operational oversight of expression, purification, developability and mass spectrometry capabilities.

In his free time, Chetan enjoys gardening, reading science fiction and playing the cello.

David Petullo, Senior Director (Biometrics Team Leader), Biometrics Late R&I, AstraZeneca

David started his career in the US Army (Walter Reed Army Institute of Research) after completing a BS in Biology at Troy State University as a research assistant working on in vitro drug metabolism for anti-malaria drugs. He continued his career in research at Human Genome Sciences, Procter & Gamble Pharmaceuticals and Eli Lilly and Company. After completing a MS in Applied Statistics at Purdue University, David spent over 17 years gaining drug development experience at the US Food and Drug Administration, with the last 13 years spent at the Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. David led and managed a statistical team for the last 7 years across multiple therapeutic areas including pulmonary, allergy, rheumatology, analgesia, anesthesia, addiction, and gastroenterology. In his current position at AstraZeneca, David manages a team of statisticians working on respiratory related Phase 3 trials.

Outside of work David enjoys spending time with his family, fishing, hiking and biking or playing golf!

Nicole Piché-Nicholas, Senior Principal Scientist, Pfizer

Nicole is a Senior Principal Scientist in the BioMedicine design (BMD) department, Worldwide Research and Development at Pfizer. She works in a group that discovers human therapeutic antibodies and engineers both antibodies and biotherapeutic modalities, including multi-specifics and T cell retargeting moieties. Nicole also serves as a biotherapeutic team lead partnering with multiple research units to advance differentiated molecules for the prevention, treatment and cure of autoimmune disease, cancer and chronic kidney disease.

While working at Pfizer, Nicole earned her MA in Pharmacology from the Boston University School of Medicine. Prior to joining Pfizer in 2009, she worked at Wyeth Research for eight years where she worked as an antibody engineer, humanizing and optimizing human therapeutic antibodies, and researched the role of the unfolded protein response, developing methods to enhance recombinant therapeutic protein production in mammalian expression systems. Prior to joining Wyeth in 2001, Nicole earned her MS in Biochemistry from the University of New Hampshire where she analyzed the role of large macromolecular complexes in the control of gene expression using Sacchromyces cerevisiae as a model system. She has coauthored thirteen scientific publications and seven patents.

Outside of work Nicole enjoys attending her children's band, dance, and sporting events, hiking in the White Mountains of NH, and serving as a Girl Scout leader.

Liz Pratico, PhD, Director, Process Development, Moderna

Elizabeth is the Director of the Late-Stage Execution team at Moderna, where she leads process characterization and commercial readiness for mRNA-based therapeutics. She brings over a decade of experience in bioprocess development across mRNA, cell, and gene therapies.

Prior to Moderna, Elizabeth held scientific and technical leadership roles at CRISPR Therapeutics, bluebird bio, and Novartis, contributing to the development and commercialization of multiple approved therapies, including Kymriah, Zynteglo, and Skysona. She earned her PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

Outside of work, Elizabeth enjoys rock climbing, traveling, cooking, and exploring the outdoors.

Megan Price, Associate Clinical Director, Solid Tumor Data Science Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine

Megan is currently an Associate Clinical Director in the Solid Tumor Data Science and Digital Health Division at Johnson & Johnson. Her current focus is supporting the prostate cancer programs leveraging a variety of data science capabilities. Prior to J&J, Megan was an Associate Director within the Research Oncology/Real World Evidence Team at Flatiron Health where she leveraged her clinical expertise to support solid tumor datasets, the clinicogenomic database and International GI Oncology Databases in Japan.

Prior to her transition into tech/industry, Megan was a practicing Oncology Nurse Practitioner for nearly 10 years with a focus on GI/GU malignancies. She was a sub-investigator on numerous phase I-III studies, as well as a large population of standard of care patients. The majority of her NP career was spent at UCLA, with additional years spent at both UT Southwestern and Texas Oncology. She has been a member of numerous speaker's bureau's educating colleagues on different topics focusing on GI/GU oncology treatments and patient advocacy. Megan continues to use her passion for oncology to fuel her current work and focus to improve the lives of cancer patients.

Megan currently resides in central Texas, where she enjoys coaching youth soccer and spending time with her family, friends and her dog Dolly. She is excited to share insights about the different roles within the healthcare industry and how to give yourself grace during times of transition.

David Proia, PhD, Senior Vice President, Biology & Drug Discovery, Acrivon

David is the Senior Vice President of Biology and Drug Discovery at Acrivon Therapeutics in Massachusetts and has extensive experience in discovery of small molecule therapeutics for various solid and liquid tumor indications. He helped advance 10 investigational agents into clinical development.

Prior to Acrivon, David served as VP of Oncology at ROME Therapeutics, where he was the biology lead for the development of agents targeting an endogenous reverse transcriptase. He served as Senior Director of In Vivo Pharmacology at C4 Therapeutics and project leader on multiple oncology programs. Prior to C4, he was the Director of Cancer Biology and In Vivo Pharmacology at Synta Pharmaceuticals and a Scientist at AstraZeneca. David has a BS in Biochemistry from Worcester Polytechnic Institute and a PhD in Molecular and Cellular Biology from Baylor College of Medicine.
He has mentored for many local and national science organizations (including SMDP) and recently joined the Board of Directors for CoLAB, a non-profit organization that partners life science companies with high school students to build awareness for STEM careers. David enjoys spending time with his wife (also an industry scientist), two daughters and Australian shepherd and loves running and playing guitar.

Angela Puchlopek-Dermenci, PhD, Senior Director, Pfizer

Angela is currently a Senior Director and leads the Development Process Chemistry organization within Chemical Research and Development at Pfizer. Her team is responsible for commercial process development, optimization, and tech transfer of commercial processes for the small molecule portfolio.

Angela completed her BS in Chemistry at the University of New Hampshire and then went on to obtain her PhD in 2010 at Yale University. Her PhD research focused on the use of small molecule peptide catalysts for the transfer of sulfur containing electrophiles in regioselective and asymmetric functionalization reactions. Following her PhD, Angela joined a lab at Caltech where she completed the first enantioselective total synthesis of (–)-acetylaranotin. Angela began her industrial career in the process chemistry group at Pfizer (Groton, CT) in 2012 where she has had the opportunity to lead >10 process development teams including those for marketed products DaurismoTM and Lorbrena® and many still in development. Angela has also spent time as a Pharmaceutical Sciences Team Leader with accountability for 7 interdisciplinary pharmaceutical science project teams comprised of scientists from all key CMC disciplines. Angela also holds the title of Associate Editor for Organic Process Research and Development journal since 2018. Among other awards, Angela was recognized in 2018 as an ACS Young Investigator and an ACS Rising Star in 2024. Outside of work, Angela enjoys spending time with family and friends, and traveling with her husband and two children, Jayden (9), Brooke (7).

Christine Quirk, PhD, Regional Medical Science Liaison, Director Thoracic Cancer, AstraZeneca

Christine is the Field Medical Director in the West Region within AstraZeneca's Thoracic Oncology Franchise. Although Chris joined AZ just 2 years ago, her experience in Medical Affairs within the pharmaceutical industry goes back over 15 years, when she left her academic appointment to have a more direct impact on patients. Starting as a Medical Science Liaison and moving to leadership roles that balance her passions of both service and mentoring, Chris has supported multiple assets across many solid tumors and hematologic malignancies during pre-launch development, launch phase and life cycle management. She has participated in over 20 drug launches and created and managed high-functioning MSL Teams in both oncology and hematology. A PhD by training, Chris started her career in academia, teaching in a medical school and leading an oncology research laboratory. Loving research but wanting to have a stronger translational component to her career, she moved to pharma as an MSL to see a greater impact her efforts could have on oncology patients.

Christine credits fantastic mentors for the successes she has had and prioritizes support of colleagues to achieve their personal and professional goals through projects, courses, and leadership opportunities.

Naomi Ramesar, Principal Scientist, Pfizer

Naomi is a Principal Scientist in Pfizer's Biotherapeutic Formulation group, leading a multidisciplinary vaccine drug product development team. She earned her PhD in Chemical Engineering from the University of Michigan, focused on nanoparticle self-assembly and applications. Naomi also holds a Master's in Chemical Engineering from the City University of New York - City College and a Bachelor's in Chemistry from the City University of New York - Hunter College.

Amanda Rodrigues Barreto de Macedo, PhD, Senior Scientist, Amgen

Amanda is a Senior Scientist at Amgen, where she leads preclinical drug development programs focusing on inflammatory and rare disease targets. With over a decade of experience in immunology, Amanda brings expertise in functional assay development with primary cells, multiparametric flow cytometry, and translational research across infectious diseases and autoimmune conditions.

Prior to joining Amgen, Amanda served as a Research Scientist and Flow cytometry core Manager at the George Washington University, where she developed novel immunological assays and mentored junior scientists. Her postdoctoral work, spanning GWU and the University of Utah, focused on characterizing immune responses to novel therapeutic strategies for latent HIV reservoirs. Amanda holds a PhD in Immunology from the Centre d'Immunologie de Marseille-Luminy (France), an MSc in Cellular and Molecular Biology from Fiocruz (Brazil), and a BS in Biomedicine from the Federal Fluminense University. She has authored over a dozen peer-reviewed publications and is a co-inventor on a patent related to immune modulation. She is a recipient of multiple young investigator awards and has presented her work at major international conferences including the HIV Persistence Workshop and the NIH Strategies for an HIV Cure Meeting. Her research continues to bridge immunological insights with therapeutic innovation in both academia and industry.

Marinella Sandros, PhD, Director Medical Affairs Strategy, Johnson & Johnson

Marinella obtained her PhD in Bioinorganic Chemistry from Wayne State University and did her postdoc in Biomedical Engineering at McGill University where she developed various diagnostic tools and drug delivery systems for various diseases. She came to medical affairs with a wealth of experience in diagnostic, therapeutic and cardiovascular research and a strong commercialization background. During her professorship in the Nanoscience Department at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, her lab focused on developing ultrasensitive diagnostic platforms to highlight the presence of cardiovascular biomarkers in tissue, cells and blood. Marinella's curiosity to gain a better understanding of product commercialization led her to join HORIBA Scientific. There, she took on the role of Product/Business Development Manager where she led several global projects to develop, manufacture and commercialize instrumentation/devices for biopharmaceutical applications.

More recently, Marinella held a position as Senior Global Product Manager at GenScript Biotech (CRO) where she managed several portfolios of customized services from gene synthesis to protein expression and antibody generation. After joining Pulmonary Hypertension Medical Affairs team at Johnson and Johnson, she entered as an Associate Director of Diagnosis and was quickly promoted to Director of Medical Affairs Strategy. In her current role, Marinella oversaw the launch of new products and continued to publish impactful

For fun, Marinella likes to swim, bike and travel with her family, husband Matthieu, kids Sebastien (13) and Liam (9) and cat Max (loves to hunt rabbits).

Thomas Schluep, Group Vice President, Program and Alliance Management, Arrowhead Pharmaceuticals

Thomas is the Group Vice President, Program Management at Arrowhead Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Arrowhead develops medicines that treat intractable diseases by silencing the genes that cause them. Using a broad portfolio of RNA chemistries and efficient modes of delivery, Arrowhead therapies trigger the RNA interference mechanism to induce rapid, deep and durable knockdown of target genes. In his role, Thomas is responsible for advancing pharmaceutical product candidates both pre-clinically and clinically across the organization.

Prior to Arrowhead, Thomas was the Chief Scientific Officer at Calando Pharmaceuticals, a privately held biopharmaceutical company. Prior to its merger with Calando, he was the Chief Scientific Officer at Insert Therapeutics, where he headed drug discovery and development programs for the polymeric delivery system Cyclosert™ and the IT-101 oncology candidate. Prior to joining Insert, Thomas was responsible for the non-viral gene therapy program at Canji, Inc, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Schering-Plough. While at Canji, he held multiple positions of increasing responsibility in the development, manufacture, and analytical testing of non-viral and adenoviral gene therapy vectors. Prior to Canji, Thomas was a post-doctoral associate at the department of Chemical Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

He holds a ScD in Process Engineering and an MS in Biotechnology, both from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, Switzerland and has authored over 35 scientific publications.

In his spare time, Thomas enjoys outdoor activities including mountain biking, skiing, camping, hiking as well as traveling.

Erica Sinclair, MBA, Vice President, Regulatory Affairs North America, Kenvue

Erica is the Vice President for Regulatory Affairs North America at Kenvue. She is an experienced executive in regulatory affairs with a demonstrated history of working in the pharmaceuticals/biotechnology industry.

Erica is skilled in regulatory requirements, management, US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Life Sciences. She holds an MBA focused in Healthcare and extensive prior experience including 10 years at GSK Consumer Healthcare as Senior Director for Regulatory Innovation, US Wellness & Digestive Health. Prior to that Erica was Director for US Regulatory Affairs at Novartis Consumer Health where she spent 13+ years. She also served in regulatory affairs roles at Pfizer Consumer Healthcare (Madison, NJ) for 5+ years and at Wyeth Consumer Healthcare for 6+ years.

Andra Stevenson, PhD, Senior Director, Medical Affairs, Merck

Andra has over 20 years of professional experience in biomedical research and in the biopharmaceutical industry with a broad and extensive career in a number of therapeutic areas. Prior to joining Merck, Andra completed his graduate work at the University of Vermont College of Medicine in areas from molecular signaling pathways, ion channel biophysics and muscle physiology to models of cerebrovascular & vascular dysfunction. As a postdoctoral fellow, Andra was awarded the prestigious Fogarty International Award from NIH and the UNCF-Merck Postdoctoral Fellowship prior to taking on an Assistant Professorship at The University of Virginia School of Medicine where he was researching broad areas within cardiovascular diseases, muscle physiology and genetics.

Andra has over 16 years of research and drug development experience with expertise in physiology, pharmacology and mechanisms underlying diseases including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases (ie, atherosclerosis, heart failure, hypertension, pulmonary hypertension, and thrombosis) as well as cross-functional areas including respiratory, urology and neuroscience. He has had the opportunity to support and led efforts from Discovery new target identification through clinical development and beyond to marketed drugs and he has a successful track record of innovation and supporting advancement of both Early and Late-stage pipeline assets. Andra has spent recent years at Merck in Global Medical & Scientific Affairs in a number of roles, including strategy lead roles for US and Global activities across a number of therapeutic areas (Diabetes, Heart Failure, NASH, Respiratory and Thrombosis) & leading and supporting Launch activities of new medicines in partnership with internal and external colleagues and organizations. Andra has had the fortune and privilege to mentor, coach and sponsor a number of early career scientists and professionals during their journeys and highly values those interactions and relationships.

In his “free-time”, Andra enjoys spending time with his family. He also enjoys writing both short-stories and poetry, but most of all connecting with his friends around the globe and being a continuous learner.

Robert Stratford, PhD, Senior Director, Clinical Pharmacology & Pharmacometrics, Incyte

Robert is originally from Southern California, where he attended the University of California at Irvine, graduating with a Bachelor’s degree in Biological Sciences. He then went to pharmacy school for three semesters at the University of Southern California before he decided to switch fields and pursue a PhD at USC in Pharmaceutical Sciences. Presently, he is Senior Director in Clinical and Quantitative Pharmacology at Incyte Corporation in Willmington, Delaware. Prior to joining Incyte, Bob was a Director of Early Phase and Translational Medicine at Otsuka, America from June 2021 to July 2024. Currently, he is an Adjunct Associate Professor of Clinical Pharmacology at Indiana University School of Medicine and was an Associate Professor and Director of Modeling and Simulation at that institution from January 2018 to May 2021. Bob’s experience in academia began in June 2010 when he joined the faculty of Xavier University of Louisiana College of Pharmacy (an HBCU) as an Assistant Professor. He departed from that college in 2015 to move closer to his family home in Indianapolis when he joined the faculty of Duquesne University School of Pharmacy in Pittsburgh as an Associate Professor. He stayed there for 2.5 years before moving “Back Home in Indiana” (the title of a famous tune). From 1987 to 2010, Bob was a staff scientist at Eli Lilly and Company in both the Product Development and Drug Disposition organizations.

The overarching objective of Bob’s research is to employ modeling approaches to describe and predict the disposition of drugs and their effects in humans. To achieve this objective, state-of-the-art modeling approaches are used to create in vitro cell-based models, as well as in vivo pharmacokinetic/pharmacodynamic (PK/PD) and physiologically-based PK/PD models. The desire is to describe and integrate the complexities of drug action at multiple scales, including the molecular, cell, tissue/organ, organismal levels (individual patients) and patient populations (e.g., hepatically impaired, pregnancy, ethnicity, pediatrics).

Bob is an avid reader, runner and cyclist, believing in achieving balance in the mental, physical and spiritual aspects of the whole person.

Don Sun, MD, Therapeutic Area Safety Head, Johnson & Johnson

Don has 6-years of clinical practice in cardiothoracic surgery and 25+ years of pharmaceutical experience in drug safety and clinical development in various therapeutic areas. Currently, he is a Therapeutic Area Safety Head responsible for overseeing end-to-end medical safety strategy of both marketed products and products in clinical development within the assigned therapeutic area. He has proven ability to lead safety strategies and regulatory authority interactions regarding safety and risk management for successful NDA/MAA submissions and approval of ground-breaking indications. Don has strong leadership to ensure compliance of drug safety activities and processes with global legislation and regulatory requirements. He is leading high-performance teams by attracting and developing diverse talent, and by building teams to ensure organizational effectiveness, transparency and communication. In his spare time, Don enjoys team sports and traveling to explore the beauty of nature.

Greg Tabor, PhD, Director, Chemistry, Merck

Greg is a scientific leader in the field of chemical biology, currently serving as a Director in the Discovery Chemistry Organization at Merck & Co, Inc. in Rahway, NJ. There, he leads a dedicated team focused on identifying novel, high-quality targets and enhancing understanding of the molecular mechanism of action of vital assets within the Merck portfolio. In his current role at Merck, Greg leads the NJ Chemical Biology team, overseeing projects across various therapeutic areas and platforms where he is instrumental in setting strategic directions, managing talent, and expanding the company's research pipeline.

Greg's academic journey began at Georgetown University, earning a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry. His time at Georgetown was marked by a deep engagement with the scientific community, where he developed a passion for research and mentorship. Greg completed his PhD at Scripps Research, completing work on a novel hydroamination transform focused on simplifying the synthesis of chemical scaffolds. Following his PhD, he pursued a postdoctoral fellowship, further honing his expertise in chemical biology. This experience not only enriched his research skills but also reinforced his commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion (D&I) within the scientific community.

Beyond his professional achievements, Greg is committed to mentoring the next generation of scientists, actively engaging in outreach programs to support students in STEM fields. In his free time, Greg enjoys exploring the world through photography.

Lynn Theprungsirikul, PhD, Sr Scientist, Cell Culture & Fermentation Sciences, AstraZeneca

Lynn is a Senior Scientist in the upstream process development team at AstraZeneca. She received her PhD in Immunology and Microbiology from Dartmouth College. During her PhD, she studied the role of bactericidal/permeability-increasing protein and its role in autoimmune induction in patients with chronic bacterial infections. Prior to that, she worked with a research group at the University of California San Diego to design, optimize, and develop organ-on-a-chip technology that mimics cancer vascularization and cardiac microtissues for use in drug screening and development. Lynn received her BS in Biology from Duke University. In her free time, she enjoys art, traveling, cuddling with dogs, and testing out new recipes.

Julie Thomas, PharmD, Senior Director, Medical Communications & Scientific Exhange, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine

Julie is currently the Senior Director of the Medical Communications & Scientific Exchange department within Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine. In this role, she oversees the execution of medical communications across the US Immunology therapeutic area including peer-reviewed publications, Medical Information, and Medical Science Liason (MSL) slide decks. Julie started her Johnson & Johnson journey in 2000 at Centocor, Inc (acquired by Johnson & Johnson in 2000), in the Medical Affairs Medical Information Department supporting the immunology and cardiovascular therapeutic areas. After 6 years in Medical Information, she transitioned to publications in the Medical Affairs Writing Group.

Julie earned a BSc Pharm degree from the University of Toronto, ON, Canada and a PharmD degree from Albany College of Pharmacy, Albany, New York. She completed a Pharmacy Practice Residency at St Joseph's Hospital, Hamilton, ON, Canada and a Drug Information/Investigational Drug Research Specialty Residency at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, Philadelphia, PA.

Chuck Thompson, PhD, Senior Director Preclinical Sciences & Translational Safety, Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine

Chuck is a Senior Director within the Preclinical Sciences and Translational Safety organization at Johnson & Johnson. In his role, Chuck leads a team of scientists that contribute to the discovery and development of novel therapeutics, across modalities (eg small molecules, peptides, proteins, RNA and gene therapy) and disease areas (eg oncology, immunology, cardiovascular and neuroscience). Chuck's core expertise is in the field of drug metabolism and pharmacokinetics, wherein in vitro and in vivo experimental insights are translated to help guide compound selection, preclinical safety assessment and clinical development of potential new medicines.

Chuck received his undergraduate degree from Hamilton College and then went on to earn his PhD in Chemistry at the University of Virginia. This was followed by postdoctoral research at MIT, where he contributed to a multi-disciplinary research program directed at the development of technologies for prolonged perfusion culture of human hepatocytes.

After starting his career working for several biotech companies in Boston, Chuck took a position with Merck, where he worked for ~12 years in various roles. Since joining Johnson & Johnson in 2018, Chuck has been involved in the discovery & development of numerous novel therapeutics.

Matt Troutman, PhD,
Senior Director, Pharmacokinetics, Dynamics & Metabolism, Pfizer

Matt's career studying absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion (ADME), along with pharmacokinetics, and bioanalytical sciences has spanned 25 years. He spent the majority of this time working at Pfizer engaged in drug discovery and development in the capacity of individual contributor to leader of groups delivering core ADME sciences. Throughout this time, he always has been drawn to seeking and creating novel approaches to apply ADME and bioanalytical sciences to good effect; be that through technology, science or strategic workflow solutions. Matt's formal training includes a BS Honors in Chemistry and PhD in Pharmaceutical Sciences, both obtained at UNC Chapel Hill.

Matt is a native North Carolinian but now lives in the New England area. He loves the outdoors, especially the mountains, and outdoor activities including skiing, mountain biking, cycling and camping and hiking.

Reginald Valdez, PhD, Associate Director, Pathology, Amgen

Reginald is a board-certified veterinary pathologist, and Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists (DACVP) and American Board of Toxicology (DABT), with over 23+ years of professional experience in the biopharmaceutical industry. At Amgen, Reginald has served on drug development teams as a Project Team Representative (PTR) for the Department of Translational Safety and Risk Sciences (TSRS) and currently supports Research and Development programs as a Project Pathologist. In previous roles at the Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research and at Pfizer Global Research and Development, Reginald provided strategic scientific leadership and pathology-related research and development support to program teams involved in drug discovery and development functions across multiple therapeutic areas worldwide.

Reginald, a native of the state of Colorado, received his undergraduate training in Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology at the University of Colorado Boulder, and earned a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM) degree from Colorado State University. He also earned a Master's Degree in Parasitology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a PhD in Immunology from Washington State University. He currently serves on the Editorial Board of Toxicologic Pathology, the official journal of the Society of Toxicologic Pathology, the British Society of Toxicological Pathologists and the European Society of Toxicologic Pathology and, is Chair of the International Consortium for Innovation and Quality in Pharmaceutical Development (IQ) Preclinical Safety Leadership (DruSafe) Testicular Toxicology Working Group (WG), representing Amgen.

Jaicha Valerio, PharmD, Senior Specialist, Medical Information, Incyte

Jaicha is a Medical Information professional supporting Incyte's hematology/oncology and solid tumors portfolio. She completed the Medical Information/Medical Affairs PharmD Fellowship Program with Incyte and Saint Joseph's University prior to her current role. Jaicha received a PharmD and BS in Biology from Temple University. Additionally, she is a certified fitness instructor and is currently training for her first half-marathon.

Narayan Variankaval, PhD, Executive Director, Analytical R&D, Merck

Narayan is currently an Executive Director in Analytical R&D at Merck Research Labs in Rahway, NJ, responsible for the strategy and leadership of the Materials and Biophysical Characterization team in Analytical Enabling Capabilities. In this role he leads three teams in the physical and biophysical characterization of small molecules, biologics and vaccines from preclinical candidate selection to filing and launch.

Prior to this Narayan was an Executive Director in Small Molecule Analytical R&D responsible for end-to-end analytical development for small molecules, adjuvants, novel excipients and specialty delivery systems including inhaled and long acting injectables.

From 2011-2017, Narayan was the Director and Head of the Molecular and Materials Characterization group responsible for salt and polymorph screening, crystallization process development support and solid-state characterization for all early-stage Merck compounds. He also spent four years between 2007 and 2011 in the Pharmaceutical Sciences organization as a member of the Materials Characterization and Technology Assessment group involved in the development of amorphous solid dispersions and as a

result of this effort garnered the Merck Research Labs Divisional Award in 2012 for co-leading the development of amorphous formulations at Merck.

Narayan obtained his MS and PhD in Polymer Science and Engineering at the Georgia Institute of Technology. He has been an invited speaker at over 15 conferences, published over 35 peer reviewed journal articles, 2 book chapters and is a co-inventor on 7 patents. He has served in the past as Chair of the Analytical Leadership Group of the IQ Consortium (2016/2017) and was Co-Chair of the Gordon Conference on Preclinical Form and Formulation (2017). Narayan is a leader in the diversity equity and inclusion team in Merck Research Laboratories and has mentored several scientists and managers from under-represented minority groups during his tenure. In his spare time, he loves gardening and designs Legos.

Olivia Venhuizen, PhD, Process Development Principal Scientist, Amgen

Olivia joined Amgen in 2019 as Process Development Scientist of Microbiology in the Process Development organization. Her working experiences include research in microbiology and virology as well as quality and manufacturing technical support. Olivia holds an MS in Environmental and Occupational Health from California State University Northridge, an MPH from Yale University, and a PhD from UCLA. She is a former CDC/APHL Emerging Infectious Disease Fellow.

Olivia facilitates efforts in evaluation of innovative microbiological technologies, development, and improvement of methods, and developing microbial control strategies. She also supports subjects associated with manufacturing of drug substances and drug products where microbiology expertise or guidance is needed. In her free time, Olivia enjoys hiking/backpacking, hot yoga, and spending time with her family and her two dogs.

Bandana Vishwakarma, PhD, Associate Principal Scientist, Antibody Drug Conjugates Oncology, AstraZeneca

Bandana thrives on challenges. This passion led her into research, and after completing her postdoctoral experience, she was eager to transition into the industry. Bandana's goal was to contribute to drug development and witness treatments making a real difference for patients.

Bandana's journey began at a contract research organization, a smaller firm that provided invaluable experience, helping her evolve into a well-rounded scientist. Through this role, she refined her interpersonal skills, fostered collaborations, and took on leadership responsibilities. Her work focuses on developing antibody-drug conjugates for hematological malignancies, advancing innovative treatments with the potential to make a meaningful impact in the field. Before transitioning into research, Bandana gained experience teaching molecular and cell biology at an undergraduate college in India. In addition to teaching, she led the extension education unit, guiding students in identifying and pursuing careers aligned with their interests. This role also involved mentoring students in women empowerment programs, helping them build confidence and access opportunities that support their aspirations.

Outside of science, Bandana loves connecting with people, making friends, and engaging in creative activities like gardening, painting, and dancing. To unwind, she enjoys binge-watching series and immersing herself in captivating stories.

Brittany Witherspoon, PhD, Director of Global DPDS Postdoc Program Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine

Brittany is currently an Associate Director of Strategy & Operations at Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine, where she has worked for the past 7+ years after being awarded her PhD in Organic Chemistry. Her role largely focuses on Learning & Development strategies, improving processes to build more efficient operations, and leading the Global DPDS Postdoc Program.

When she's not working, Brittany can be found traveling the world or in a movie theater.

Vlad Yurukov, PharmD, Sr MSL Cardiovascular Renal Metabolic, AstraZeneca

Vlad holds a Doctor of Pharmacy from the University of Illinois at Chicago and completed his residency at Loyola University Medical Center. He is a Board-Certified Pharmacotherapy Specialist and Advanced Pharmacy Practice Practitioner licensed in California and Illinois. Over the past several years, his post-doctoral experiences as a clinical pharmacist practitioner covering heart failure and renal services at Sutter Health and UC Davis have allowed him to provide exceptional patient care, engage in clinical research studies, and establish valuable relationships with physicians. He has routinely assisted cardiologists, nephrologists, and mid-level providers with medication selection, appropriate medication titration, and drug information for complex patients.

As a Senior Medical Science Liaison, Vlad supports scientific exchange with key opinion leaders and healthcare providers both nationally and internationally, particularly in Northern California. His role is pivotal in ensuring clinicians stay abreast of the latest scientific advancements and therapeutic innovations.

Yao Zhang, PhD, Senior Director of Biostatistics, Pfizer

Yao is a Senior Director of Biostatistics in the Data Sciences & Analytics group at Pfizer Research & Development. He holds a Bachelor's and a Master's degrees in Physics, as well as a PhD in Statistics.

Since joining Pfizer in 2001, Yao has worked in various areas in pharmaceutical R&D, using advanced statistical methodologies and partnering with scientists in biology, chemistry, drug metabolism and safety to provide cutting-edge technologies and drug research, as well as working with medical teams and regulatory agents to advance novel medicines through clinical trial development and bring them to patients.

In his leisure time, Yao enjoys spending time with his family, cooking, hiking, and travel.