

RESEARCH EDUCATION CORE

NEWSLETTER



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Highlights

The TUFCCC/HC U54 Partnership continues to provide meaningful opportunities for research, mentorship, and training. This summer, we celebrated the contributions of our mentors and recognized the academic and career progress of our trainees.

Summer Cancer Research Institute 2026: The Summer Cancer Research Institute (SCRI) 2026 successfully concluded, with 13 trainees completing the 8-week program, which ran from June 8th through July 31st. Trainees gained valuable experiences – from learning laboratory techniques, to shadowing oncologists, to participating in community events. They showcased their hard work and growth at the SCRI Mini-Symposium. Congratulations on a job well done!

Pilot and Pre-Pilot 2026-2027 Awardees: After careful consideration and review, the SPEECH U54 partnership is excited to announce 13 Pilot and Pre-Pilot 2026-2027 recipients. Awardees will present their research progress in monthly webinars to the U54 community throughout the year.

MENTOR SPOTLIGHT

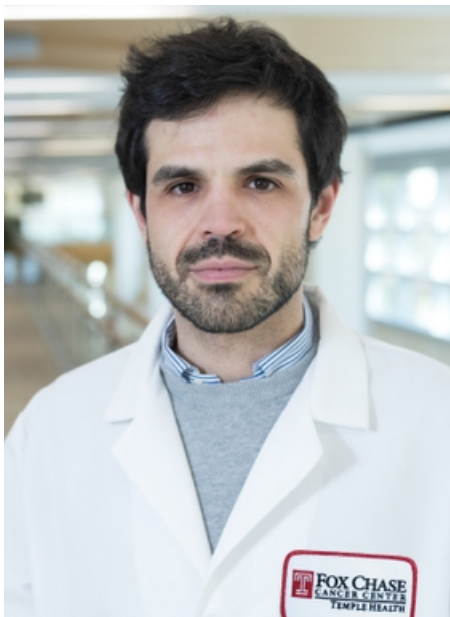
Jorge Gómez-Deza, MRes, PhD

Assistant Professor
Department of Cancer and Cellular Biology
Lewis Katz School of Medicine

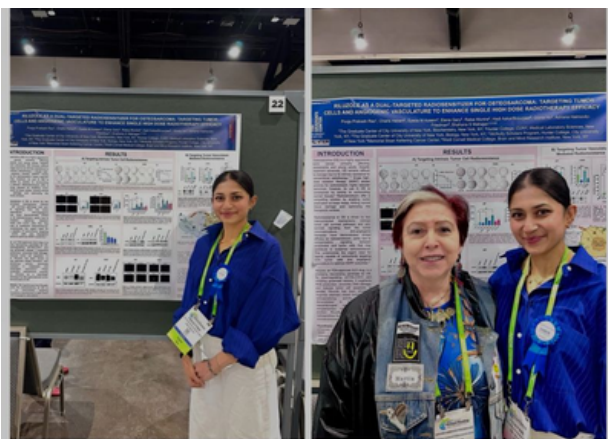
Dr. Jorge Gómez-Deza is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Cancer and Cellular Biology at the Lewis Katz School of Medicine and a member of the Cancer Signaling and Microenvironment Program at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia, PA. He earned his PhD in Basic and Clinical Neuroscience from King's College London and completed his postdoctoral fellowship at the National Institutes of Health, where he studied how neurons respond to injury.

Dr. Gómez-Deza's laboratory investigates the mechanisms of chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy and traumatic brain injury. This year, he and his team were awarded several grants, including from the Metavivor Foundation, Rally Foundation, and St. Baldricks Foundation. He also served as the co-corresponding author on a paper published in *Neuron* in May 2026, with several members of his laboratory contributing as co-authors.

This past summer, Dr. Gómez-Deza welcomed his second student through the SCRI program. His favorite part of being involved in the summer program is watching students grow and develop during their eight-week experience in the laboratory. For him, the highlight of the program is the students' final presentations, which showcases how much effort they have invested and how much they have accomplished and learned.



MENTEE HIGHLIGHTS



Pooja Rao with her research poster, "Riluzole as a Dual-Targeted Radiosensitizer for Osteosarcoma: Targeting Tumor Cells and Angiogenic Vasculature to Enhance Single High Dose Radiotherapy Efficacy" at the 2026 AACR Annual Meeting in San Diego.



Maite Tenemaza presenting her internship project at the Fourth Annual STANDOUT Conference in New York.



Calista Lee conducting fieldwork at her research internship in North Carolina through the Center for Environmental Farming Systems.

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

Several of our trainees graduated from college this spring and are moving forward into the next phase of their professional journey.

If you are a former U54 trainee and have any updates to share, we'd love to hear from you!

Where are they now?

Ramneek Kaur (SCRI 2023) graduated from Temple University in May 2026 with a B.A. in Biology, a minor in Public Health, and a certificate in Genomic Medicine. She also received the Otto Kurschner Memorial Award and will be starting medical school at the Temple University Lewis Katz School of Medicine in Fall 2026.

Pooja Rao (Pre-Pilot 2025) presented her research at the 2026 American Association for Cancer Research Annual Meeting in San Diego, California. She received the AAISCR Young Investigator Award at the American Association of Indian Scientists in Cancer Research.

Calista Lee (SCRI 2024) participated in the Agroecology Scholars Program in Research and Extension at North Carolina State University.

Ariana Santiago Ramos (SCRI 2024) graduated from Temple University with a B.S. in Biology, a minor in Spanish, and a certificate in Spanish and Latinx Studies. She will be starting medical school at the Cooper Medical School of Rowan University in Fall 2026.

Maite Tenemaza (SCRI 2025) completed a summer internship through Hunter College's STANDOUT Program in Behavioral Cancer Prevention & Control Research.

Announcing the 2026 - 2027 Pilot & Pre-Pilot Awardees

As part of their award, all recipients will be presenting a webinar to share their research progress with members of the U54 community. If you are interested in attending any of the webinars, please reach out to Kate Scotchie (kate.scotchie@hunter.cuny.edu) and Elisabeth Bozzola (elisabeth.bozzola@fcc.edu) for the meeting link.

2026 - 2027 Webinar Schedule:

- **September 16, 2026**
 - **Xavier Grana & Frida Kleiman** - U54-SPEECH program introduction and overview
- **October 21, 2026**
 - **Qi Chen (Pilot)** - Developing Communication Guides for Young Adult Cancer Survivors and Their Caregivers and Supporters: A Dyadic Qualitative Study
 - **Annmarie Gaglio (Pre-Pilot)** - Determining the Role of the C-Terminus of Gain of Function Mutant p53 in DNA Damage Tolerance
- **November 21, 2026**
 - **Audrey Warren (Pre-Pilot)** - The Role of CDK7 in Chemotherapy-Induced Neurodegeneration
 - **Lucia Borriello (Pilot)** - Understanding How the Tumor Microenvironmental and Socio-Environmental Factors Contribute to TNBC Relapse in Young and Black Patients
- **December 16, 2026**
 - **Bac Viet (Pilot)** - Investigate the Stabilization of ZEB1 Promoting Inefficiency of Pol0 Inhibitors in Leukemia Cells Within the Bone Marrow Microenvironment
 - **Anita Kumari (Pre-Pilot)** - Role of FAM122A, A Novel Inhibitor of the Tumor Suppressor PPP2R2A, in the DNA Damage Response
- **January 20, 2027**
 - **Jiwani Peters (Pre-Pilot)** - Design and Synthesis of Carbohydrate-based Anti-Cancer Vaccines
 - **Aisha Bhimla (Pilot)** - Tobacco and Twinkies: Examining Geographic Disparities and Targeting Marketing as Determinants of Co-occurring Tobacco Use and Ultra-processed Food Consumption in Under-resourced Communities
- **February 17, 2027**
 - **Ines Velázquez Quesada (Pilot)** - Role of Neuron-Breast Cancer Cell Interactions During Breast-to-Brain Metastasis Colonization
 - **Fernada Romerio (Pilot)** - Understanding Emotional Communication Among Younger Breast Cancer Patients During Clinic Encounters: A Novel Mixed-Methods Analysis
- **March 17, 2027**
 - **Carmen Choya Foces (Pilot)** - Investigating the Role of MICU2 in Mitochondrial Metabolism in Acute Myeloid Leukemia (AML)
 - **John Crespo (Pre-Pilot)** - Determining the Impact of IL-13 on Esophageal Epithelial Heterogeneity
- **April 14, 2027**
 - **Ivy Tran (Pre-Pilot)** - Racial Ancestry-Linked Epigenetic Age Deceleration Defines a Distinct Subtype of Right-Sided Colorectal Cancer
 - **Xavier Grana & Frida Kleiman** - Final Remarks

Congratulations to the recipients of the Pilot & Pre-Pilot Awards!

SCRI 2026 Journey

Congratulations, SCRI Trainees!

SCRI trainees are emerging scientists gaining hands-on research, clinical shadowing, and community health experience through the 8-week summer program.

After eight weeks of engaging in seminars, workshops, mentored lab research, and related activities, this exceptional cohort of trainees presented their findings at the 8th Annual Summer Cancer Research Institute Mini-Symposium. To prepare for the event, trainees were tasked with writing an abstract, designing a scientific poster, and delivering a presentation. They shared their research findings and accomplishments with mentors, staff, faculty, fellow trainees, lab members, and their family and friends.

The SCRI team would like to thank all of the TUFCCC faculty and staff involved in ensuring that the trainees had a fun and rewarding summer!

A special thank you to our SCRI 2026 mentors, listed below alongside their trainee:

Temple University Trainees:

- **Aissata Balde**
 - Mentor: Kelly Whelan, PhD
- **Milo Friedman**
 - Mentor: Jorge Gómez-Deza, PhD
- **Jonatan Lopez**
 - Mentor: Ana Gamero, PhD
- **Jason McClean**
 - Mentor: Xavier Graña, PhD
- **Brittney McLarty**
 - Mentor: Grace Ma, PhD

Hunter College Trainees:

- **Sajid Ahmed**
 - Mentor: Robin Sebastian, PhD
- **Mohamed Hamad**
 - Mentor: Yuwaraj Kadariya, MD, PhD
- **Alananan Liu**
 - Mentor: Pedro Torres-Ayuso, PhD
- **Janey Liu**
 - Mentor: Sara Small, MD, PhD
- **Menatalla Mahmoud**
 - Mentor: Khadijah Mitchell, PhD
- **Stella "Millie" Nathanson**
 - Mentor: Carolyn Fang, PhD
- **Matthew Pinos**
 - Mentor: Aitziber Buqué Martínez, PhD
- **Eljay Watts**
 - Mentor: Lucia Borriello, PhD



ARE YOU INTERESTED IN APPLYING FOR THE SUMMER CANCER RESEARCH INSTITUTE 2027?

Attend a virtual information session!



SCAN TO REGISTER AND
RECEIVE ZOOM LINK

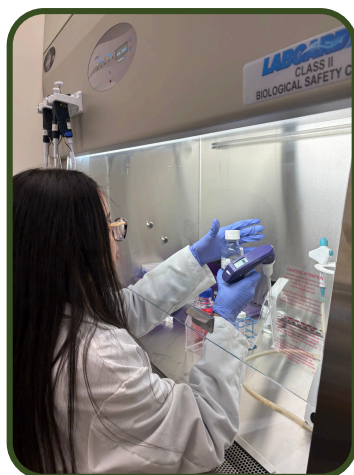
DATES:
THURSDAY, 10/15
WEDNESDAY, 10/21
FRIDAY, 11/6

SESSIONS WILL BE HELD
12:00-1:00 PM

To be eligible for the program, students must be currently enrolled at either Temple University or Hunter College as an undergraduate or graduate student.

Applicants should have an interest in pursuing biomedical, clinical, or population-based cancer research. We encourage applications from students of all backgrounds. SCRI is held in Philadelphia each summer, on the Temple University and Fox Chase Cancer Center campuses.

Participants receive a stipend and will attend weekly cancer seminars and skill-building workshops, benefit from hands-on research training, and receive mentorship from an established investigator in the field.



If you would like to receive more information about the Summer Cancer Research Institute, please contact Kate Scotchie at kate.scotchie@hunter.cuny.edu or Elisabeth Bozzola at elisabeth.bozzola@fccc.edu.

NIH/NCI FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The following funding opportunities aim to support career and research development in the field of cancer research. For more information, click on each funding opportunity below or visit the [Funding for Cancer Training NCI Page](#).

Predoctoral Candidates & PhD Students:

- **Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards (NRSA) for Individual Predoctoral MD/PhD Degree Fellows (F30)**
 - Eligibility: Predoctoral candidates in a dual doctoral degree program (e.g., MD/PhD, DDS/PhD, DO/PhD)
 - Due Dates: 3 Cycles - April 8, August 8, December 8 2026
- **Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards (NRSA) for Individual Predoctoral MD/PhD Degree Fellows (F31)**
 - Eligibility: PhD candidates
 - Due Dates: 3 Cycles - April 8, August 8, December 8 2026
- **Individual Predoctoral to Postdoctoral Transition Award (F99/K00)**
 - Eligibility: 3rd and 4th year health-related PhD students
 - Due Dates: 3 Cycles - April 8, August 8, December 8 2026

Postdoctoral Fellows and Early-Stage Investigators:

- **NCI Pathway to Independence Award for Early-Stage Postdoctoral Researchers K99/R00)**
 - Eligibility: Postdoctoral fellows with no more than 2 years of postdoctoral research experience
 - Due Dates: 2 Cycles - June 14, October 14 2026
- **NCI Pathway to Independence Award (Extended K99/R00)**
 - Eligibility: Postdoctoral fellows with less than 6 years of postdoctoral research experience
 - Due Dates: 2 Cycles - June 14, October 14 2026
- **The NCI Mentored Research Scientist Development Award (K01)**
 - Eligibility: Postdoctoral and Early-Stage Investigators
 - Due Dates: 3 Cycles - February 12, June 12, October 12 2026
- **Mentored Clinical Scientist Research Career Development Award (K08)**
 - Eligibility: Postdoctoral and early-stage faculty clinical scientists (*must have an active U.S clinical licensure)
 - Due Dates: 3 Cycles - February 12, June 12, October 12 2026
- **Mentored Quantitative Research Career Award (K25)**
 - Eligibility: Postdoctoral, Early-Stage, and Established Investigators
 - Due Dates: 3 Cycles - February 12, June 12, October 12 2026
- **Academic Career Excellence (ACE) Award (K32)**
 - Eligibility: Predoctoral, Postdoctoral, and Clinical Fellows
 - Due Dates: Pending (Forecasted Opportunity)

STAY CONNECTED

Research Education Core Leaders:

Carolyn Fang, PhD - Fox Chase Cancer Center

Frida Kleiman, PhD - Hunter College

Program Coordinators:

Kate Scotchie, BA - kate.scotchie@hunter.cuny.edu

Elisabeth Bozzola, BS - elisabeth.bozzola@fccc.edu

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



TUFFFFC_HC
Research Education Core



@REC_U54

Fall Scientific Conferences

September

September 25 - 28:
AACR Pediatric Cancer
Conference

September 26 - 30:
American Society for Radiation
Oncology (ASTRO) Annual
Meeting

October

October 16 - 17:
ASCO Quality Care Symposium

October 18 - 21:
AACR Conference on The Science of
Cancer Health Disparities

November

November 4 - 8:
Society for Immunotherapy of
Cancer Conference

November 12 - 15:
Society for Neuro-Oncology
Annual Meeting

Fall Cancer Awareness Months

September

Childhood Cancer
Leukemia & Lymphoma
Ovarian Cancer
Prostate Cancer
Thyroid Cancer
Gynecologic Cancer

October

Breast Cancer
Liver Cancer

November

Neuroendocrine Cancer
Gastric Cancer
Lung Cancer
Pancreatic Cancer

SPEECH

Synergistic Partnership for Enhancing
Excellence in Cancer Health