

Dermatology News

PURSuing WITH EXCELLENCE THE MISSIONS OF RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND PATIENT CARE

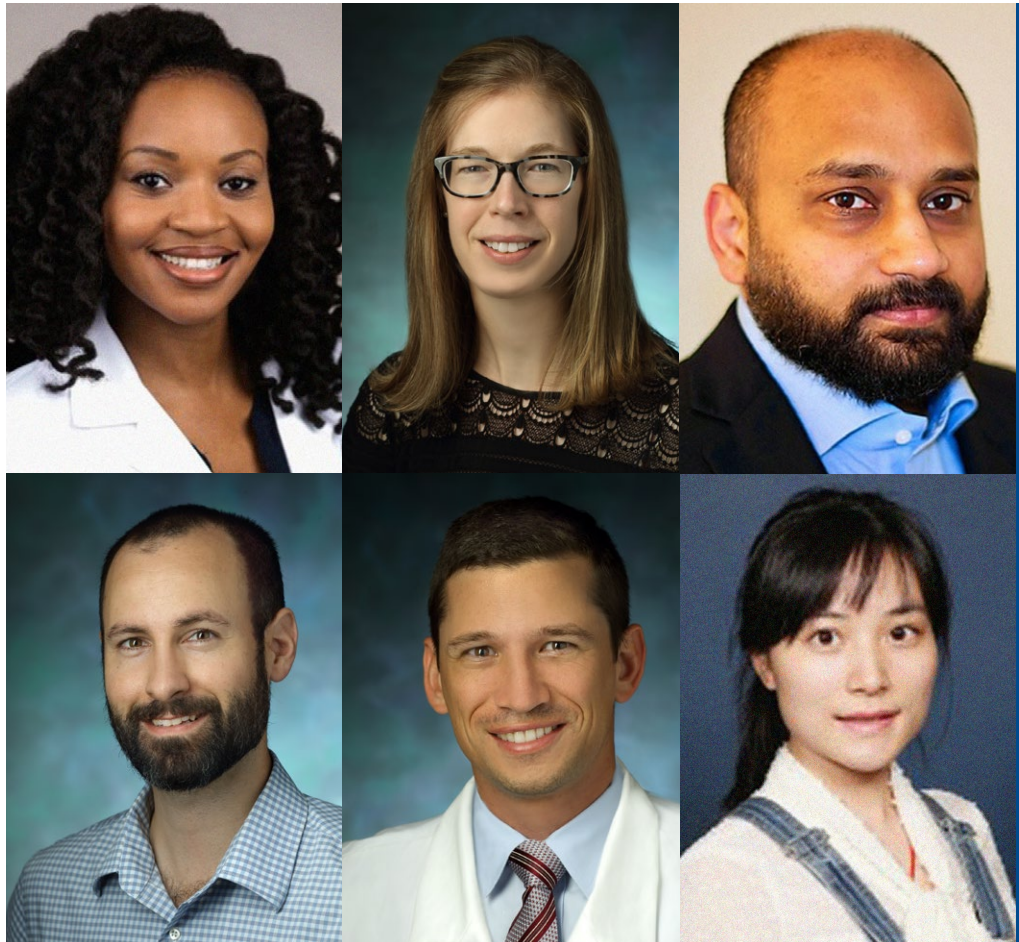
Acknowledging Research Excellence

SKIN RESEARCH IS FLOURISHING AT Hopkins Dermatology. Our faculty and trainees are conducting innovative investigations to define disease mechanisms, find better treatments, and move those discoveries towards clinical care. It is with great pride that we share a multitude of achievements recently awarded to our world-class researchers.

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF DERMATOLOGY (AAD) presents prestigious awards to individuals to recognize their contributions to the specialty of dermatology. We are delighted to share the following recognition for two of our investigators.

Crystal Aguh, M.D., Associate Professor of Dermatology and Director of the Ethnic Skin Program, is the recipient of two **AAD Hair Loss and Alopecia Initiative in Research (HAIR) Awards**. The Academy's HAIR awards recognize research projects that address gaps in hair disorders research, with a particular emphasis on hair disorders in diverse populations. Dr. Aguh's awards are for her studies entitled *Investigating the Impact of Hair Washing on Scalp Cytokine Expression in Patients with CCCA and Identifying Biomarkers of Therapeutic Response and Disease Progression in CCCA*.

Shawn Kwatra, M.D., is the recipient of the **AAD Young Investigator Award for Bench/Translational Research**. Dr. Kwatra is an Associate Professor of Dermatology and the Director of the Johns Hopkins Itch Center. His clinical and translational research interest is in the pathogenesis and treatment of chronic



Clockwise from top left: Dr. Crystal Aguh, Dr. Kristin Bibee, Dr. Martin Alphonse, Dr. Yingchao Xue, Dr. Joel Sunshine and Dr. Nathan Archer.

“This is by far the highest number of Dermatology Foundation awards in the history of the Department. This kind of acknowledgement fortifies our commitment to skin research from basic science to clinical dermatology and epidemiology.”

SEWON KANG, M.D.,
NOXELL PROFESSOR AND CHAIR
OF HOPKINS DERMATOLOGY.

pruritus. Dr. Kwatra's award is for his study *Pathogenesis of Prurigo Nodularis*.

THE AMERICAN SKIN

ASSOCIATION announced that **Dr. Luis Garza** is this year's winner of the Research Achievement Award in Translational Research. Dr. Garza is a Professor of Dermatology and Vice Chair of Research. His areas of clinical expertise include hidradenitis suppurativa, alopecia areata, and general dermatology. The Garza Lab focuses on skin stem cells and wound healing with an emphasis on identifying the next generation of wound therapeutics and diagnostics.

THE DERMATOLOGY

FOUNDATION (DF) invests in early career researchers. Each year, their Medical and Scientific Committee identifies scientifically meritorious proposals for funding. We are happy to report the DF has awarded five of our researchers with awards. Four are prestigious Career Development Awards, and one is a sought-after Investigator Research Fellowship Award. "This is by far the highest number of Dermatology Foundation awards in the history of the Department," said Sewon Kang, M.D., Noxell Professor and Chair of Hopkins Dermatology. "This kind of acknowledgement fortifies our commitment to skin research from basic science to clinical dermatology and epidemiology."

Crystal U. Aguh, M.D. received a third year of funding for her **Medical Dermatology Career Development Award** for her study *Exploring Gene Expression Patterns and Biomarkers of Disease Severity in CCCA*. Along with her clinical and research efforts, Dr. Aguh has authored three books on hair loss and has published over two dozen peer-reviewed journal articles and given multiple national and international talks.

Martin Alphonse, Ph.D. received a **Research Career Development Award** for his study *NLRP12 and Caspase-8 Mediated Inflammasome Signaling in Staphylococcus Aureus Skin Infections*. Dr. Alphonse is an instructor in the Department of Dermatology.



The Garza Lab at Hopkins Dermatology.

His research focus centers on the study of immune responses to host-pathogen interactions in inflammasome biology.

Kristin Bibee, M.D., Ph.D. received a **Clinical Career Development Award in Dermatologic Surgery** for her research entitled *Tumor and Stromal Factors Driving Squamous Cell Carcinoma Behavior in the Immunosuppressed Patient*. Dr. Bibee is an Assistant Professor of Dermatology. Her clinical practice is focused on Mohs surgery, complex cutaneous oncology, and transplant dermatology. Her scientific interests include mechanisms of skin cancer development and evolution in immunosuppressed patients, mitigating risk in high-risk cutaneous malignancies, and patient education.

Courtney M. Johnson, M.D., Ph.D. received a **Dermatologist Investigator Research Fellowship** for her study entitled *Single Cell Transcriptomic View of Cancer-Associated Fibroblasts in Early-Stage Mycosis Fungoides*. Dr. Johnson is the inaugural T32 Research Fellow at Hopkins Dermatology. She hopes to

further develop protocol to identify key regulatory markers that can be utilized to improve the care of Cutaneous T-Cell Lymphoma patients.

Joel C. Sunshine, M.D., Ph.D. received a second year of funding for his **Dermatopathology Research Career Development Award** for his study *Loss of Effective Antigen Presentation in Melanoma and Treatment Failure*. Dr. Sunshine is an Assistant Professor of Dermatology, Dermatopathology and Biomedical Engineering. His primary research interest is understanding how skin cancers interact with the immune system, finding new ways to predict which patients will do well with what treatment, and developing new therapies to improve the immune response to skin cancers.

Dr. Sunshine is also the recipient of a two-year grant from the **Emerson Collective**, which works to accelerate solutions that will improve cancer detection, treatment, and the patient experience. His research project is entitled *Bioengineered Nanotechnology to Modulate Antigen Presentation in Cancer*.



Clockwise from top left: Dr. Luis Garza, Dr. Courtney Johnson, Dr. Shawn Kwatra and Dr. Janis Taube.

THE JOHNS HOPKINS SCHOOL OF MEDICINE Young Investigators' Day was established in 1978 to recognize the outstanding research contributions made by our trainees: medical and graduate students, postdoctoral and clinical fellows and residents. This year the committee chose to recognize **Yingchao Xue, Ph.D.**, a Post-doctoral Fellow in the Garza Lab, with the Claude & Barbara Migeon Postdoc Research Award for her research entitled *Mechanical Tension Mobilizes Lgr6+ Epidermal Stem Cells to Drive Skin Growth* that was also recently published in the journal *Science Advances*.

The **LEO FOUNDATION**, which provides philanthropic grants with the aim to support the best international research in skin diseases, awarded **Nathan Archer, Ph.D.** a three-

year, multi-million dollar grant for his research entitled *The Role of Eosinophils in Atopic Dermatitis Skin Inflammation and Itch*. Dr. Archer is an Assistant Professor. His research goal is to understand mechanisms of protective innate and adaptive immune responses to skin pathogens and the role of aberrant immune responses and the skin microbiome in the pathogenesis of inflammatory skin diseases, including atopic dermatitis and psoriasis.

THE STATE OF MARYLAND'S Department of Commerce, through its **E-Nnovation Initiative Fund**, awarded Hopkins Dermatology a \$1,150,000 grant to establish an endowed professorship. Supported by matching funds from **Thomas Olsen, M.D.**, a donor to Hopkins Dermatology, the *George W. Hambrick, Jr., M.D. Professorship*

in *Dermatology*, will support a highly collaborative precision immuno-oncology research program developed by **Janis Taube, M.D., M.Sc.**, the Director of Dermatopathology and an expert in next-generation tissue-based biomarkers for immunotherapy. Dr. Taube has developed a new platform in partnership with Dr. Alex Szalay, an astronomer, Big Data expert, and professor in the university's Department of Astrophysics. The platform, called "AstroPath," combines astronomy with pathology to identify predictive biomarkers for cancer immunotherapy.

The Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund awarded **Dr. Luis Garza** \$650,000 for his innovative clinical work with our nation's wounded warriors. Dr. Garza's Veteran Amputee Skin Regeneration Program uses cellular therapy to regrow skin at the stump site, creating tougher skin like on the soles of feet. This makes prosthetic wear more comfortable and helps those with limb loss, many of whom are wounded veterans, enjoy a better quality of life. Dr. Garza and the Department are grateful for this and all previous support from the Maryland Stem Cell Research Fund.

SKIN OF COLOR SOCIETY funds basic, translational, or clinical research related to inflammatory disorders in skin of color. This year, the Society created a **Career Development Award** with the expectation that the recipients will be tomorrow's leaders in dermatology. We are proud to announce the inaugural awardee is our very own **Dr. Shawn Kwatra** for his research entitled *Racial Differences in Germline and Somatic Mutations in Prurigo Nodularis*.

Congratulations to all of our awardees!

If you would like to support the innovative research of Hopkins Dermatology, please contact Toba Rainess, Sr. Associate Director of Development, at trainees1@jhmi.edu or 202-527-3176.

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Friends & Changemakers

Hopkins Dermatology is most appreciative of our friends **Ray and Ann Vickery** for their stalwart support. The Vickery's are grateful patients, donors, and volunteers. Ray, a graduate of Harvard Law, who served as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Trade Development during the Clinton Administration, as well as three terms as an elected member of the

Virginia General Assembly, is a member of the Department's Chairman's Circle, an advisory group that meets biannually. Ann Vickery, a graduate of Georgetown Law, held various positions at the White House and in the Department of Treasury and later served as a managing partner in the District of Columbia office of Hogan Lovells, where she was director of the health practice group. Ann was very active in the hospice movement, having been largely responsible for inclusion of hospice as a Medicare benefit.



Dr. Kang with Ray and Ann Vickery.

The Vickery's support **Dr. Luis Garza's** Veteran Amputee Skin Regeneration Program which addresses the skin health issues associated with long-term prosthetic wear. Using stem cells, Dr. Garza reprograms skin at the stump site to generate tougher skin, so wearing a prosthetic is no different than wearing a shoe. This life-changing program is also supported by the Department of Defense.

According to Ray, "Ann and I are most impressed with the work of Dr. Garza. His program is making a real difference in the lives of veteran amputees. These heroes gave so much to our beloved country, America should do everything possible to improve the quality of their lives. Unfortunately, there has been a gap in funding for Dr. Garza's important program, and we were happy to help meet this need."

For more information or to support the Veteran Amputee Skin Regeneration Program, please email Toba Rainess at traines1@jhmi.edu or call 202-527-3176.

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Dr. Lamberg and his wife Lynne.

The Lambergs' Legacy

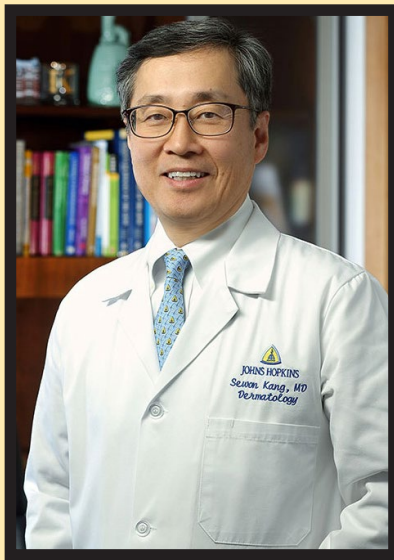
The Stanford I. Lamberg, M.D. Research Prizes in Dermatology were established to spark research discovery and innovation for our trainees and junior faculty members. Each year the Department awards prizes for the Best Presentation by a Resident, Best Paper by a Resident, and the Lamberg Prize for Junior Faculty Research.

Most recently, Dr. Lamberg chose to endow these awards through a bequest intention in his estate plans, while still providing annual funds to the Department. This ensures that the Lamberg Research Prizes will continue in perpetuity. Hopkins Dermatology is most grateful to Dr. Lamberg and his wife Lynne for their generosity and partnership.

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Chairman's Corner



Sewon Kang, M.D.

SPRING IS HERE, AND WITH IT COMES A RENEWED SENSE of togetherness after so many months spent apart. While COVID-19 is still very much part of our lives, there has been an easing which has allowed us to experience some of the most wonderful aspects of our mission.

We were able to hold our annual Alumni & Friends Reception at the American Academy of Dermatology's Annual Meeting, and get together in person for our annual Research Day. We hope to continue in this direction of normalcy, but know changes could come at any time.

In this edition of the Dermatology Newsletter, we are proud to highlight the research excellence that is flourishing at Hopkins Dermatology. Our brilliant faculty and trainees have received recognition from the likes of the American Academy of Dermatology, the American Skin Association, the Dermatology Foundation, the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine, the Leo Foundation, the Maryland E-Innovation Initiative Fund, and the Skin of Color Society. These awards and accolades will have lasting impact on our tripartite mission of research, education, and patient care.

It is a truly remarkable year for our group.

Wishing you good health,

Sewon Kang, M.D.
Noxell Chair and Professor

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Alumni Spotlight

On March 26, 2022, Hopkins Dermatology hosted an Alumni & Friends Reception at the American Academy of Dermatology's Annual Meeting in Boston, MA. Residents, Fellows, Faculty, Alumni, and friends of the Department came together after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. It was wonderful to be together again in person.

Clockwise from top left:
Brian Connolly and Byron Ho; Jay Birnbaum and Sewon Kang; Rachel Marchalik and Alexander Fischer; Nancy Nkansah-Mahaney, Kristin Khan, Jihad Alhariri, Angel Diaz, Rachel Marchalik, Yemisi Dina; Candrice Heath, Jihad Alhariri, Nashay Clemetson, Crystal Aguh, John Zampella.



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New Faculty

Welcome to our newest full-time faculty members.



Martin P. Alphonse, Ph.D.

Dr. Alphonse received his Ph.D. in Immunology from the University of Toronto, training at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Canada. He completed his post-doctoral fellowship at the Department of Dermatology, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Dr. Alphonse's research focuses on inflammasome, immune metabolism, and caspase signaling in inflammatory skin diseases, including *S. aureus* skin infections. He actively collaborates with other faculty members in the Department of Dermatology to understand the role of immune responses in various skin diseases, including pruritus and skin regeneration.



Joy Wan, M.D., M.S.C.E.

Dr. Joy Wan is an Assistant Professor of Dermatology. Her areas of clinical expertise include pediatric dermatology and atopic dermatitis. She received her undergraduate degree in biochemical sciences from Harvard University and her M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania. She completed her dermatology residency training at the University of Pennsylvania and a pediatric dermatology fellowship at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. She also pursued postdoctoral research training in clinical epidemiology at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Wan's research focuses on epidemiologic and patient-oriented investigations of pediatric skin diseases including eczema.

Supporting Our Work

The Johns Hopkins Department of Dermatology strives to provide outstanding individualized diagnosis and treatment of skin disease; educate the next generation of dermatologists to become leaders in medical dermatology, cosmetic dermatology, dermatologic surgery, dermatopathology and investigative dermatology; and develop new and better strategies to diagnose and treat skin disease through groundbreaking research.

If you wish to support any program or research project with a tax-deductible donation, please visit:

<https://secure.jhu.edu/form/derma>

or call 202-527-3176.