

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

UPENN DIGESTIVE AND LIVER CENTER

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Ken Cadwell, PhD

Center Director

Gary D Wu, MD

Co-Associate Director

Rebecca G Wells, MD

Co-Associate Director

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Core Director

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Technical Director

Host-Microbial Analytic and Repository Core (H-MARC)

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Core Director

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Biomedical Data Science Core (BDSC)

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Genetically Engineered Mouse Core (GEMC)

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Core Director

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Gastrointestinal Epithelium Modeling Core (GEM)

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Co-Core Director

Amanda B Muir, MD

Co-Core Director

Tatiana Karakasheva, PhD

Technical Director

Introducing Dr. Joe Zackular... our new Microbiome theme Co-Leader



The Zackular laboratory focuses on understanding how interactions between the host, gut microbiota, and pathogens impact human health and disease, particularly the nosocomial pathogen *Clostridioides difficile*. The research in the lab focuses on how the gut microbiota shapes *C. difficile* fitness and virulence, and how this complex community alters host responses to infection. Leveraging knowledge high throughput sequencing technologies with more mechanistic strategies involving bacterial genetics, mass spectrometry, and imaging, the lab aims to develop novel vaccine strategies for *C. difficile* infection and uses microbiome-based therapies for disease treatment.

Dr. Zackular is co-director of the Center for Microbial Medicine at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, which aims to bring microbiome-based medicine to pediatric patients and use whole genome sequencing of pathogens to provide personalized treatments for infections. For more information on the Center for Microbial Medicine visit: <https://www.research.chop.edu/center-for-microbial-medicine>.

ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

901 BRB AT NOON. LUNCH WILL BE SERVED

Intestinal Stem Cell Club: 1st Thursday

Mucosal Immunology Research in Progress: 2nd Thursday

Liver Biology Club: 3rd Thursday

Research Seminar Series: 4th and 5th Thursdays

Visit the website for the most up to date schedule:

<https://www.med.upenn.edu/digestive-and-liver-center/cmsdld-research-seminar-series.html>

New Series: *The things no one tells you about!*

Session 1: "Sticky Situations"

Format: Moderated panel discussion

Panel

- Donita Brady (Harrison McCrea Dickson, M.D. and Clifford C. Baker, M.D. Presidential Associate Professor, Department of Cancer Biology, PSOM)
- Igor Brodsky (Robert R. Marshak Professor and Chair, Department of Pathobiology, Penn Vet)
- Celeste Simon (Arthur H. Rubenstein, MBBCh Professor, Department of Cell and Developmental Biology, PSOM)

Moderator

- Rebecca Wells (Professor of Medicine)

Date/Time: Wednesday, October 22, 3:00–4:00 pm

Location: 1412 BRB

Open to all trainees and junior faculty!

Refreshments served

REGISTER NOW!



Senior faculty will discuss their approaches to difficult lab scenarios not covered by the rules, including:

- How to manage conflicts in the lab — how do you respect lab members as adults, but keep conflicts from getting out of control and dominating lab culture?
- Romance between peers in the lab — how do you handle the discrete, and the decidedly non-discrete?
- Firing someone — how to decide and carry it out, what to say to the lab afterwards and whether you should worry about lab culture afterwards?

25th ANNUAL UPENN DIGESTIVE AND LIVER CENTER SYMPOSIUM

FIBROSIS AND WOUND HEALING ACROSS THE SPECTRUM OF DIGESTIVE AND LIVER DISEASES

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 12TH, 2025

GAULTON AUDITORIUM, BRB II/III

9:00AM- 5:30PM

8:30AM - 9:00AM LIGHT BREAKFAST AND REGISTRATION

9:00AM - 9:20AM INTRODUCTION - Rebecca Wells, MD

9:20AM - 11:00AM SESSION I: UNDERSTANDING AND DEFINING THE ECM IN FIBROSIS

Natalie J. Török, MD, MSc, Stanford

Matrix remodeling in steatohepatitis

Claudia Loebel, MD, PhD, University of Pennsylvania

Local photo-crosslinking of native tissue matrices to probe cell mechanosensing

TBD Abstract Presentation

Peggi Angel, PhD, Medical University of South Carolina

Decoding Fibrosis through ECM-Targeted Spatial Proteomics

11:00AM - 11:20AM BREAK

11:20AM - 12:50PM SESSION II: FIBROSIS ACROSS ORGAN SYSTEMS

David M. Merrick, MD, PhD, University of Pennsylvania

Structural dynamics of adipose tissue in obesity and weight loss

Eleana Kaffe, PhD, University of Pennsylvania

Decoding Human Liver Fibrosis Through Humanized Rodent Models

Florian Reider, MD, Cleveland Clinic

TBD

TBD Abstract Flash Talks

12:50PM - 2:00PM LUNCH and POSTER SESSION

2:00PM - 3:50PM SESSION III: NEW HORIZONS IN UNDERSTANDING, DIAGNOSING, AND TREATING FIBROSIS

Seema Aceves, MD, PhD, University of California, San Diego

Immunofibrosis Driven Tissue Remodeling in Eosinophilic Esophagitis

Jacob S. Brenner, MD, PhD, University of Pennsylvania

DNA-loaded lipid nanoparticles (DNA-LNPs): A platform technology to control gene expression in the liver and GI tract

Walter R. Witschey, PhD, University of Pennsylvania

Advancing Digestive and Liver Disease Care through Multimodal AI

Jon A. Epstein, MD, University of Pennsylvania

Treating cardiac fibrosis with mRNA and CAR-T cells

3:50-4:00 ABSTRACT PRIZES and WRAP UP

4:00-5:30 HAPPY HOUR

REGISTRATION AND ABSTRACTION SUBMISSION DEADLINE: OCTOBER 29TH, 2025

TO REGISTER : [CLICK HERE](#) OR scan the QR code NOTE: Abstracts may also be submitted by emailing Lillian Chau at Lillian.Chau@pennmedicine.upenn.edu

