



July 2025

R.K.M.I. RESEARCH REVIEW

Scholar Spotlight

Carolina Pinzon-Guzman, MD, PhD

Born in Colombia, South America, Dr. Carolina Pinzon-Guzman began her journey in the United States after completing high school. She earned her undergraduate degree in Biomedical Science from Texas A&M University and went on to conduct full-time cancer biology research at the University of Pennsylvania. She was later accepted into the MD/PhD program at Penn State College of Medicine, where she completed her doctoral research in developmental biology, focusing on the genetic and molecular mechanisms of stem cell differentiation. Following graduation, Dr. Pinzon-Guzman pursued general surgery residency at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, where she took two dedicated years of postdoctoral research to investigate foregut development and its relationship to esophageal atresia. She continued this work during her fellowship at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Fetal Center, where she expanded her research into lung development in the context of congenital diaphragmatic hernia.



After completing pediatric surgery fellowship at the Montreal Children's Hospital, Dr. Pinzon-Guzman joined UPMC Children's Hospital as a pediatric surgeon-scientist. Her research continues to focus on the molecular and genetic foundation of foregut development, aiming to better understand and ultimately improve care for conditions such as esophageal atresia and congenital diaphragmatic hernia. She is also excited to collaborate with the UPMC Fetal Center to advance both clinical and scientific efforts in these areas.

Celebrating Our Newest Mellon Scholar Alumni!

We are thrilled to congratulate the newest graduates of the Mellon Scholars Program! With their promotion from assistant professor to associate professor in the tenure track, they've reached an exciting new milestone in their academic careers. As they join the distinguished ranks of Mellon Scholar alumni, we know their journeys are only just beginning. We can't wait to see the brilliant paths they forge and the change they'll create in the world. Congratulations to you all!

Gary Kohanbash, PhD
Amery Treble-Barna, PhD
Maya Ragavan, MD, MPH, MS



Regulatory Services

We're pleased to announce that beginning July 1st, RKMI will have shared access to a dedicated regulatory coordinator from the [Pediatric Clinical Research Services](#) (PCRS) group to assist with your regulatory needs.

Regulatory Services Available:

- Institutional Review Board (PittPRO) submissions
- IACUC submissions
- Organization and maintenance of regulatory files
- ClinicalTrials.gov support
- Industry-sponsored study submissions and management

To access these services, please reach out to our PCRS regulatory coordinator:

Valerie Miller
millerv4@upmc.edu |  412-692-7336

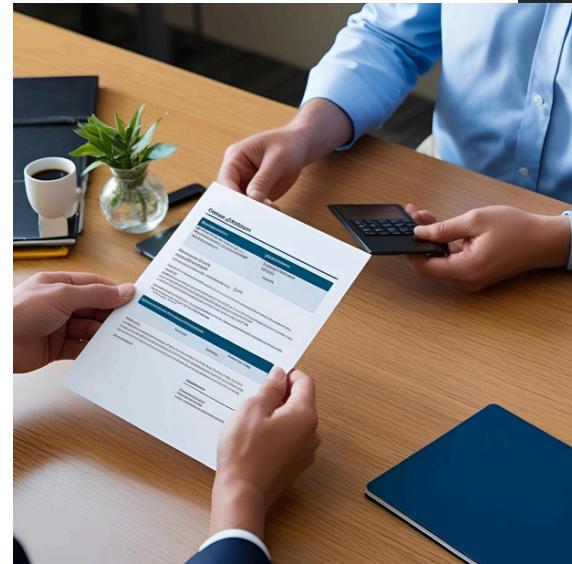


*Follow the link above or use the QR code
for more information on the
comprehensive services offered by PCRS.*

Mock Study Section Grant Review Process

Mellon Scholars are encouraged to submit their complete grant applications (understandably perhaps in a very rough draft form) to administration via [email](#) roughly two months in advance of the appropriate funding deadline, along with a list of 3-5 potential Pitt reviewers.

Reviewers may meet for discussions. The scholar will be provided with the written critiques from each reviewer and a summary of the discussion between the reviewers if one occurs. The scholar will be blinded to the identity of their reviewers. Discussion summaries and critiques will be returned to the scholar prior to the grant's agency due date, so that the scholar can incorporate any changes in response to these critiques.



Submission Email Address: RKMIAdmin@UPMC.edu

Upcoming Grant Opportunities

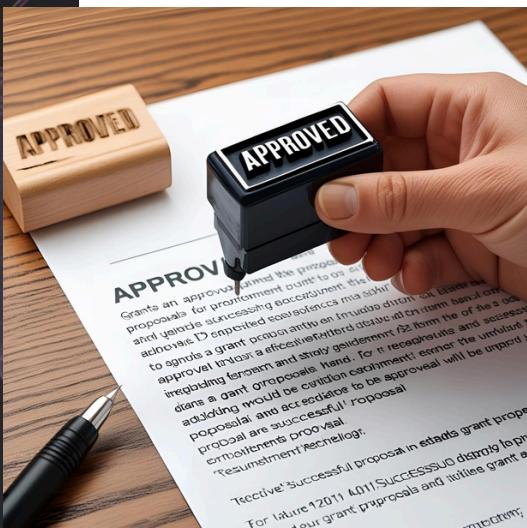
RK Mellon Institute for Pediatric Research (RKMI) is accepting applications. **Application Deadline: October 15th.**

- Pilot Award: \$50,000/yr/2yrs
- Trainee Award: \$50,000/yr/2yrs

For submissions: RKMIAdmin@upmc.edu

Research Advisory Committee (RAC) is accepting applications. **Application Deadline: August 15th.**

For submissions: RACAdmin@upmc.edu



Core Fund Recipients

Core funds in the amount of \$2000 are available annually to Mellon scholars that are not R01 funded.

FY25 Core fund awardees:

- Jessica Jarvis, PhD, MT-BC
- Laura Kirkpatrick, MD
- Yijen Wu, PhD
- Carlina Pinzon-Guzman, MD
- Lina Gonzalez, MD
- Rannar Airik, PhD
- Maya Ragavan, MD, MPH, MS
- Franziska Rosser, MD, MPH
- Jessica Daley, MD
- Taylor Eddens, MD, PhD
- Megan Freeman, MD, PhD
- Catherine Forster, MD, MS, FAAP

To receive funds, submit a paragraph request via email to Dr. George Gittes at Gittesgk@UPMC.edu explaining the planned use of the money.



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"The Mellon fund enabled me to conduct preliminary pilot testing, which provided critical scheme to strengthen my NIH grant application. As a result, the grant scored at the top 5 percentile and is now funded. Thank you, Mellon fund!" – Dr. Yijen Wu, PhD.

"Conducting rigorous mechanistic research on a career development award budget can be challenging. CHP Mellon Scholar Funds allowed me to uphold scientific integrity by supporting the contract of experienced clinical research staff for masked data collection in my PICU-based clinical trial." – Dr. Jessica Jarvis, PhD, MT-BC

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Research Concierge Program

The [Pitt Research Concierge Program](#) is designed to reduce administrative burden and promote ease of research at the University of Pittsburgh.

The [Proposal Editing Service](#) offers proofreading and copy-editing services for all types and sizes of externally sponsored funding proposals.

Do you have a research-related question? Submit your question to the [Pitt Research Navigator](#) and get connected to the right resource in one business day.

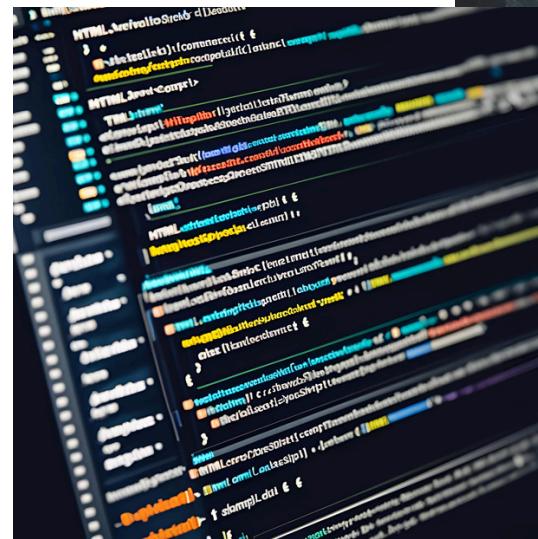
Learn more at researchconcierge.pitt.edu.



Pitt Website Creation

Creating and maintaining a page on the Pitt Pediatrics website is simple and highly effective for showcasing your research and recruitment efforts. To get started, reach out to the [Pediatrics Communications Team](#)—they'll guide you through the setup process. Once your page is live, you can send regular updates for publication or enroll in the Website Editor Class, hosted by the communications team, to gain approval for editing your own webpage. This one-hour class is open to you or any member of your team, allowing you to take control of your content with ease.

PEDSCOMM@pitt.edu



Upcoming Speakers

Mellon Scholar Seminar Series: 3PM-4PM

9/17/25 - Laurie Silva, PhD & William DePas, PhD

10/15/25 - Youjin Lee, PhD & Anthony Cillo, PhD

11/19/25 - Jessica Daley, MD & Jenny Ruiz, MD, MSCE

12/17/25 - Anita Saraf, MD, PhD & Yijen Wu, PhD

Rangos Research Seminar Series: 12PM-1PM

9/09/25 - Erika Newman, MD, FAAP, FACS

9/16/25 - Corina Bondi, PhD

9/23/25 - Shaun Carlson, PhD

9/30/25 - George Gittes, MD

Pediatric Grand Rounds: 8AM-9AM

7/10/25 - Annie Andrews, MD

7/17/25 - Ben Miller, MD

7/24/25 - Marne Lunoe, MD, MS

7/31/25 - Tahniat Syed, MD, MPH, FAAP

Summer Research Internship Program



The RKMI is thrilled to host our 2nd year [Summer Research Internship Program](#) (SRIP) students for another enriching season of discovery and academic growth. Central to SRIP is the invaluable mentorship experience, where students collaborate closely with dedicated faculty on independent research projects. These partnerships foster not only scholarly development but also meaningful relationships that often extend beyond the summer. We're proud to support these students as they explore new ideas, sharpen their skills, and contribute fresh perspectives to our research community.

- Nirja Divekar, University of Pittsburgh - Mentor: Baoli Hu
- Angelika Dewicki, Washington & Jefferson College - Mentor: Brian Campfield
- Gemma DeSanzo, Pennsylvania Western University Edinboro - Mentor: Corina Bondi
- Jade McCurvin, University of Pittsburgh - Mentor: Franziska Rosser
- Anna DeFazio, Saint Francis University - Mentor: Kelly Bailey
- Heather Stephenson, University of Pittsburgh - Mentor: Thomas Hooven



Share Your Feedback!
RKMIAdmin@upmc.edu

 www.chp.edu/research/rkmfi