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LIVER DIGEST

A weekly update of PLRC happenings

July 30, 2020



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FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Drs. D. Lansing Taylor** (Drug Discovery Institute and Dept of Computational and Systems Biology), **Alejandro Soto-Gutierrez** (Dept of Pathology and McGowan Institute) and **Jaideep Behari** (Dept of Medicine, Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition and Director of the UPMC Fatty Liver, Obesity and Wellness Clinic) are Mult-PIs on an NIH funded grant, “A vascularized patient-derived iPSC liver acinus microphysiology system as an innovative precision medicine platform for optimizing clinical trial design for nonalcoholic fatty liver disease.”

Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is a major health crisis with no approved therapeutics and many failures in the clinic. A vascularized patient-derived liver acinus microphysiology system (vLAMPS) is an innovative precision medicine platform for optimizing clinical trial design for NAFLD. The team will test the response of induced pluripotent stem cell-derived liver cells from

NAFLD patients in vLAMPS with either the high-risk variant PNPLA3 I148M or the wild-type to a range of drugs in development. The goal is to identify the right patient genotype for the right drug or drug combination.

- **Dr. Paul Monga**, Director of the PLRC, has received a multi-PI R01 grant with **Dr. Amaia Lujambio**, Assistant Professor at Mt. Sinai, to study, "Targeting tumor metabolism and immune environment via beta-catenin: Towards precision medicine in HCC." Other PLRC collaborators who are full members of PLRC from Pittsburgh on this grant include **Dr. Jianhua Luo** and **Dr. Silvia Liu**. This proposal is based on the hypothesis that CTNNB1-mutated HCCs (25-35% of all HCCs) could form the basis of precision medicine in HCC. The study will further our understanding of how these subtypes of tumors may have mTOR activation owing to glutamine addiction, and at the same time be resistant to immune checkpoint inhibitors due to immune cell exclusion from the tumor microenvironment.

NEXT VIRTUAL SEMINAR: TUESDAY, August 4 AT 12:00 PM

Our next virtual seminar is scheduled for **Tuesday, August 4 at 12:00 PM**. A Zoom link to access the seminar has been sent out to all members via email. **Dr. Donghun Shin**, current PLRC member, will be giving a

presentation on his research and the title of the talk will be: "Attenuating the EGFR-ERK-SOX9 axis promotes liver progenitor cell-mediated liver regeneration in zebrafish."

If you have any questions, please email Amanda Bytzura at bytzuraam@upmc.edu.

UPCOMING SOTA LECTURE SERIES SCHEDULE

The Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology and Nutrition will be hosting their annual State-of-the-Art Lecture series in a virtual format. Lectures are held on Tuesdays and Fridays from 7:00-8:00 am. Here is the schedule of upcoming lectures:

- Kevin McGrath, MD will present at **7:00 am on Tuesday, August 4** and the title of the presentation will be, "Management of Ingested Foreign Bodies."
- **Michael Dunn, MD**, PLRC member, will present at **7:00 am on Friday, August 7** and the title of the presentation will be, "Viral Hepatitis."

Please click here for the Microsoft Teams link to join the meeting.

You can also join by dialing **412-447-5295** and entering the **Conference ID: 992 093 294#**

JOB OPPORTUNITY

- **Dr. D. Lansing Taylor** is looking for a candidate to fill a post-doctoral fellow Position in Human Liver Microphysiology Systems (MPS) in his laboratory. The incumbent will be working for the team's newly awarded liver microphysiology “preclinical trial” project. **Please click here to view the full job description.**



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