

# NOYCIA recognizes Canadian oncology research excellence

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The Novartis Oncology Young Canadian Investigator Awards returned for its 22nd year at ASCO 2025

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By Sophia Kajla, Chief Scientific Officer and Vice President, Scientific Affairs, Novartis Canada

This year on National Cancer Survivors Day (June 1), Isabelle Lanthier and I had the honour of hosting the 22<sup>nd</sup> Novartis Oncology Young Canadian Investigator Awards ([NOYCIA](#)) at the 2025 [American Society of Clinical Oncology \(ASCO\)](#) Annual Meeting.

Since its inception in 2004, NOYCIA has helped showcase top young oncology researchers from across the country who are making strides in the fight against cancer. This year, over 60 oncology practitioners, researchers and industry experts joined Novartis Canada's Medical teams at ASCO to celebrate the achievements of the 2025 NOYCIA winners.

Every year, an esteemed Scientific Panel reviews submissions from a broad range of applicants, including Post-Doctorate Students, Residents, Fellows, Graduate Students, Medical Students, PhD Candidates, and Undergraduates affiliated with a Canadian institution and who are the first author of an abstract accepted by ASCO. This dedicated Panel then selects ten winners based on their research merit and who demonstrate excellence in their field of study, with each winner receiving a grant to support their work.

The evening is also an opportunity to activate NOYCIA's *Mentorship Matters Program*, which promotes the exchange of medical knowledge and expertise by providing networking and mentorship opportunities to trainees with experienced oncology professionals – fueling and expediting pathways for knowledge exchange and collaboration from coast to coast, beyond institutional and provincial boundaries.

Following extensive and objective deliberation by the Scientific Panel, we are thrilled to announce this year's NOYCIA 2025 recipients:

## **Immune Checkpoint Inhibitors and Immunotherapy:**

- **Luciana Siqueira, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre**

- *Abstract:* The association between emotional distress prior to receiving immune checkpoint inhibitors and overall survival among patients with cancer: A population-based study
- *Supervisors:* Dr. Lawson Eng & Dr. Marcus Butler

- **Edmond Rafie, Research Center of the Centre Hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal**

- *Abstract:* Dietary compounds and patterns associated with immune checkpoint inhibitors (ICI) outcomes in advanced non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC)
- *Supervisor:* Dr. Arielle Elkrief

- **Patrick Tuan Hoang, University of Toronto**

- *Abstract:* Identification of immunotherapy early treatment failure in non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) using a novel cell-free DNA (cfDNA)-tissue-agnostic genome-wide methylome enrichment

assay

- *Supervisor:* Dr. Adrian Sacher

- **Gregoire Marret, University Health Network**

- **Abstract:** Spatial transcriptomics analysis to predict response to immune checkpoint blockade (ICB) in recurrent or metastatic head and neck squamous cell cancer (RM-HNSCC)
- *Supervisor:* Dr. Lilian Siu

- **Rami Habib, McGill University**

- **Abstract:** JAK inhibitor for the treatment of steroid refractory and life threatening immune-related adverse events secondary to immune checkpoint inhibitors
- *Supervisor:* Dr. Khashayar Esfahani

## **Transcriptomics and Molecular Analysis:**

- **Xin Wang, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre**

- **Abstract:** Correlative and spatial transcriptomic analysis of olaparib and durvalumab in patients with recurrent/refractory IDH-mutant gliomas
- *Supervisor:* Dr. Eric Chen

- **Ronan McLaughlin, Princess Margaret Cancer Centre**

- **Abstract:** NeoPancONE: GATA6 Expression as a Predictor of benefit to Peri-Operative Modified FOLFIRINOX in Resectable Pancreatic Adenocarcinoma (r-PDAC): A Multicentre Phase II study
- *Supervisor:* Dr. Jennifer Knox

## **Patient Experience and Decision-Making:**

- **Rena Seeger, University of Ottawa**

- **Abstract:** Exploring decisional needs of patients considering first line treatment of Advanced EGFR+ lung cancer: An interpretive descriptive study
- *Supervisor:* Dr. Paul Wheatley-Price

## **Novel Therapeutic Approaches:**

- **Asli Munzur, University of British Columbia**

- **Abstract:** Clonal hematopoiesis (CH) in participants with metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer (mCRPC) receiving 177Lu-PSMA-617 or cabazitaxel: an exploratory post-hoc analysis of a randomized phase II trial (TheraP ANZUP 1603)
- *Supervisor:* Dr. Alex Wyatt

## **Healthcare Systems and Workforce Planning:**

- **Philip Ding, University of Alberta**

- **Abstract:** Rethinking future workforce planning by developing novel metrics of complexity in cancer care
- *Supervisor:* Dr. Winson Cheung

NOYCIA's legacy is unmatched in Canada. Many of its past recipients have gone on to become respected medical leaders and mentors, continuing the program's virtuous cycle of excellence in oncology research and education.

We are especially grateful to our 2025 Scientific Panel for their time and expertise:

- Dr. Paul Wheatley-Price, NOYCIA Chair; Associate Professor, Department of Medicine, University of

Ottawa; and Medical Oncologist, The Ottawa Hospital Cancer Centre

- Dr. Julie Lemieux, Hemato-Oncologist, CHU de Québec
- Dr. Erin Powell, Medical Oncologist, Dr. H. Bliss Murphy Cancer Center
- Dr. Sharlene Gill, Professor of Medicine, University of British Columbia; GI Medical Oncologist, BC Cancer; Chair, Canadian Clinical Trials Group (CCTG) GI Disease Site Committee; and President, Canadian Association of Medical Oncologists
- Dr. Daniel Heng, Division Head, Medical Oncology, Tom Baker Cancer Center; and Clinical Professor of Medicine, University of Calgary
- Dr. Rosalyn Juergens, Medical Oncologist, Juravinski Cancer Centre; and Co-Chair, Lung Cancer Canada Medical Advisory Committee
- Dr. Dave Cescon, Breast Medical Oncologist and Clinician Scientist; Princess Margaret Cancer Centre

Through programs like NOYCIA, Novartis is proud of our commitment to pioneering next-generation innovations and supporting the future of oncology research excellence. We look forward to witnessing the contributions this year's winners will make to advancing scientific understanding and approaches to improve outcomes for patients in Canada, and around the world.

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