



PRESS RELEASE

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Wistar's Dr. Noam Auslander Awarded \$600K V Foundation Grant to Identify Connections between Gut Microbial Genes & Melanoma Immunotherapy

Dr. Auslander's project will investigate the effects of microbial proteins on immunotherapy responses

PHILADELPHIA — (Thursday, June 27, 2024) — The Wistar Institute's [Noam Auslander, Ph.D.](#), assistant professor in the Molecular and Cellular Oncogenesis Program at the Ellen and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center, was awarded a \$600,000 *Women Scientists Innovation Award for Cancer Research grant* from the V Foundation for Cancer Research to support the next three years of her research, which will use proteins of gut bacteria to predict immunotherapy benefit in melanoma. Dr. Auslander plans to analyze microbial proteins from the guts of patients to determine how they may drive melanoma immune responses, with the ultimate goal of improving the clinical benefits of immunotherapy.

“The V Foundation plays a crucial role in supporting and enabling transformative cancer research,” said Noam Auslander. “This prestigious award allows us to use computational biology methods to gain insights from complex data sets that can allow clinically impactful discoveries. Our goal through this project is to determine how patterns in the gut microbiome of melanoma patients determine immunotherapy responses. The V Foundation’s philanthropic support allows us to dig deep into this question using different computational methods, and, with the support from our clinician and experimental collaborators, potentially improve future clinical decisions and treatment outcomes.”

The V Foundation for Cancer Research was founded in 1993 by the late Jim Valvano, ESPN broadcaster and renowned basketball coach, and has allocated more than \$353 million in grants for cancer research across the nation. By supporting the most promising cancer research projects from



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exceptional scientists of diverse backgrounds, The V Foundation has empowered investigations into cancer types of all stages — from the lab to the clinic.

“The V Foundation is honored to support Dr. Auslander’s innovative cancer research addressing a major unmet need in predicting responses to melanoma treatment. We look forward to seeing the novel findings her work will uncover and the impact it will have on patients in the future,” said Kara Coleman, Ph.D., Vice President of Research and Grants Administration at the V Foundation.

Dr. Auslander’s high-impact data research in melanoma immunotherapy happened due to generous V Foundation support.

“Dr. Auslander’s research identifies valuable patterns in human biology through large-scale data analysis with advanced computational techniques,” said **Dario C. Altieri, M.D.**, Wistar president and CEO, director of the Ellen and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center, and the Robert and Penny Fox Distinguished Professor. “By investing in the burgeoning field of machine learning, this grant from the V Foundation accelerates the use of machine learning in transformative science.”

ABOUT THE WISTAR INSTITUTE

The Wistar Institute is the nation’s first independent nonprofit institution devoted exclusively to foundational biomedical research and training. Since 1972, the Institute has held National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Cancer Center status. Through a culture and commitment to biomedical collaboration and innovation, Wistar science leads to breakthrough early-stage discoveries and life science sector start-ups. Wistar scientists are dedicated to solving some of the world’s most challenging problems in the field of cancer and immunology, advancing human health through early-stage discovery and training the next generation of biomedical researchers. wistar.org.



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