6th Annual Henry Ford + MSU Cancer Research Symposium

Programmatic Pathways in Cancer Research

October 29-30, 2026

The Henry Autograph Collection | 300 Town Center Drive, Dearborn, MI

Thursday, October 29, 2026

Presidential Ballroom

1:00 – 3:00 p.m.	**Cancer Center Research Program Meetings** (by invite only) • **Physical Sciences in Cancer (Plaza A)** *Eric Mellon, MD, PhD, Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology* • **Cancer Biology and Immunology (Plaza B)** *Sophia Lunt, PhD, Professor, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology Howard Crawford, PhD, Senior Scientist, Department of Surgery* • **Cancer Epidemiology, Prevention and Control (Presidential Ballroom)** *Kelly Hirko, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics Christine Neslund-Dudas, PhD, Associate Scientist, Department of Public Health Sciences*
3:00 – 4:00 p.m.	**REGISTRATION & CHECK-IN** (Lobby)
4:00 – 5:45 p.m.	**Session I: Emerging Researchers at Henry Ford + MSU** *Session Co-Chairs: Shyam Nyati, PhD and Kathy Gallo, PhD* • **HPV16 Productivity vs Tumorigenicity in the Oropharynx** *Robert Jackson, PhD, Assistant Scientist, Department of Otolaryngology* • **Clonal Hematopoiesis as a Driver of Myeloid and Solid Cancers** *Tyler Parsons, PhD, Assistant Scientist, Hematology and Oncology Division, Department of Medicine* • **Increasing Cancer Prevention and Detection Behaviors through Multilevel, Interdisciplinary Approaches** *Olivia Aspiras, PhD, Assistant Scientist, Department of Public Health Sciences* • **Intersecting Inequities: Cancer Among People with HIV** *Jennifer McGee-Avila, PhD, Assistant Scientist, Department of Public Health Sciences* • **Decoding Allele-Specific RAS Signaling to Reveal Cancer Vulnerabilities** *Jonathan Diedrich, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology* • **Dendritic Cell Reprogramming During Tumor Progression** *Michael Plebanek, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine* • **Expanding the Regulatory Landscape of T cell Immunity** *Michael Dahabieh, PhD, Assistant Scientist, Department of Surgery*
5:45 – 6:45 p.m.	**NETWORKING & REFRESHMENTS**
6:45 – 7: 15 p.m.	**Q&A Session: Henry Ford + MSU Cancer Center Leaders**

Friday, October 30, 2026

Presidential Ballroom

7:00 – 8:00 a.m.	**REGISTRATION & CHECK-IN** (Lobby) **BREAKFAST** (Presidential Ballroom)
8:00 – 8:15 a.m.	**Opening Remarks** **David Lanfear, MD** *Chief Scientific Officer and System Vice President of Research, Henry Ford Health*
8:15 – 9:30 a.m.	**Session II: Cancer Therapeutics: From Discovery to Clinical Impact** *Session Co-Chairs: Anna Moore, PhD, Lisa Rogers, DO, Clara Hwang, MD* Includes a panel discussion featuring all speakers (15 minutes). • **From Discovery to Impact: HF+MSU Reimagining Academic Drug Discovery** *Andrea Gonzales, PhD, Professor and Director, Drug Discovery, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology* • **Development of RNA-Based Therapeutics for PDAC** *Lorenzo Sempere, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Radiology* • **Targeting Pro-oncogenic Signaling Downstream of Warburg Effect to selectively induce Ferroptosis in Cancer** *Charles Hong, MD, Professor and Chair, Department of Medicine* • **Drug Development: From First-in-Human to FDA Approval** *Fawzi F Abu Rous, MD, Assistant Professor, Hematology and Oncology Division, Department of Medicine* • **From Bench to Bedside: Gene Therapy Translation through Investigator- Initiated Trials at Henry Ford Health** *Shyam Nyati, PhD, Associate Scientist, Department of Radiation Oncology*
9:30 – 9:45 a.m.	**BREAK**
9:45 – 10:30 a.m.	**Session III: Head and Neck Cancer** *Session Co-Chairs: Steven Chang, MD and Samantha Tam, MD* **Keynote: HPV-mediated Head and Neck Cancers and Immunotherapy** **Sara Pai, MD, PhD** *Professor, Department of Head and Neck Surgery, Yale School of Medicine*

10:30 – 11:45 a.m.	**Invited Talks** Includes a panel discussion featuring all speakers (15 minutes). • **Cancer Immunology in Head and Neck Squamous Cell Carcinoma** *Lexi Vu, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Microbiology, Genetics, and Immunology* • **Advances in Systemic Therapy in HNSCC or Molecular Testing/Minimal Residual Disease Testing** *Matthew Wilkins, MD, Hematology and Oncology Division, Department of Medicine* • **Metabolic Vulnerabilities and Therapeutic Targeting** *Sophia Lunt, PhD, Professor, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology* • **Head and Neck Cancer Survivorship** *Veronica Bernacchi, PhD, RN, Assistant Professor, College of Nursing* • **Voice and Quality of Life in Head and Neck Cancer Patients** *Maryam Naghibolhosseini, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Communicative Science and Disorders* • **Current Topics in Clinical Trials in Head and Neck Squamous Cell Carcinoma** *Farzan Siddiqui, MD, Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology*
11:45 – 1:15 p.m.	**POSTER SESSION** (Plaza Ballroom) **LUNCH** (Presidential Ballroom)
1:15 – 2:00 p.m.	**Session IV: KRAS Driven Cancers** *Session Co-Chairs: Ling Huang, PhD and Jeffrey Klomp, PhD* **Keynote: Cancer without Disease: Combining the concept of Healthy Living and Aging with Strategies to Diagnose and Prevent Malignant Disease of Cancer** **Raghu Kalluri MD, PhD** *Senior Vice President and Executive Director, UTMB Cancer Center and Chief Scientific Officer, The University of Texas Medical Branch*
2:00 – 3:15 p.m.	**Invited Talks** Includes a panel discussion featuring all speakers (15 minutes). • **Pancreatic Cancer as the Paradigm for KRAS Dependency** *Howard Crawford, PhD, Senior Scientist, Department of Surgery* • **Defining and Targeting RAS Dependency in Endometrial Cancer** *Jennifer Klomp, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Medicine* • **Triggering Immunogenic Cell Death in Oncogene-Driven Lung Cancer** *Amanda Pilling, PhD, Assistant Scientist, Hematology and Oncology Division, Department of Medicine*
3:15 – 3:35 p.m.	**BREAK**

3:35 – 4:35 p.m.	**Session V: Best Abstract Awardees Oral Presentations** *Session Co-Chairs: Ben Rybicki, PhD and Jamie Bernard, PhD* • **Automated cGMP Production of [18F]FHBG for PET Imaging of Oncolytic Viral Gene Therapy in Glioblastoma Patients** *Chris Hoang, Graduate Student, Department of Chemistry* • **Aging-Induced DGAT1 Metabolic Reprogramming Drives Resistance to PD-1 Blockade in Ovarian Cancer** *Mary Priyanka Udumula, PhD, Research Scientist, Department of Gynecologic Oncology* • **Disability Burden and Mammography Screening Among U.S. Women Aged 40–74: A Population-Based Analysis of 2024 BRFSS Data** *Rebecca Miller, Medical Student, College of Human Medicine* • **GABA signaling in CAFs as a novel regulator of pancreatic cancer immunosuppression** *Ariana Musa de Aquino, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Surgery*
4:35 – 4:50 p.m.	**CLOSING REMARKS & RAFFLE**