

Institute for Breast Cancer Research – Research Team Biographies

Pamela Sumiko Ohashi, PhD

Currently, Dr. Pamela Ohashi focuses on understanding the signaling pathways of T cell activation versus tolerance to help activate, direct and enhance anti-tumor responses in breast cancer. More notably, Dr. Ohashi was the first to show that T cells for tissue specific antigens remain ignorant of the tissue self-antigen. In additional studies, she has shown that tumor growth can break T cell ignorance to tissue specific antigens and lead to immune surveillance of tumors in living organisms. Dr. Ohashi, who trained under Nobel Laureate Rolf Zinkernagel, is a highly recognized scientist who has received several awards for her work in research, including the Pharmingen Investigator Award the American Association of Immunology and a Canada Research Chair. She is a Professor in the Departments of Medical Biophysics and Immunology at the University of Toronto.

Lea Harrington, PhD

Dr. Lea Harrington is studying how the dysfunction of DNA at either end of a chromosome, or a telomere, contributes to the formation of tumors, including the development of breast neoplasm, using a unique murine model for the role of telomere length maintenance. In the recent past, Dr. Harrington and her team identified a new evolutionarily conserved telomerase subunit (EST1.) In collaboration with Dr. Murray Robinson, Dr. Harrington cloned the first two mammalian telomerase proteins, TEP1 and TERT. Her remarkable work in DNA research has earned her the National Cancer Institute of Canada's Terry Fox Young Investigator Award. She is an Associate Professor in the Department of Medical Biophysics at the University of Toronto.

Wen-Chen Yeh, PhD, MD

Seasoned researcher Dr. Wen-Chen Yeh's main focus is the connection between inflammatory signaling and cancer. He explores the identification of target oncogenes and studies the association between TLR signaling and breast cancers. Dr. Yeh has demonstrated the critical balance of cell death and survival signals triggered by the same inflammatory stimulus (TNF.) Dr. Yeh has been honoured with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research's New Investigator Award and a Medical Research Council Postdoctoral Fellowship. As a first-year resident, he received recognition as the Top Intern in Internal Medicine. He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Medical Biophysics at the University of Toronto.