



**Program**

# 2026 International Cancer Neuroscience Symposium

**Feb. 18 - 20, 2026**

TMC<sup>3</sup> Collaborative Building

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
**MD Anderson  
Cancer Center**  
Making Cancer History<sup>®</sup>

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**The MD Anderson CANCER NEUROSCIENCE PROGRAM**  
*is proud to host the*  
**International Cancer Neuroscience Symposium**  
 February 18 – 20, 2026  
 TMC<sup>3</sup> Collaborative Building, Houston, TX

<b>DAY 1 of 3: Opening Keynote on Neuroimmunology Neurobiology and Neurotoxicity Sessions</b> <i>Wednesday, February 18, 2026</i>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Session / Title and Speaker</b>
8:15AM – 8:25AM	<b>Welcome from the Cancer Neuroscience Program (CNP) Leaders &amp; Symposium Chairs</b> <i>Fred Lang, MD, Vinay Puduvalli, MD, Jim Ray, PhD, &amp; Jian Hu, PhD: Co-Directors, CNP Moran Amit, MD, PhD, &amp; Nisha D'Silva, BDS, MSD, PhD: Symposium Chairs</i>
8:25AM – 9:45AM	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Keynote Lecture</b>
8:25AM – 8:30AM	<b>Keynote Speaker Introduction</b> <i>Moran Amit, MD, PhD (MD Anderson Cancer Center)</i>
8:30AM – 9:05AM	<b>Immune Checkpoint Blockade in Cancer Immunotherapy: Mechanistic Insights Provide New Therapeutic Opportunities</b> <i>James P. Allison, PhD (2018 Nobel Laureate, MD Anderson Cancer Center)</i>
9:05AM – 9:45AM	<b>From the Clinic to the Lab: Investigating Mechanisms of Responses and Resistance to Immune Checkpoint Therapy</b> <i>Padmanee Sharma, MD, PhD (MD Anderson Cancer Center)</i>
9:45AM – 10:15AM	BREAK & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
10:15AM – 11:45AM	<b>Session 1: Neurobiology</b> <i>Moderators: Yuan Pan, PhD</i>
10:15AM – 10:45AM	<b>Revealing and Exploiting Therapeutically the Tumor-Sensory Neuron-Pericyte Axis in Metastatic Melanoma</b> <i>Alexander Birbrair, PhD (University of Wisconsin - Madison)</i>
10:45AM – 11:15AM	<b>Subcortical Regulation of Breast Cancer Progression</b> <i>Jeremy Borniger, PhD (Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory)</i>
11:15AM – 11:45AM	<b>Redefining Perineural Invasion: Are We There Yet?</b> <i>Nisha D'Silva, BDS, MSD, PhD (University of Michigan)</i>
11:45AM – 12:45PM	LUNCH & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
NOON – 12:45PM	Pharma Satellite Symposium ( <i>optional</i> ) <i>Location: Hermann Hall – Floor 2</i>
12:45PM – 1:45PM	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Keynote Lecture</b>
12:45PM – 12:50PM	<b>Keynote Speaker Introduction</b> <i>Chibawanye Ene, MD, PhD (MD Anderson Cancer Center)</i>
12:50PM – 1:45PM	<b>Therapeutic Implications of Decoding Tumor-Neuron Communication in Diffuse Glioma</b> <i>Shawn Hervey-Jumper, MD, PhD (University of California at San Francisco)</i>
1:45PM – 2:00PM	BREAK & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
2:00PM – 4:00PM	<b>Session 2: Neurotoxicity</b> <i>Moderators: Peter Grace, PhD &amp; Paige Green, PhD</i>
2:00pm – 2:25pm	<b>Strategies for Conducting Rigorous Chemotherapy-Induced Peripheral Neuropathy (CIPN) Clinical Trials</b> <i>Ellen Lavoie Smith, PhD (University of Alabama-Birmingham)</i>
2:25PM – 2:50PM	<b>Neuronal EGFR Signaling Primes Morphine Tolerance in Oral Cancer</b> <i>Yi Ye, PhD (New York University)</i>
2:50PM – 3:15PM	<b>Brain Health and Cognitive Function: Neurotoxic Impact of Cancer and Cancer Therapy</b> <i>Jeff Wefel, PhD (MD Anderson Cancer Center)</i>
3:15PM – 3:40PM	<b>Cognitive Deficits and Glial Responses in a Mouse Model of Pediatric Leukemia Survival</b> <i>Teresa Reyes, PhD (University of Cincinnati)</i>
3:40PM – 3:55PM	Question & Answer for All Session Speakers

4:00PM – 4:20PM	BREAK & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
4:20PM – 5:35PM	<b>10-min Oral Presentations by Pre-Selected Top Abstract from Each of the 5 Categories</b> <i>Moderators: Moran Amit, MD, PhD &amp; Monty Montano, PhD</i> <i>Awards Sponsored by Wiley Advanced Portfolio</i>
4:20PM – 4:35PM	<i>Neuroimmunology</i> <b>Regulatory T-cells Produce Neurtin to Drive Tumor Innervation and Growth</b> <i>Stephen Opoku (University of Alabama at Birmingham)</i>
4:35PM – 4:50PM	<i>Neurobiology</i> <b>AxonFinder Reveals Spatial Proteomic Heterogeneity in Tumor-Innervating Neuronal Fibers in Prostate Tumors</b> <i>Ece Eksi, PhD (Oregon Health &amp; Science University)</i>
4:50PM – 5:05PM	<i>Neurotoxicity</i> <b>FDA-Approved Riluzole as a Therapeutic Intervention for Cancer-Related Cognitive Impairments</b> <i>Sanad El-Khatib (University of California at Irvine)</i>
5:05PM – 5:20PM	<i>Neurobehavioral Health</i> <b>Convergent Neuroimmune Signaling Underlying Rapid Antidepressant Response to Ketamine and Psychedelics</b> <i>Greg Jones, MD (National Institutes of Health)</i>
5:20PM – 5:35M	<i>Neural Neoplasms</i> <b>Dynamic Circuit Remodeling During Glioblastoma Progression: Depth-Resolved Electrophysiology and Cortical Imaging Define Network Biomarkers</b> <i>Tenisha Connor, MS (Cleveland Clinic Research)</i>
5:35PM – 5:45PM	BREAK & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
5:45PM – 7:00PM	<b>Reception &amp; Music-in-Medicine Live Demonstration with Audience Participation</b>
	<b>Your Brain on Beethoven <i>Integrating Real-Time, 3D Computer-Brain Interface Mapping and Visualization During a Live Performance of Beethoven's Iconic "Archduke" Piano Trio</i></b> <i>Pianist, Mei Rui, DMA, Professor in Neurosurgery, MD Anderson Cancer Center</i> <i>Grammy award-winning violinist, Robin Scott, Professor, Eastman School of Music</i> <i>Celloist, Ahrim Kim, Professor, Eastman School of Music</i>

<b>DAY 2 of 3: Neuroimmunology of Cancer</b> <i>Thursday, February 19, 2026</i>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Session / Title and Speaker</b>
8:00AM – 9:00AM	<b>1<sup>st</sup> Keynote Lecture</b>
8:00AM – 8:05AM	<b>Keynote Speaker Introduction</b> <i>Moran Amit, MD, PhD</i>
8:05AM – 9:00AM	<b>A Neuroendocrine Factor Controlling Tumor Immunosurveillance</b> <i>Guido Kroemer, MD, PhD (University of Paris Cité &amp; INSERM)</i>
9:00AM – 9:15AM	BREAK & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
9:15AM – 10:45AM	<b>Session 3: Neuro-Immune Interactions at the Tumor Bed</b> <i>Moderators: Nicole Scheff, PhD &amp; Sébastien Talbot, PhD</i>
9:15AM – 9:45AM	<b>Targeting Epigenetic Machinery to Overcome Therapeutic Resistance</b> <i>Sangeeta Goswami, MD, PhD (MD Anderson Cancer Center)</i>
9:45AM – 10:15AM	<b>The Immunosuppressive Function of ILC2 Cells is Regulated by <math>\beta</math>2-Adrenergic Receptor Signaling in Breast Cancer</b> <i>Elizabeth Repasky, PhD (Roswell Park)</i>
10:15AM – 10:45AM	<b>Neural Regulation of the Immunosuppressive Tumor Microenvironment</b> <i>Paola Vermeer, PhD (University of South Dakota)</i>
10:45AM – 11:00AM	BREAK & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
11:00AM – NOON	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Keynote Lecture</b>
11:00AM – 11:05AM	<b>Keynote Speaker Introduction</b> <i>Nicole Scheff, PhD (University of Pittsburgh)</i>
11:05AM – NOON	<b>Neuro-Immune Interplay in Cancer</b> <i>Sébastien Talbot, PhD (Queen's University)</i>

NOON – 1:30PM	LUNCH & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
NOON – 1:30PM	<p><b>Meet-the-Editor Session</b>  <b>Come to the Levy Conference Room on floor 2 and have a 1:1 Discussion with Editors from Various Journals.</b></p> <p><i>Dorothy Hallberg, PhD, Associate Editor, Science Translational Med</i>  <i>Barbara Marte, PhD, Senior Editor, Nature</i>  <i>John Pham, PhD, Editor-in-Chief, Cell</i>  <i>I-Mei Siu, PhD, Senior Editor, Cancer Discovery</i>  <i>Sam Rose, PhD, Neuron</i>  <i>Alexia-Ileana Zarmytidou, PhD, Chief Editor, Nature Cancer</i>  <i>Monty Montano, PhD, Executive Editor, Wiley Advanced Portfolio</i>  <i>Ada Wong, PhD, Deputy Editor, Advanced Science (Oncology)</i></p>
NOON – 1:30PM	<p><b>Poster Session</b>  <i>Posters on display all day; presenters at poster during this set time.</i></p>
1:30PM – 3:00PM	<p><b>Session 4: Panel Discussion on the Future of Cancer Neuroscience</b>  <i>Wiley Live Podcast – Panel Discussion; 90-second clips from the podcasts</i>  <i>Moderators: Monty Montano, PhD &amp; Moran Amit, MD, PhD</i></p>
1:30PM – 1:50PM	<p><b>The Neuroscience of Brain Cancers</b>  <i>Michelle Monje, MD, PhD – (Stanford University) virtual</i></p>
1:50PM – 2:10PM	<p><b>Decoding the Language of Brain Tumor and Neuron Communication</b>  <i>Benjamin Deneen, PhD (Baylor College of Medicine)</i></p>
2:10PM – 2:30PM	<p><b>Interaction Between Cancer and the Peripheral Nervous System:  A Tale of Two Lung Cancers</b>  <i>Leanne Li, MD, PhD (Francis Crick Institute)</i></p>
2:30PM – 2:45PM	<p><b>Young Investigator Awardee Presentation</b>  <b>Cholinergic Nerves Support Neuroendocrine Features in SCLC</b>  <i>Rachel Davis (Harvard Medical School)</i></p>
2:45PM – 3:10PM	Question & Answer for All Session Speakers
3:10PM – 3:30PM	BREAK & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
3:30PM – 5:00PM	<p><b>Session 5: Clinical Neuroimmunology</b>  <i>Moderator: Frank Winkler, PhD &amp; Moran Amit, MD, PhD</i></p>
3:30PM – 3:55PM	<p><b>Patient-Reported Outcomes as a Biomarker and Therapeutic Target for Immunosuppression in Cancer</b>  <i>Nicole Scheff, PhD (University of Pittsburgh)</i></p>
3:55PM – 4:20PM	<p><b>Deconstructing Cognitive Aging Phenotypes with Senolytic CAR T Cells</b>  <i>William Hwang, MD, PhD (Massachusetts Gen Hosp/Harvard)</i></p>
4:20PM – 4:45PM	<p><b>A Novel Triplet Immunotherapy for Glioblastoma</b>  <i>Douglas Hanahan, PhD – (Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research) virtual</i></p>
4:45PM – 5:00PM	Question & Answer for All Session Speakers
5:00PM – 5:30PM	<b>PLENARY SESSION</b>
5:00PM – 5:30PM	<p><b>Monocyte Reprogramming by Nociceptors Impedes T Cell-Mediated Tumor Immunity</b>  <i>Ulrich von Adrian (Harvard Medical School) virtual</i></p>
5:30PM – 7:00PM	<p><b>Networking Reception Sponsored by Wiley Advanced Portfolio</b>  <i>Food, beverages, and “The Checkmates” band providing live music</i></p>

<b>DAY 3 of 3: Neurobehavioral Health, Neural Neoplasms, and “Inflamed Scientists” Sessions</b>	
<i>Friday, February 20, 2026</i>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>Session / Title and Speaker</b>
8:00AM – 9:00AM	<b>Keynote Lecture</b>
8:00AM – 8:05AM	<p><b>Introduction of Keynote Speaker</b>  <i>Nicole Scheff, PhD (University of Pittsburgh)</i></p>
8:05AM – 9:00AM	<p><b>Neural Regulation of Metastasis</b>  <i>Erica Sloan, PhD (Monash University)</i></p>
9:00AM – 9:15AM	BREAK & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
9:15AM – 10:45AM	<p><b>Session 6: Neurobehavioral Health</b>  <i>Moderators: Jeff Wefel, PhD &amp; Erica Sloan, PhD</i></p>
9:15AM – 9:40AM	<p><b>A Humble Precursor to Cancer Neuroscience: Biobehavioral Pathways in Cancer</b>  <i>Paige A. Green, PhD (National Institutes of Health)</i></p>
9:40AM – 10:05AM	<b>Neuroimmune Mechanisms of Cancer-related Fatigue</b>

	<i>Julienne Bower, PhD (UCLA Jonsson Comprehensive Cancer Center)</i>
10:05AM – 10:30AM	<b>Cancer at the Dinner Table: The Promise of Psychedelics in Oncology</b> <i>Charles Raison, MD (University of Wisconsin – Madison)</i>
10:30AM – 11:00AM	Question & Answer for All Session Speakers
11:00AM – 12:30PM	LUNCH & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
NOON – 12:45PM	Non-CE Satellite Symposium ( <i>optional</i> ) <i>Location: Hermann Hall</i>
11:00AM – 1:00PM	<b>Poster Session</b> <i>Posters on display all day; presenters at poster during this set time.</i>
11:00AM – 11:45PM	<b>Advancing Cancer Neuroscience Research Together: A Conversation with Wiley’s Advanced Portfolio</b> <i>Monty Montano, PhD, Executive Editor, Wiley Advanced Portfolio</i> <i>Ada Wong, PhD, Deputy Editor, Advanced Science (Oncology)</i> <i>Moran Amit, MD, PhD, Symposium Co-Chair</i> <i>Tenesha Connor, MS, Top Abstract Awardee, Neural Neoplasms</i> <i>Ece Eksi, PhD, Top Abstract Awardee, Neurobiology</i> <i>Sanad El-Khatib, Top Abstract Awardee, Neurotoxicity</i> <i>Greg Jones, MD, Top Abstract Awardee, Neurobehavioral Health</i> <i>Stephen Opoku, Top Abstract Awardee, Neuroimmunology</i> <i>Rachel Davis, Young Investigator Awardee</i>
1:00PM – 2:00PM	<b>Keynote Lecture</b>
1:00PM – 1:05PM	<b>Introduction of Keynote Speaker</b> <i>Frederick F. Lang, MD</i>
1:05PM – 2:00PM	<b>Cancer Neuroscience of Brain Tumors</b> <i>Frank Winkler, MD, PhD (Heidelberg University Hospital)</i>
2:00PM – 2:15PM	BREAK & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY + POSTER WINNER ANNOUNCEMENTS
2:15PM – 4:15PM	<b>Session 7: Neural Neoplasms</b> <i>Moderators: Vinay Puduvalli, MD &amp; Frederick F. Lang, MD</i>
2:15PM – 2:40PM	<b>Single Cell Analysis of Gliomas in Space and Time</b> <i>Mario Suva, MD, PhD (Mass General Hospital)</i>
2:40PM – 3:05PM	<b>A 360 Degree Perspective of Glioma Evolution</b> <i>Joseph Costello, PhD (University of California San Francisco)</i>
3:05PM – 3:30PM	<b>Neuronal Regulation of Molecularly Distinct Pediatric Gliomas</b> <i>Kathryn Taylor, PhD (Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center)</i>
3:30PM – 3:55PM	<b>Axonal Injury Programmes Drive Gliomagenesis</b> <i>Simona Parrinello, PhD (University College London)</i>
3:55PM – 4:15PM	Question & Answer for All Session Speakers
4:15PM – 4:30PM	BREAK & NETWORKING OPPORTUNITY
4:30PM – 5:45PM	<b>Session 8: Inflamed Scientists Elevator Pitch Session</b> <i>“Elevator pitch” by emerging leaders (3 min per speaker) + 8 min rapid fire Q&amp;A from moderator panel</i> <i>Moderator: Moran Amit, MD, PhD, Barbara Marte, PhD and Sébastien Talbot, PhD</i>
4:30PM – 4:45PM	<b>TOPIC: Tracing and Omics in Cancer Research</b> <b>Unraveling How Cancer-Associated Neurons Shape the TME and Cancer Progression</b> <i>Vera Thiel, PhD (HI-STEM)</i> <b>Mining Multi-Omic Complexity to Identify Targets Driving Neural Invasion in Pancreatic Cancer</b> <i>Carmen Mota Reyes, PhD (Tech Univ of Munich)</i>
4:45PM – 5:00PM	<b>TOPIC: Electrical and Metabolic Crosstalk Between Nerves and Cancer</b> <b>Divide and Conquer: Disconnecting Glioblastoma Networks for Break &amp; Networking Opportunities Therapy Resistance</b> <i>Melina Müller (Heidelberg Univ)</i> <b>Neurometabolism Drives Cancer Plasticity</b> <i>Simon Grelet, PhD (Univ of South Alabama)</i>
5:00PM – 5:15PM	<b>TOPIC: Adaptive Immunity</b> <b>DBH-expressing Immune Cells Shape Anti-Tumor Immunity</b> <i>Didem Cobanoglu, PhD (Texas A&amp;M University)</i> <b>Identifying and Disrupting Neuro-Immune Circuits in Cancer</b> <i>Karen Dixon, PhD (Univ of Basel)</i>

5:15PM – 5:30PM	<b>TOPIC: Innate Immunity</b> <b>Tumor-Brain Communication Shapes Anti-Cancer Immunity by Modulating Myeloid Cells</b> <i>Chengcheng Jin, PhD (Univ of Pennsylvania)</i> <b>TAM-driven Neural Regeneration in Severe Spinal Cord Injury</b> <i>Francesco Bifari, MD, PhD (University of Milan)</i>
5:30PM – 5:45PM	<b>TOPIC: Neuro-Immune Interactions in Cancer</b> <b>Targeting <math>\alpha</math>2-Adrenergic Receptors to Modulate Immune Responses in Cancer</b> <i>Jingjing Zhu, PhD (Ludwig Institute)</i> <b>Nerves Limit Protective Immune Responses in Tumor Draining Lymph Nodes</b> <i>Yuri Bunimovich, MD, PhD (Univ of Pittsburgh)</i>
5:45PM	<b>Final Remarks &amp; Meeting Adjournment</b>

**Activity Co-Directors**

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 MD Anderson Cancer Center

**Nisha D'Silva, BDS, MSD, PhD**

Professor, Pathology School of Dentistry  
 University of Michigan

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Scientific Director, Boston Pepper Center  
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 Editor-in-Chief, *Aging Cell*

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