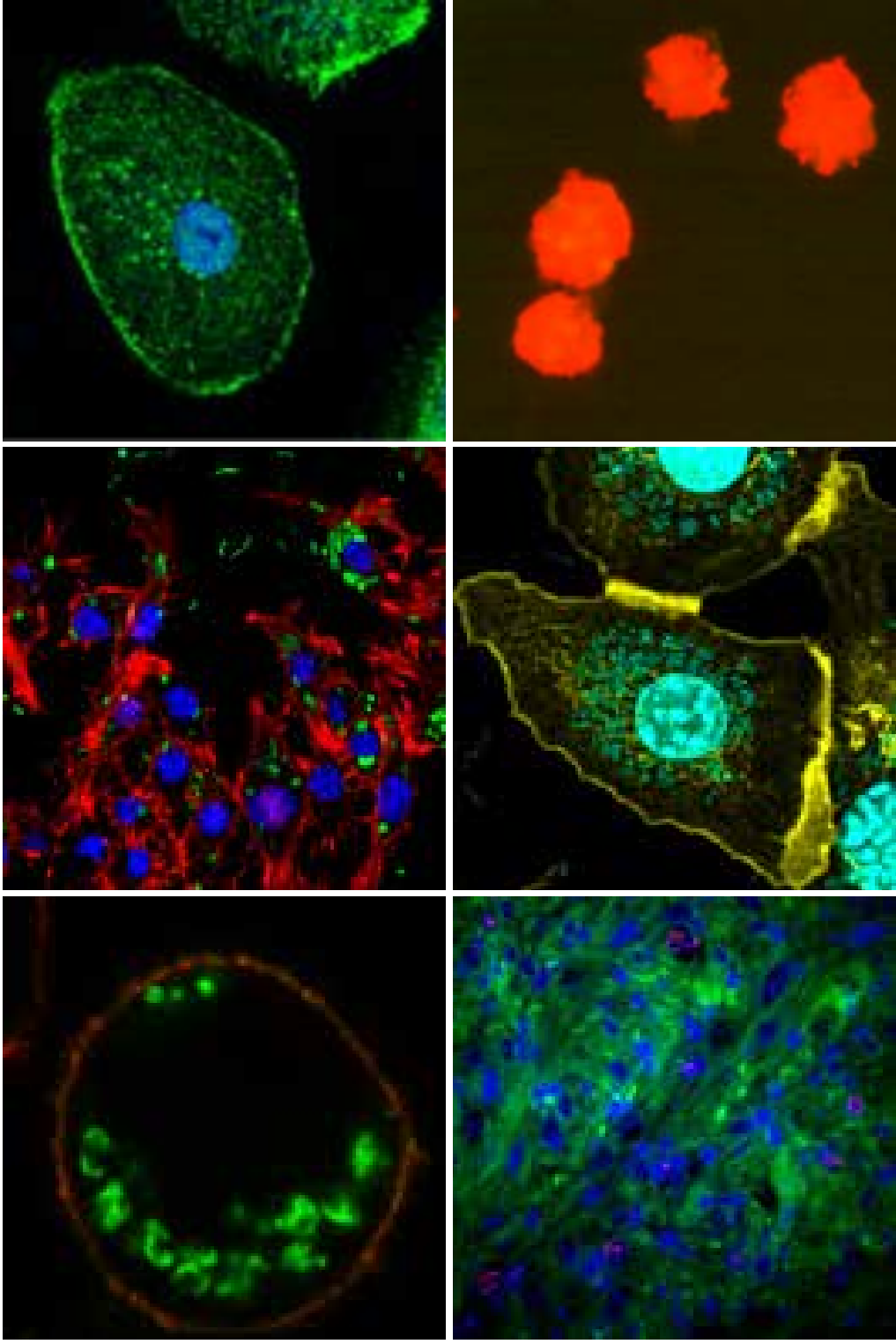

אוניברסיטת תל אביב
בעקבות הלא נודע

Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Clinical Research 2017

Sections

Cover images (from bottom left, clockwise):

Image 1: Staining of a novel anti-frizzled7 monoclonal antibody directed at tumor stem Cells. Credit: Benjamin Dekel lab.

Image 2: Growing adult kidney spheroids and organoids for cell therapy. Credit: Benjamin Dekel lab.

Image 3 & 4: Vibrio proteolyticus bacteria infecting macrophages. Credit: Dor Salomon.

Image 5: K562 leukemia cells responding to complement attack (red-complement C9, green-mitochondrial stress protein mortalin) Credit: Niv Mazkereth, Zvi Fishelson.

Image 6: Cardiomyocyte proliferation in newborn mouse heart by phosphohistone 3 staining (purple). Credit: Jonathan Leor.

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Editor: Prof. Karen Avraham
Graphic design: Michal Semo Kovetz, TAU Graphic Design Studio
June 2017

The Sackler Faculty of Medicine

The Sackler Faculty of Medicine is Israel's largest medical research and training complex. The Sackler Faculty of Medicine of Tel Aviv University (TAU) was founded in 1964 following the generous contributions of renowned U.S. doctors and philanthropists Raymond, and the late Mortimer and Arthur Sackler. Research at the Sackler Faculty of Medicine is multidisciplinary, as scientists and clinicians combine efforts in basic and translational research. Research is conducted in the laboratories on the TAU campus, and in the clinical facilities affiliated to the Faculty. The Faculty of Medicine includes the Sackler School of Medicine, the School of Health Professions, the School of Public Health, and the School of Dental Medicine. Education takes place in all these schools and in the Graduate School of Medicine, School of Continuing Medical Education, the New York State American Program and the B.Sc. Program in Medical Life Sciences. This network of preclinical and clinical teams helps realize the ultimate goals of the research: the basic understanding of human pathophysiology and the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of disease. The research of clinical faculty members from the Sackler School of Medicine are featured in this research brochure.

The Faculty of Medicine engages in joint teaching and research programs with nearly every faculty at TAU, including the Wise Faculty of Life Sciences, the Sagol School of Neuroscience, the Edmond J. Safra Bioinformatics Center, the TAU Center for Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, and the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics, and multi-nationally with schools, hospitals and research centers throughout the world. The Sackler faculty is known for research in the following areas: cancer biology, stem cells, diabetes, neurodegenerative diseases, infectious diseases and genetic diseases, including but not imited to Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and HIV/AIDS. Physicians in 181 Sacker affiliated departments and institutes in 17 hospitals hold academic appointments at TAU. The Gitter-Smolarz Life Sciences and Medicine Library serves students and staff and is the center of a consortium of 15 hospital libraries.

The student body is made up of 750 Israeli students enrolled in the 6-year M.D. degree program, 300 American and Canadian students enrolled in a 4-year M.D. program chartered by the State of New York and accredited by the State of Israel, and a 4-year program for Israeli students for the M.D. degree, with 260 students. Approximately 200 students study dental medicine in a six-year program where they are awarded the D.M.D. degree and another 2,000 students are enrolled in the health professions programs where they will earn degrees in Communications Disorders, Nursing, Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy. Sackler's Graduate School for Advanced Studies trains approximately 800 masters and doctoral level students in the biomedical disciplines, with a special emphasis on a multidisciplinary approach and application of fundamental knowledge to important biomedical problems.

The Sackler Faculty of Medicine is led by the Dean, Prof. Ehud Grossman; Vice Deans Prof. Karen Avraham, Prof. Iris Barshack, Prof. Moshe Phillip, Prof. Anat Lowenstein, Prof. Meir Lahav, Prof. Ami Fishman, Prof. Moshe Kotler, and Assistant to the Dean, Michal Gilboa.

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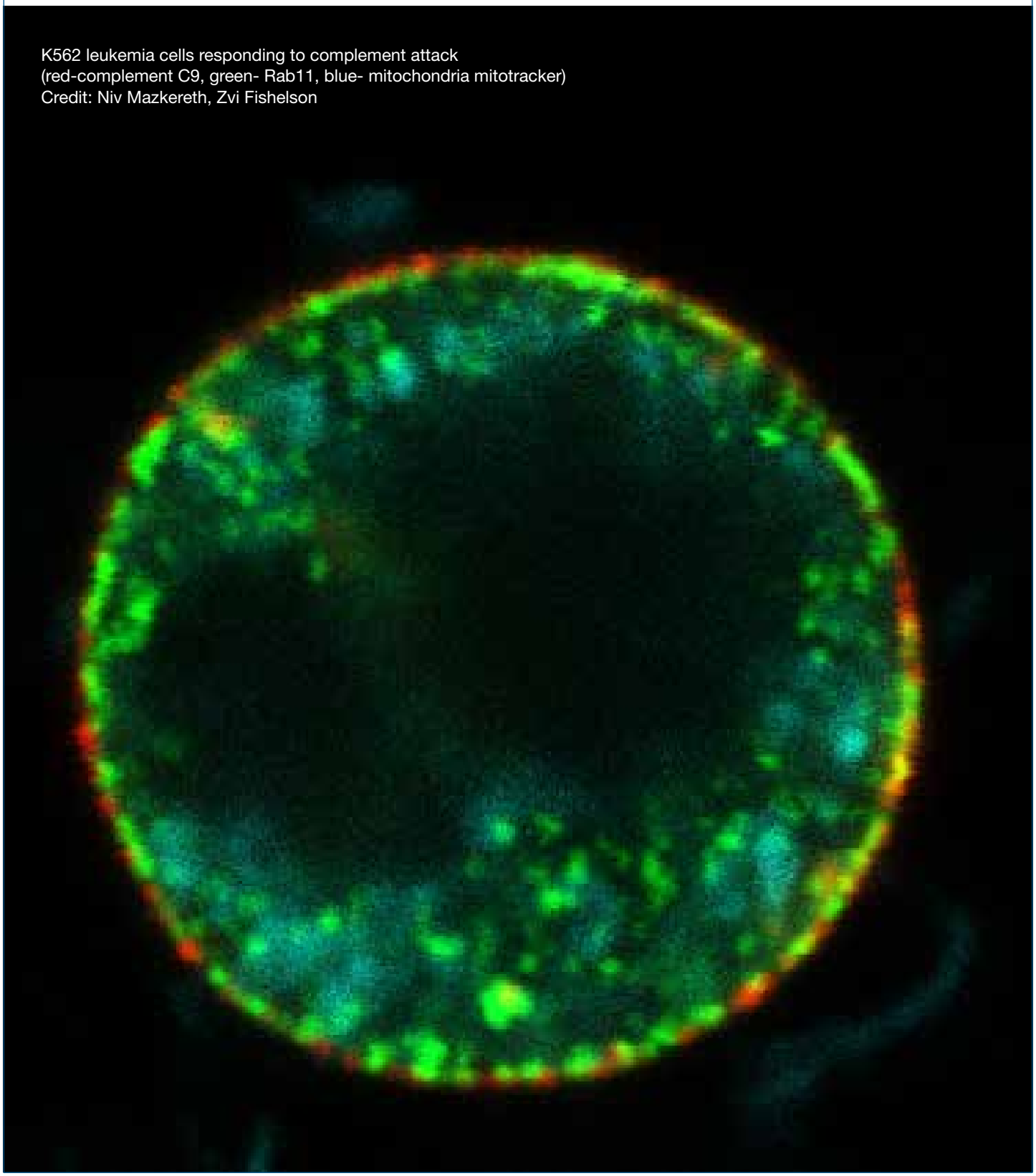
Cancer

K562 leukemia cells responding to complement attack
(red-complement C9, green- Rab11, blue- mitochondria mitotracker)
Credit: Niv Mazkereth, Zvi Fishelson



Prof. Nadir Arber, M.D., M.Sc., MHA

Integrated Cancer Prevention Center
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אוניברסיטת תל אביב

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Dr. Shiran Shapira, Ph.D.

Head – Research Laboratory

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Cancer Prevention Research Laboratory

Positions

Professor of Medicine & Gastroenterology

Yechiel and Helen Leiber Professor for Cancer Research

Chair, Israeli Gastroenterological Association

Head, Integrated Cancer Prevention Center, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Head, Promotion Center and Integrated Cancer Prevention Center Head, Djerassi Oncology Center

Former head, Cancer Research Center, Tel Aviv University

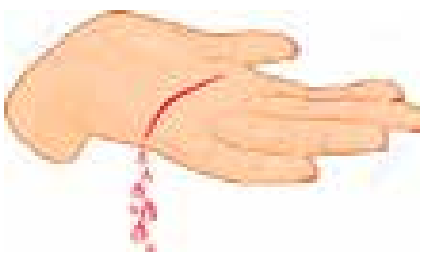
Former head, Dotan Center for Hemato-oncology, Tel Aviv University

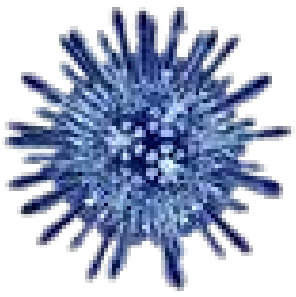
Research

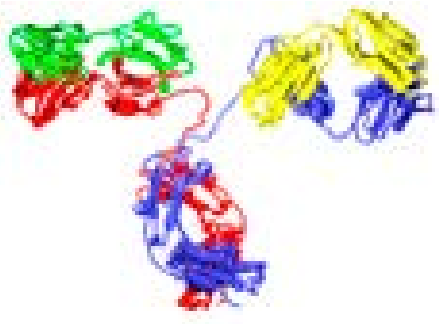
Laboratory of Molecular Biology – ICPC

The Integrated Cancer Prevention Center (ICPC) has diverse and broad experience in translational research focused on early detection, prevention and therapy of cancer, particularly in tumors of the gastrointestinal (GI) tract. The team is highly experienced in clinical studies, molecular epidemiology as well as in molecular and cell biology studies of cancer.

Currently, on-going researches at the ICPC focus on translational research, bridging between basic researches in the lab and clinicians and patients in the clinical center. The center has a long history of planning, developing, and conducting clinical trials, with a main focus on investigator-initiated and cooperative group trials investigating the activity of







drugs for the prevention and treatment of colorectal cancer (CRC).

Basic research takes place at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology, headed by Dr. Shiran Shapira, a senior scientist and member of the academic staff at Tel Aviv University. Dr. Shapira devotes herself to cancer research in the fields of early detection, prevention, and cancer therapy. She possesses extensive experience in wide range of biology areas with foucing on cancer research, biochemistry, molecular biology, signal transduction, antibody engineering, protein expression and purification and gene delivery.

Research Team

Prof. Nadir Arber, MD, MSc, MHA, Head of ICPC; Dr. Shiran Shapira, PhD, Head of Laboratory; Dina Kazanov, MSc; Dr. Eliezer Liberman, MD; Ilana Bostenai, PhD student; Ahmad Fokra, PhD student; Sally Zigdon, MSc; Lina Tiklan

Projects

1. Early detection – development of new methods for the early detection of CRC and colorectal adenomas as well as other types of solid and hematological cancers. The tested samples taken from humans, blood and urine.

2. Prevention – Serving as the PI of several international, multicenter trials in the prevention of GI tumors, and in particular sporadic and familial CRC.

3. Identifying high risk subjects through molecular epidemiology – We have identified a new polymorphism in the APC gene (E1317Q), which is more common in Sephardic Jews and Arabs and is associated with a HR of ~4. When it is combined with another polymorphisms in the CD24 gene (V248A) the OR is 7.8.

4. Detection of new oncogenes that play a role in the multistep process of CRC carcinogenesis.

The research team at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology has been exploring, for several years, the hypothesis that CD24 is a potential oncogene in GI malignancies and may serve as a biomarker and target for the treatment of cancer and cancer-related chronic inflammatory disorders such as, inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD).

5. Treatment - Development of novel therapeutic strategies for cancer treatment with a main focus on immunotherapy using humanized anti-CD24 monoclonal Abs, immunotoxin and bi-specific

6. Design of novel therapeutic agents targeting Ras and Wnt pathways that play an important role in GI carcinogenesis, based on gene therapy using adenoviruses and highly sophisticated viral vectors such as adenoviruses, lentiviruses and adeno-associated viruses.

7. Wound healing- CD24 may represent a novel clinical intervention strategy to accelerate the healing of wounds both acute and chronic injuries for patients. The proposed treatment may enable faster recovery from injuries while reducing the risk of infection, toxicity and other possible side

Publications

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Grants

2016-2018	Kamin Grant, The Industry Academy Programs of the Chief Scientist (OCS), Israeli Ministry of Industry and Trade, Delayed wound healing heat stabke (HSA/CD24) knockout mice
2014-2017	ERA-Net on translational cancer research (TRANSCAN), Personalized prevention of colorectal neoplasia by use of genetic variability for the prediction of efficacy and toxicity of treatment with COX-2 inhibitors and aspirin", PREDICT
2016-2017	Dotan, The Varda and Boaz Dotan research center in Hemato-Oncology, Tel Aviv University, Lentiviral gene-based therapy for hematological malignancies
2016 – 2017	CBRC, Cancer Biology Research Center, Selective targeting of aberrant Cyclin D1-expressiong cancer by a novel gene therapy approach
2015-2017	ICRF, Israel Cancer Research Fund, Humanized anti-CD24 antibody; a potential biology tool for cancer immunotherapy
2016 – 2017	Djerassi Elias for oncology, Development of a novel drug delivery strategy to treat lung cancer
2017-2018	The Varda and Boaz DOTAN Research Center in Hemato-Oncology, Tel Aviv University, Targeting lymphoma with bispecific antibodies that simultaneously engage CD30 and CD24

Dr. Osnat Ashur-Fabian, Ph.D.

Translational Hemato-Oncology; Hematology Institute and Blood Bank; Meir Medical Center
Department of Human Molecular Genetics and Biochemstry, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

אוניברסיטת תל אביב

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Investigating Hormone Metabolism in Cancer

Positions

Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Research

Our research deals with the role of thyroid hormones in cancer progression and on the development of a novel class of targeted cancer therapy. A set of small molecules that specifically block the thyroid-cancer axis were developed. Our research group is the first to show the potent elimination of various cancer types by these novel drugs.

Publications

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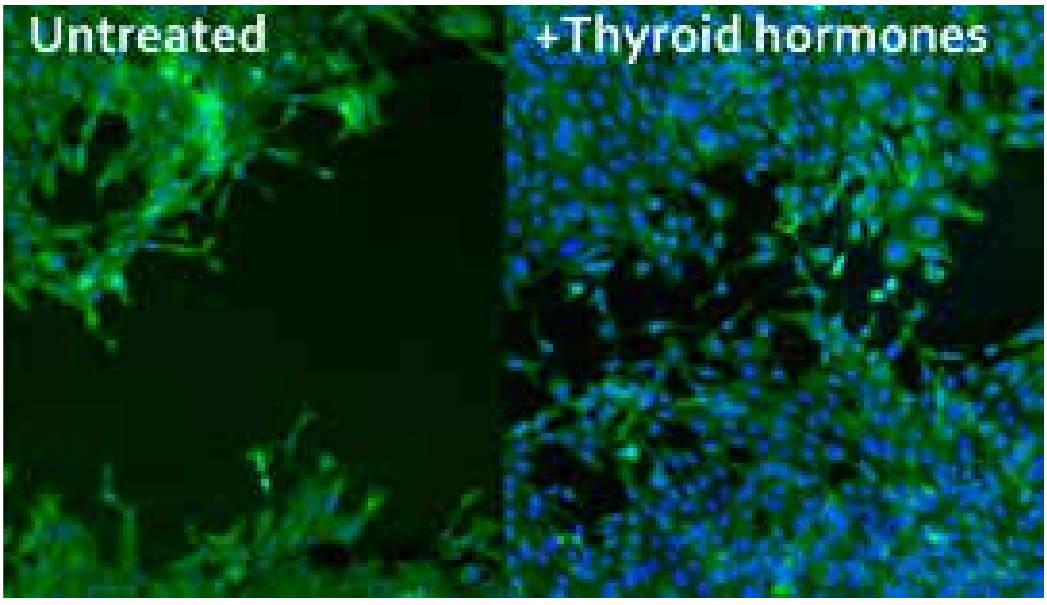

Ovarian cancer cell proliferation and migration is enhanced by thyroid hormones

A case report and review of the literature. *Anticancer Drugs*. 24(3):315-23, 2013.

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Investigating Markers of Inflammation and of Neoplastic Processes for Diagnosis and Treatment

Positions

Professor of Pathology

Vice Dean, Head of School of Medicine, Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University

Head, Department of Pathology

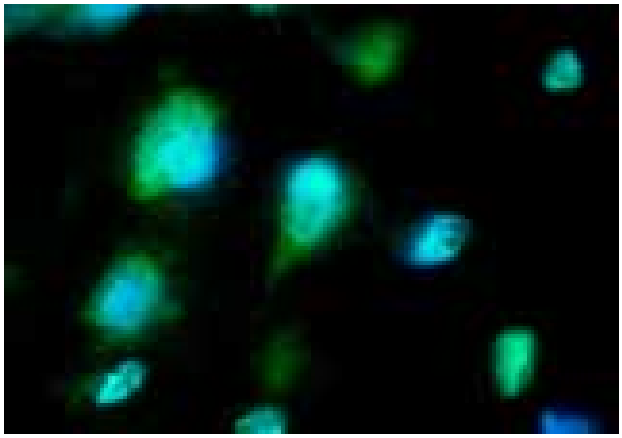
Co-director, Tumor Tissue Bank, Molecular Diagnostic Service, Precision Medicine Project (diagnostic service), Digital Pathology Project, Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer

Research

The profession of Pathology encompasses three main constituents: diagnostics, teaching and research. Within the department, description, processing and examination of the macroscopic specimen is performed by the doctors of the department. The specimens undergo histochemical staining. If necessary for the sake of diagnosis, additional specialized histochemical and immunohistochemical stains are carried out. Furthermore, the department executes other techniques that enable precise diagnosis such as: FISH, PCR, In-situ hybridization and Electron Microscopy visualization. The department delves in a large array of research projects with the cooperation of other departments within and outside of the hospital, and intrinsic research of the department itself.

The department encompasses a laboratory specific for histochemical staining, a laboratory for immunohistochemical staining that performs in-situ hybridization, as well as a laboratory for PCR, Electron Microscopy, FISH and for Molecular Pathology. Moreover, we are leading the tumor tissue bank of the Sheba Medical Center, and the Molecular Diagnostic Service of the Sheba Medical Center, using an advanced NGS platform for diagnostic and research purposes. We also perform on a routine and research basis immunohistochemical stainings and molecular methods for precision medicine and immunotherapy. Furthermore, the department includes an advanced system for photographing and processing both macroscopic and microscopic constituents, and leads the Digithal Pathology Project of the Sheba medical Center.

A



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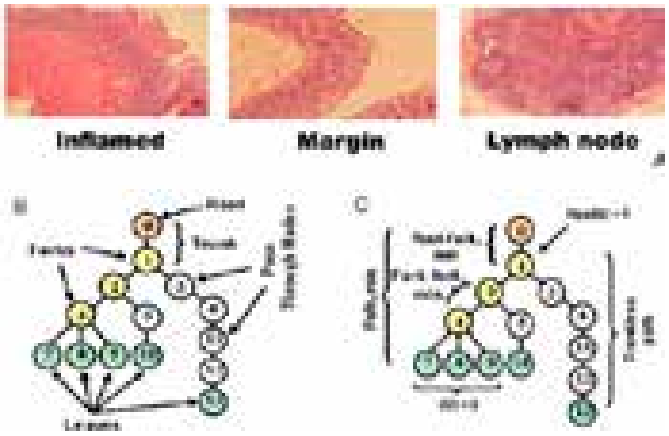

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Another branch is that of independent research. One of the great accomplishments has been the conceptual implementation of the use of microRNAs to aid in the identification of different tissues and the application of this knowledge to identify metastases of unknown origin. In situ hybridization of microRNAs is an important methodology used in our research for studing the pathogenesis of inflammatory and of neoplastic processes. Another area of research in which the department is leading is the development of the technology of tissue microarrays. The department leads the investigation of inflammatory processes and lymphoproliferative tumors according to the production and study of heavy chain B lymphocytes within the tissue. In light of this investigation, the department received a number of important research grants.

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אוניברסיטת תל אביב

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Investigating the Microenvironment Interactions and B-cell Receptor Signaling in Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia

Positions

Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

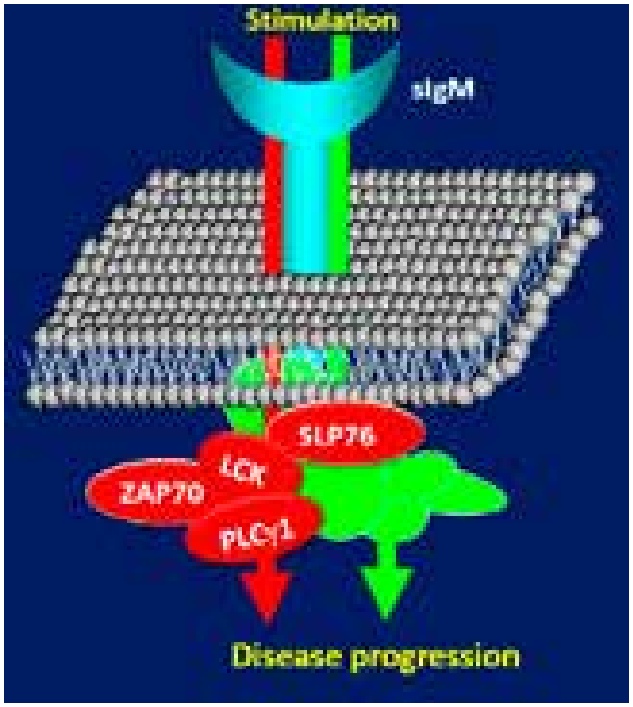
Head, CLL Service, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Secretary, Israeli CLL Study Group

Committee Member, Israel Society of Hematology

Research

We study interactions between the CLL cells and the tissue microenvironment and explore new aspects of the B-cell receptor (BCR) signaling in CLL cells. Our previous work characterized distinct *in vivo* gene expression signatures of CLL cells derived from the different compartments of blood, bone marrow and lymph nodes. Recently, we have shown that SLP76, an adaptor protein of the T-cell receptor pathway, is ectopically expressed in CLL cells and mediates alternative signaling downstream of the BCR (Figure). Our research is aimed to discover novel targets of therapy of CLL. Our group is well experienced in performing cell biology assays, flow cytometry and image analysis, protein analysis and gene silencing in primary CLL cells, and is highly skillful in studying signaling in CLL cells.



CLL cells ectopically express T-cell receptor associated signaling molecules, which potentiates their B-cell receptor responsiveness.

Publications

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Grants

2014 – 2017 Novel signaling pathway in CLL-physiology and target for therapy. Dotan Grant for Hemato-Oncology.

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Basic and Translational and Research of Childhood Malignancies and Leukemia

Positions

Professor, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Chair, MD-PhD program

Research

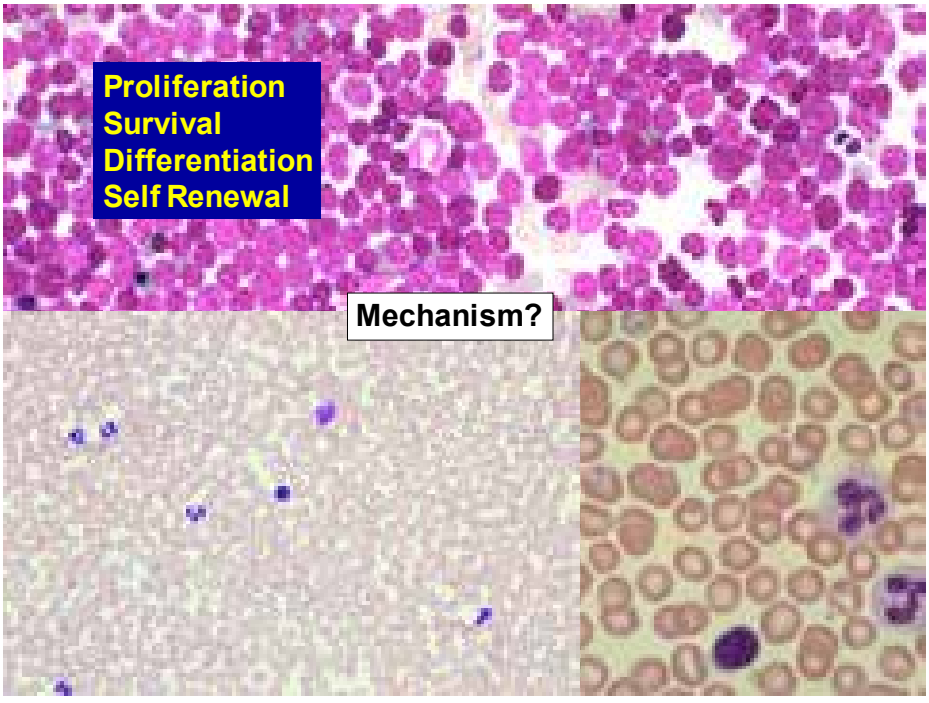
We focus on patient-driven basic research into the pathogenesis of childhood leukemia and cancer. We harness advanced molecular and cellular biology technologies utilizing in-vitro and in-vivo models with the ultimate goal of improving the care of children with cancer.

Our research is divided into two major topics:

1. Basic, translational and clinical research of leukemia.

2. The role of SIL (STIL) protein in mitosis, centrosomal biology and cancer.

Cancer is the deadliest disease of children and leukemia is the most common childhood cancer.



Carboxypeptidase E (CPE), a novel Wnt inhibitor, is excluded from the colonic crypt bottom.

We are interested in the fundamental question how normal blood development is diverted into leukemia. What are the genetic and biochemical abnormalities that block cell differentiation, enhance proliferation and survival and confer the unique stem cell properties of self renewal to leukemia stem cells? We focus on chromosome 21 because of the mysterious association of leukemia with Down Syndrome. We utilize advanced genomic technologies, cell based assays of transformation of primary human and mouse stem cells, mouse models including transgenic, transplantation and explants of human leukemia. Our recent discoveries of the major involvement of the TSLP-IL7R-JAK2 pathway in leukemogenesis have lead to clinical trials with novel inhibitors of this pathway for high-risk leukemias in children and adults. The spread of leukemia to the brain is a major clinical problem as preventive therapy to the brain consisting of chemotherapy or irradiation causes long term side effects. We are therefore studying how leukemia cells spread to the central nervous system and developing mouse models to study this challenging problem.

We have discovered that SIL, a gene cloned from childhood leukemia, is required for centrosomal biogenesis and for survival of cancer cells. Targeting SIL by siRNA cause cancer cell death at mitotic entry in-vitro and in-vivo. Current research focuses on the fundamental role of the SIL protein in centrosome generation in normal and malignant cells and on developing approaches for its targeting for cancer therapy.

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Castiel, A., M.M. Danieli, A. David, S. Moshkovitz, P.D. Aplan, I.R. Kirsch, M. Brandeis, A. Kramer, and S. **Izraeli**. The Stil protein regulates centrosome integrity and mitosis through suppression of Chfr. *J Cell Sci*, 2011. 124: 532-9.

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Tal, N., C. Shochat, I. Geron, D. Bercovich, and **S. Izraeli**. Interleukin 7 and thymic stromal lymphopoietin: from immunity to leukemia. *Cell Mol Life Sci*, 2014. 71:365-78.

Grants

2014-2017	EU ERA-NET TRANSCANCER "TRANSALL" Validation of biomarkers for the diagnosis and risk stratification of childhood ALL
2014-2018	BSF Functional analysis of ERG GATA1
2014-2018	ISF Modelling T-lympho-myeloid leukemia
2014-2017	ISF-NSFC Hematopoietic transcription factors in leukemia – mouse models and human leukemias
2014-2017	The Israel Science Foundation (ISF) and the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC), PIs Izraeli, Shai (Israel) Chen, Sai-Juan (China)
2014-2017	Israel Ministry of Health ERA-NET EU programs, PIs Izraeli, Shai (Israel), multiple Europeans PIs
2014-2018	Israel Science Foundation
2014-2018	USA-Israel Bi-National Scientific Foundation, PIs Izraeli, Shai (Israel); Crispino, John (USA)
2015-2018	DOD USAMRMC
2016-2018	Children With Cancer UK, PI Enver, Tariq (UCL), co-PI Izraeli, Shai
2016-2019	German Israel Foundation

Dr. Ben Zion Katz, Ph.D.

The Hematology Laboratory
Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

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Development of B-Cell Malignancies

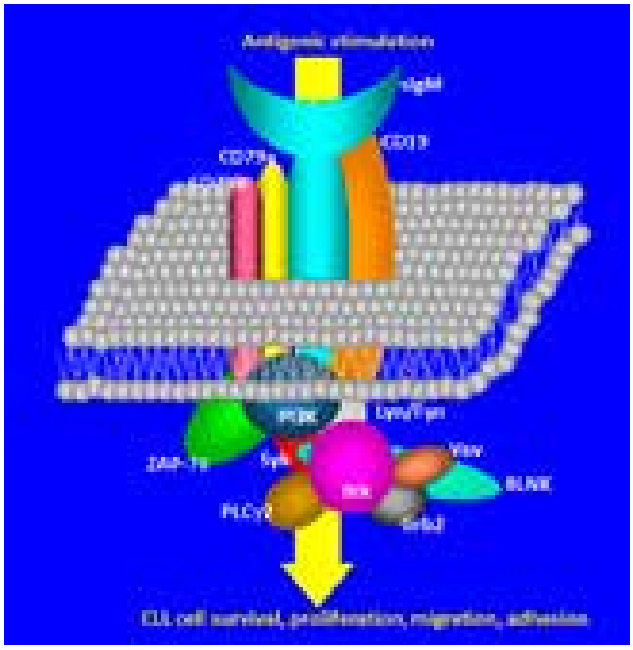
Positions

Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Deputy Director, The Hematology Laboratory, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Research

The focus of the research in the laboratory is on B-cell malignancies, their developmental processes, and the clinical significance of the malignant B-cells physiological and molecular phenotypes. We utilize a wide range of both clinical and basic research laboratory techniques, and study tissue culture model systems, as well as primary patient-derived samples.



Specific research programs
A) The role of microenvironmental interactions in the pathogenesis of chronic lymphocytic leukemia.
B) The function of CD19 and CD38 in the physiology of malignant B-cells.
D) Development of novel laboratory methodologies to study B-cell malignancies
The complexity of the B-cell receptor.

Publications

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Herishanu, Y., **Katz, B.-Z.**, Lipsky, A., Wiestner, A. Biology of chronic lymphocytic leukemia in different microenvironments: clinical and therapeutic implications. (2013) Hematol. Oncol. Clin. North. Am. 27:173-206.

Herishanu, Y., Kay, S., Sarid, N., Kohan, P., Braunstein, R., Rotman, R., Deutsch, V., Ben-Ezra, J., Naparstek, E., Perry, C., **Katz, B.-Z**. Absolute monocyte count trichotomizes chronic lymphocytic leukemia into high risk patients with immune dysregulation, disease progression and poor survival. (2013) Leuk. Res. 37:1222-1228.

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Katz, B.-Z., Herishanu, Y. Therapeutic targeting of CD19 in hematological malignancies: past, present, future and beyond. (2014) Leuk. Lymphoma. 55:999-1006.

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treated with chemoimmunotherapy. (2015) Blood 125:1047.

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Katz, B.-Z., Herishanu, Y. Fragility of sub-cellular structures in chronic lymphocytic leukemia. (2017) Int. J. Hematol. In press.

Grants

2014 – 2017 Novel signaling pathway in CLLphysiology and target for therapy, Dotan Grant for Hemato-Oncology.

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Tumor-Microenvironment Cellular Interactions in Cancer Progression and Metastasis

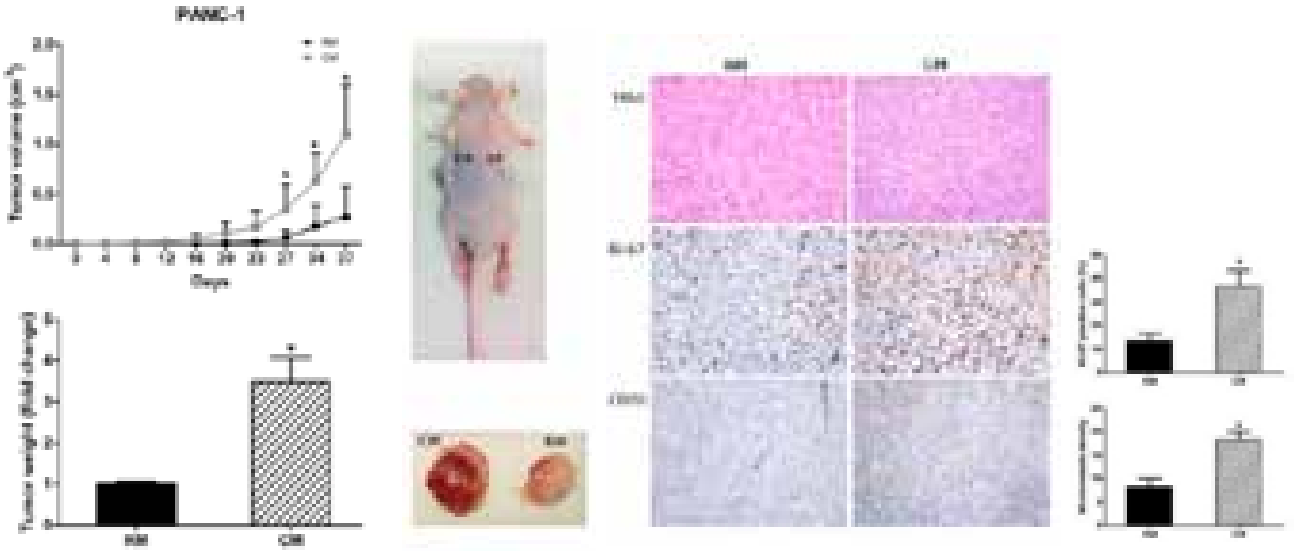
Positions

Chair, Department of Surgery A

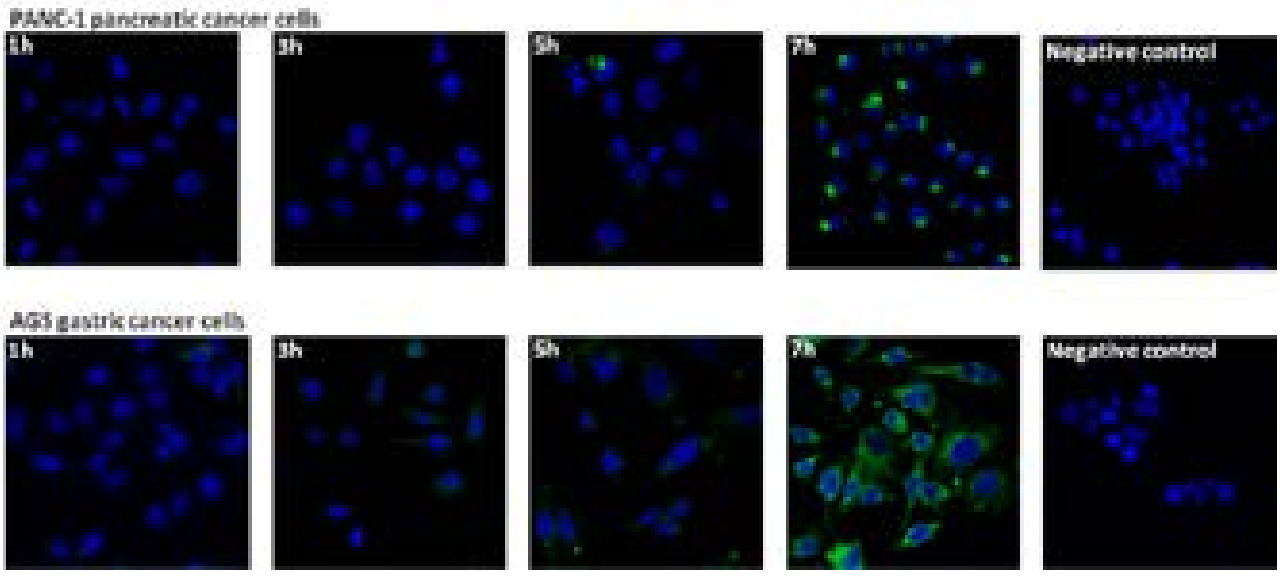
Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Research

The surgical oncology research lab was established in order to conduct clinical and basic science research in order to further understand disease patterns and mechanisms, thus, trying to improve diagnosis and treatment outcomes of the patients we operate on. Moreover, the lab is a platform for the development of future academic surgeons, passionate about both research and the field of surgery. We focus on patient-driven translational research, studying the molecular basis of various soft tissue sarcoma (STS) tumors, and gastrointestinal malignancies. We aim to explore distinct signaling pathways and molecules that may play a role in cancer progression and metastasis. Specifically, we investigate the cross talk between metastatic GI cancer cells and the omentum. We also investigate the potential role of miRNAs as molecular biomarkers for staging, prognosis, and pattern of future spread. For these purposes we frequently utilize in-vitro and in-vivo models, human cancer specimens from our clinically annotated tissue bank, as well as various advanced molecular and bioinformatic approaches.



Tumor growth is promoted by omental fat in vivo. PANC-1 pancreatic cancer cells were initially pretreated in vitro with human omental fat conditioned medium (CM) or control regular medium (RM) for 24h. The tumor cells were then injected subcutaneously into the flank of nude mice. (A) Tumor growth and weight of PANC-1 tumors was facilitated in mice following pre-treatment with omental fat CM (n=15); (B) Representative mice and tumor images; (C) Marked increase in proliferation (Ki-67) and microvessel density (CD31) by human omental fat CM.



Uptake of omental fat exosomes by cancer cells. PKH67-labeled omental fat exosomes were incubated with PANC-1 pancreatic cancer cells (upper panel) and AGS gastric cancer cells (lower panel), reaction was stopped at different time points (1, 3, 5 and 7 hours) and cells were analyzed by confocal microscopy. The nucleus of PANC-1 and AGS cells was stained with dapi. Negative control- PANC-1 and AGS cells with no addition of labeled exosomes.

Publications

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Immunotherapy of Brain Tumors: From Basic Mechanisms to Clinical Translation

Positions – Zvi Ram

Chairman, The Neurosurgery Section, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Full Professor, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Former Chairman, Tumor Section of European Association of Neurosurgical Societies

Positions – Ilan Volovitz

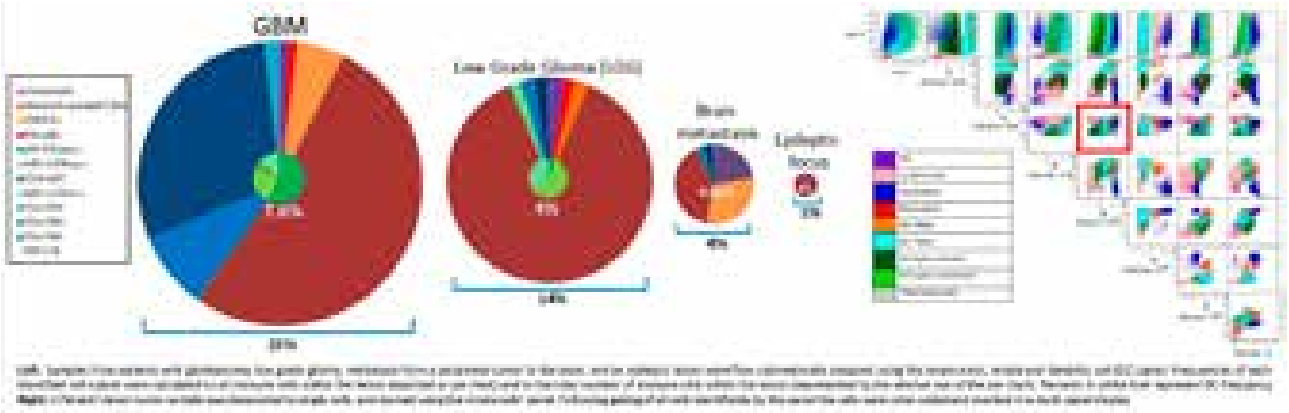
Lab Head, Cancer Immunotherapy Lab, Neurosurgery Department, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Research

Our laboratory studies the unique immunology of brain tumors by combining basic-science with clinically-applied investigation. Utilizing the discrepancy between the relatively weak immune surveillance inside the brain and the potent one outside it, the lab has developed a novel method to treat brain tumors utilizing a concept we termed 'Split Immunity'. The concept was recently translated from rats to human glioblastoma (GBM) patients. To monitor the post-therapy changes in the anti-tumor immune response, the lab has developed a unique set of high resolution immune assays that follow the peripheral (outside the tumor) and the intratumoral immune response.

Main research interests

- Development of scientific and clinical insights into the concept of 'Split Immunity' and how it affects the treated patients.
- Mapping of the entire adaptive and innate cellular immune milieu found inside human brain tumors



using advanced multicolor (up to 12-color) flow cytometry.

- Using a cell-centered approach called "Immune Cytomics" to study the network of interactions formed between the different intra-tumoral immune cells and between immune and tumor cells.
- Evaluating how novel, non-immune-based, treatments for brain tumors affect the anti-tumoral immune responses.

Publications

Gelerstein E, Berger A, Jonas-Kimchi T, Strauss I, Kanner AA, Blumenthal DT, Gottfried M, Margalit N, **Ram Z**, Shahar T. Regression of intracranial meningioma following treatment with nivolumab: Case report and review of the literature. J Clin Neurosci. 2017

Blumenthal DT, Dvir A, Lossos A, Tzuk-Shina T, Lior T, Limon D, Yust-Katz S, Lokiec A, **Ram Z**, Ross JS, Ali SM, Yair R, Soussan-Gutman L, Bokstein F. Clinical utility and treatment outcome of comprehensive genomic profiling in high grade glioma patients. J Neurooncol. 2016;130:211-219.

Shahar T, Granit A, Zrihan D, Canello T, Charbit H, Einstein O, Rozovski U, Elgavish S, **Ram Z**, Siegal T, Lavon I. Expression level of miRNAs on chromosome 14q32.31 region correlates with tumor aggressiveness and survival of glioblastoma patients. J Neurooncol. 2016

Ofek P, Calderón M, Mehrabadi FS, Krivitsky A, Ferber S, Tiram G, Yerushalmi N, Kredo-Russo S, Grossman R, **Ram Z**, Haag R, Satchi-Fainaro R. Restoring the oncosuppressor activity of microRNA-34a in glioblastoma using a polyglycerol-based polyplex. Nanomedicine. 2016

Volovitz I, Shapira N, Ezer H, Gafni A, Lustgarten M, Alter T, Ben-Horin I, Barzilai O, Shahar T, Kanner A, Fried I, Veshchev I, Grossman R, **Ram Z**. A non-aggressive, highly efficient, enzymatic method for dissociation of human brain-tumors and brain-tissues to viable single-cells. BMC Neurosci. 2016

Volovitz I, Melzer S, Amar S, Bocsi J, Bloch M, Efroni S, **Ram Z**, Tárnok A. Dendritic Cells in the Context of Human Tumors: Biology and Experimental Tools. Int Rev Immunol. 2016

Stupp R, Taillibert S, Kanner AA, Kesari S, Steinberg DM, Toms SA, Taylor LP,Lieberman F, Silvani A, Fink KL, Barnett GH, Zhu JJ, Henson JW, Engelhard HH, Chen TC, Tran DD, Sroubek J, Tran ND, Hottinger AF, Landolfi J, Desai R, Caroli M, Kew Y, Honnorat J, Idbaih A, Kirson ED, Weinberg U, Palti Y, Hegi ME, **Ram Z**. Maintenance Therapy With Tumor-Treating Fields Plus Temozolomide vs Temozolomide Alone for Glioblastoma: A Randomized Clinical Trial. JAMA. 2015

Kanner AA, Wong ET, Villano JL, **Ram Z**. Post Hoc analyses of intention-to-treat population in phase III comparison of NovoTTF-100A™ system versus best physician's choice chemotherapy. EF-11 Investigators. Semin Oncol. 2014

Weller M, van den Bent M, Hopkins K, Tonn JC, Stupp R, Falini A, Cohen-Jonathan-Moyal E, Frappaz D, Henriksson R, Balana C, Chinot O, **Ram Z**, Reifenberger G, Soffietti R, Wick W European Association for Neuro-Oncology (EANO) Task Force on Malignant Glioma. EANO guideline for the diagnosis and treatment of anaplastic gliomas and glioblastoma. Lancet Oncol. 2014

Westphal M, Ylä-Herttuala S, Martin J, Warnke P, Menei P, Eckland D, Kinley J, Kay R, **Ram Z**. Adenovirus-mediated gene therapy with sitimagene ceradenovec followed by intravenous ganciclovir for patients with operable high-grade glioma (ASPECT): a randomised, open-label, phase 3 trial. ASPECT Study Group. Lancet Oncol. 2013

Shahar T, Nossek E, Steinberg DM, Rozovski U, Blumenthal DT, Bokstein F, Sitt R, Freedman S, Corn BW, Kanner AA, **Ram Z**. The impact of enrollment in clinical trials on survival of patients with glioblastoma. J Clin Neurosci. 2012

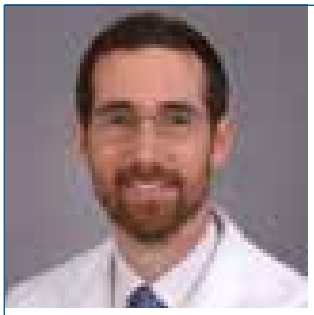
Grants (Ilan Volovitz and/or Zvi Ram)

2014-2017 – Joint Project – Barrow Neurological Institute – Immunotherapy of recurrent GBM patients using 'Split immunity' (Ilan Volovitz and Zvi Ram)

2015-2018 – ABC2 - Accelerate brain cancer cure – Immunotherapy of recurrent GBM patients using 'Split immunity'. (Ilan Volovitz and Zvi Ram)

2015-2018 – Novocure - Evaluating the effects of tumor treating fields (TTFields) on immune responses. (Ilan Volovitz and Zvi Ram)

2013-2018 – European FP7 grant- Microbubble driven multimodal imaging and heranostics for gliomas. (Zvi Ram)



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Radiation Biology: Translating Biological Insights from the Lab to Impact Cancer Patient Care

Positions (Dr. Lawrence)

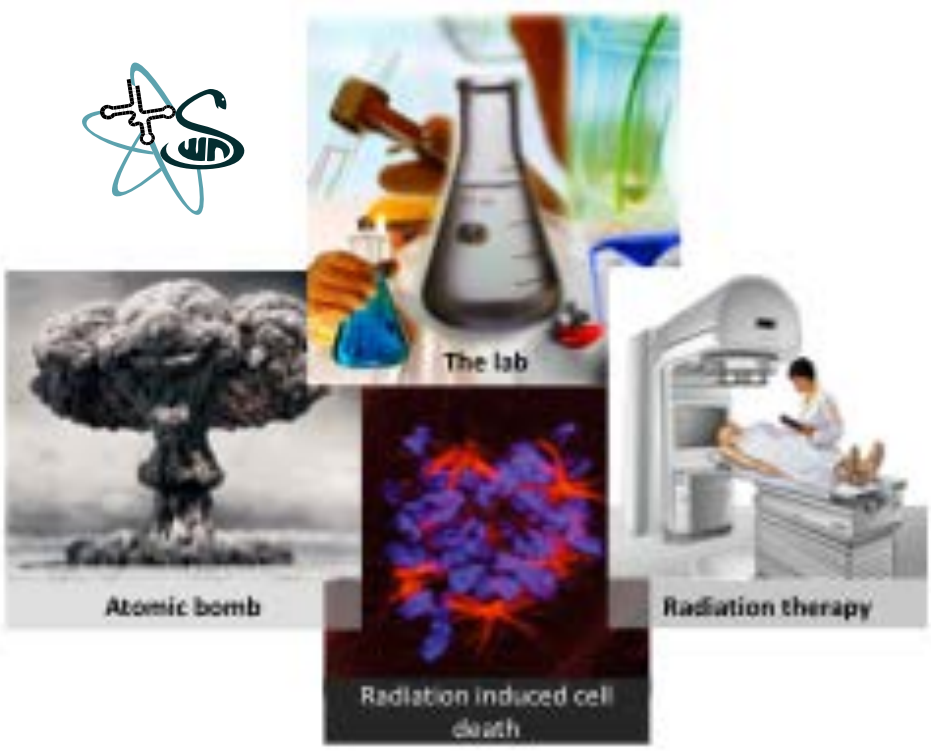
Director, Center for Translational Research in Radiation Oncology

Senior Lecturer (regular track), Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Assistant Professor (adjunct), Dep. Radiation Oncology, Thomas Jefferson University

Research

Radiation therapy is a cornerstone of modern cancer care. Ionizing radiation kills cancer cells by generating reactive oxygen species, damaging DNA, and inducing chromosomal damage. Yet many aspects of radiation biology remain unknown. The lab focusses on understating cells' ability to survive ionizing radiation, a phenomenon known



as radioresistance. We seek to answer the question of how some tumors are able to withstand very large doses of radiation. We hypothesize that cells withstand the intense onslaught of DNA damage by adapting their metabolic processes, diverting biosynthesis pathways to nucleotide synthesis and REDOX management. Another explanation of why cells in-vivo appear to resist radiation is the result of the interaction between tumor cells and the microenvironment. Ongoing projects in the lab are challenging and developing both these concepts.

The research center also performs clinical research, initiating and running clinical trials. Hence, a particular strength of the lab is the ability for our findings to impact patient care through the performance of clinical trials.

Publications

Shi W, Palmer JD, Werner-Wasik M, Andrews DW, Evans JJ, Glass J, Kim L, Bar-Ad V, Judy K, Farrell C, Simone N, Liu H, Dicker AP, **Lawrence YR**. Phase I trial of panobinostat and fractionated stereotactic re-irradiation therapy for recurrent high grade gliomas. J Neurooncol. 2016;127(3):535-9.

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Yaacov Richard Lawrence, Meihua Wang, Adam Dicker, David Andrews, Walter J. Curran, Jr., Jeff M. Michalski, Luis Souhami, Wai-Kwan Alfred Yung, Minesh Mehta. Early toxicity predicts long-term survival in high-grade glioma. Br J Cancer. 2011;104(9):1365-71

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Grants

2014–2017	Rosetree's Foundation
2014–2017	NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme
2017–2018	Israel Cancer Association

Dr. Raya Leibowitz-Amit, M.D, Ph.D.

Sheba Medical Center
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Sackler Faculty of Medicine

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miRNAs in Solid Malignancies / Immunotherapy Research / Clinical Cancer Research

Positions

Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Senior Medical Oncologist, Clinician-investigator, Oncology Institute & Cancer Research Center, Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer

Research

As a clinician-investigator and a practicing medical oncologist, our lab is engaged in basic, translational and clinical cancer research.

Basic research: Our lab at the Cancer Research Center at the Sheba campus studies the role of microRNAs in solid malignancies. We were the first to show that a large micr-RNA cluster on chromosome 14q32 is silenced in melanoma. This cluster was later dubbed 'the larger tumor suppressor miRNA cluster' and was shown to be down-regulated in a wide range of malignancies. We showed the involvement of three miRNAs from this cluster in melanoma progression, and continue to study the role of this cluster in the pathogenesis of this disease. In the last year, we have also studyed the involvement of miRNAs in bladder cancer; specifically, preliminary results suggest that a family of miRNAs are associated with the development of resistance to chemotherapy in bladder cancer; research is currently ongoing.

Translational research: Immunotherapy, namely the activation of the immune system against cancer, is revolutionizing cancer treatment, yet not all cancers, and not all patients within a given cancer, respond to immunotherapy. Currently, the biomarkers associated with response to immunotherapy are unknown. In collaboration with Dr. Irit Gat-Viks from the Faculty of Life Sciences at TAU, we are embarking on a clinical trial in which we will prospectively search for immune cell populations within the systemic circulation that are associated with response to immunotherapy. We will perform RNA sequencing of immune cells before and following immunotherapy treatment and analyze the cell populations using deconvolution algorithms developed at the Gat-Viks lab.

Clinical research: Whereas the list of anti-neoplastic treatments is constantly growing across the cancer spectrum, currently there are almost no proven predictive biomarkers of response to treatment with any of these agents, and clinical decisions are generally empirical and based on 'trial and error'. We are interested in finding associations between lab variables/plasma biomarkers and response to anti-neoplastic treatment in genito-urinary malignancies; specifically, we recently addressed the following clinical questions:

1. We described clinical and laboratory variables associated with response to the hormonal agent abiraterone in prostate cancer.

2. We showed that the neutrophil-lymphocyte ratio is associated with response to chemotherapy in bladder cancer, and that a high lymphocyte count is associated with pathological complete response at cystectomy following neo-adjuvant treatment.

3. We described the patterns of change of a several plasma biomarkers following treatment with the biological agent cabozantinib in prostate cancer.

4. We summarized our clinical experience with the immunotherapeutic anti-PD1 antibody pembrolizumab, showing that low lymphocyte counts are associated with lack of response.

These clinical works, taken together, show that the adaptive arm of the immune response is imperative in amounting response to both chemo and immuno-therapy.

Publications

Leibowitz-Amit R, Shapira-Frommer R, Golan T, Israel A, Shacham-Shmueli E, Gluck I, Aderka D, Onn

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Leibowitz-Amit R, Israel A, Gal M, Atenafu E A, Symon Z, Portnoy O, Laufer M, Dotan Z, Ramon J, Fridman E, Berger R. Association between the Absolute Baseline Lymphocyte Count and Response to Neoadjuvant Platinum-based Chemotherapy in Muscle-invasive Bladder Cancer. Clin Oncol (R Coll Radiol). 2016;28(12):790-796.

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Leibowitz-Amit R, Mete O, Asa SL, Ezzat S, Joshua AM. Malignant pheochromocytoma secreting vasoactive intestinal peptide and response to sunitinib: a case report and review of the literature. Endocr Pract. 2014. e145-50.

Seah JA, **Leibowitz-Amit R***, Atenafu EG, Alimohamed N, Knox JJ, Joshua AM, Sridhar SS. Neutrophil-Lymphocyte Ratio and Pathological Response to Neoadjuvant Chemotherapy in Patients with Muscle-Invasive Bladder Cancer. Clin Genitourin Cancer. 2015:e229-33. *equal contribution.

Leibowitz-Amit R, Khoja L, Tannock IF, Joshua AM. Choosing a better endpoint for trials of bone-protecting agents. Ann Oncol. 2015. 26(5):1032-3.

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Leibowitz-Amit R, Seah JA, Atenafu EG, Templeton AJ, Vera-Badillo FE, Alimohamed N, Knox JJ, Tannock IF, Sridhar SS, Joshua AM. Abiraterone acetate in metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer: a retrospective review of the Princess Margaret experience of (I) low dose abiraterone and (II) prior ketoconazole. Eur J Cancer. 2014. 50(14):2399-407.

Templeton AJ, Pezaro C, Omlin A, McNamara MG, **Leibowitz-Amit R**, Vera-Badillo FE, Attard G, de Bono JS, Tannock IF, Amir E. Simple prognostic score for metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer with incorporation of neutrophil-to-lymphocyte ratio. Cancer. 2014. 120(21):3346-52.

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Azad AA, Eigl BJ, **Leibowitz-Amit R**, Lester R, Kollmannsberger C, Murray N, Clayton R, Heng DY, Joshua AM, Chi KN. Outcomes with abiraterone acetate in metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer patients who have poor performance status. Eur Urol. 2015. 67(3):441-7.

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Zehavi L, Avraham R, Barzilai A, Bar-Ilan D, Navon R, Sidi Y, Avni D, **Leibowitz-Amit R**. Silencing of a large microRNA cluster on human chromosome 14q32 in melanoma: biological effects of mir-376a and mir-376c on insulin growth factor 1receptor. Mol Cancer. 2012. 11:44.

Grants

2016-2018 Israel Science Foundation (ISF): The role of micro-RNAs from the 14q32 locus in the transformation, progression and drug sensitivity of malignant melanoma.

2016 Israeli Cancer Association: The crosstalk between micro-RNA expression and chemo-sensitivity/ resistance in urothelial carcinoma of the bladder.

2016 Tel Aviv University 'Djerassi Dream Idea grant': Potentiating the anti-neoplastic effects of the immune system by disrupting exosomal communications.

Prof. Pia Raanani, M.D.

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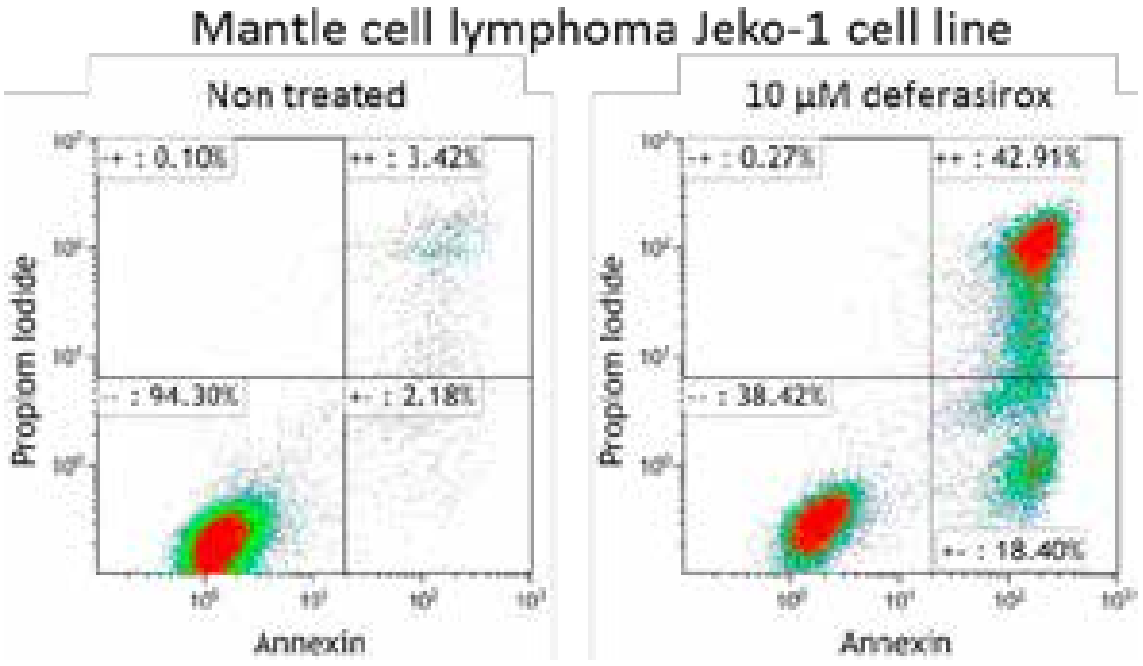
Hematological Malignancies

Positions

Prof. Raanani, Clinical Full Professor in Hematology, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Research

Our primary field of interest is finding new therapies or better therapies for the treatment of incurable hematological malignancies. Our projects focus on exploring the effect of new agents on different leukemia and lymphoma cell lines and patient samples. We study the molecular pathways involved in the initiation and maintenance of hematological tumorigenesis and try to understand the effect of the different agents on these molecular pathways. We apply cutting-edge technologies including, molecular protein and cellular biology, microarray and NGS analysis. Understanding normal hematological development and understanding the molecular effect of different chromosomal abnormalities



Deferasirox is a rationally-designed oral iron chelator used to reduce chronic iron overload in patients who receive long-term blood transfusions. We showed that this agent can induce apoptosis in mantle cell lymphoma.

(translocations, deletion, etc.) is essential for understanding the the processes leading to the induction and maintenance of hematological malignancies and for designing targeted treatments for these malignancies.

Publications

Gover-Proaktor A*, **Granot G***, Shapira S, Raz O, Pasvolsky O, Nagler A, Lev DL, Inbal A, Lubin I, **Raanani P**, Leader A. Ponatinib reduces viability, migration, and functionality of human endothelial cells. Leuk Lymphoma. 2016;12:1-13.

Hershkovitz-Rokah O, Modai S, Pasmanik-Chor M, Toren A, Shomron N, **Raanani P**, Shpilberg O, **Granot G**. Restoration of miR-424 suppresses BCR-ABL activity and sensitizes CML cells to imatinib treatment. Cancer Lett. 2015;360(2):245-56.

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Ovcharenko A*, **Granot G***, Rokah OH, Park J, Shpilberg O, **Raanani P**. Enhanced adhesion/migration and induction of Pyk2 expression in K562 cells following imatinib exposure. Leuk Res. 2013;37(12):1729-36.

Ovcharenko A*, **Granot G***, Shpilberg O, **Raanani P**. Retinoic acid induces adhesion and migration in NB4 cells through Pyk2 signaling. Leuk Res. 2013;37(8):956-62.

Hussein K, **Granot G**, Shpilberg O, Kreipe H. Clinical utility gene card for: familial polycythaemia vera. Eur J Hum Genet. 2013;21(6).

Vazana-Barad L, **Granot G**, Mor-Tzuntz R, Levi I, Dreyling M, Nathan I, Shpilberg O. Mechanism of the antitumoral activity of deferasirox, an iron chelation agent, on mantle cell lymphoma. Leuk Lymphoma. 2013;54(4):851-9.

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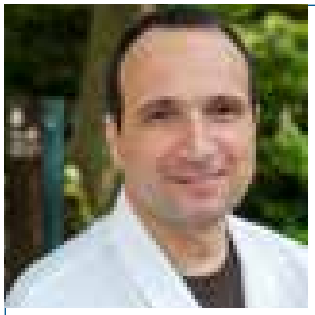
Rokah OH*, **Granot G***, Ovcharenko A, Modai S, Pasmanik-Chor M, Toren A, Shomron N, Shpilberg O. Downregulation of miR-31, miR-155, and miR-564 in chronic myeloid leukemia cells. PLoS One. 2012;7(4):e35501.

Reviews

Raanani P, **Granot G**, Ben-Bassat I. Is cure of chronic myeloid leukemia in the third millennium a down to earth target (ed) or a castle in the air? Cancer Lett. 2014;352(1):21-7.

Grants

2016-2017	Delivery of miR-15/16-enriched exosomes to treat CLL, Research Authority, Tel Aviv University
2015-2017	Novel approaches to the sensitization and eradication of the leukemic stem cell, Israeli Cancer Association.
2016-2017	Pathogenesis of Tyrosine Kinase Inhibitors (TKIs) Associated Vascular Disease in Chronic Myeloid Leukemia (CML), Pfizer Pharmaceuticals Israel Ltd



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Investigating Mechanisms of Hepatitis B Virus Persistence and Its Link to Liver Cancer

Positions

Head, Department of Medicine D and the Laboratory of Liver Research

Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Research

Current research interests focus on the role of the innate immune system in HBV infection and the role of HBV infection in liver carcinogenesis.

1. Studying the molecular mechanisms by which HBV confers resistance to sorafenib in order to get a deeper understanding of HBV oncogenicity and to gain insight into possible molecular targets for HCC interventions.
2. Characterizing the molecular signature of type I interferon induction and response following HBV infection.
3. Characterizing the interferon-response genes (ISGs) induced by HBV and their effect on HBV life cycle.
4. Investigating the mechanism(s) of HBV inhibition by the innate immune response.

Publications

Shlomai, A.*, Schwartz, R.E.*, Ramanan, V.*, Bhatta, A., de Jong, Y.P., Bhatia, S.N., and Rice, C.M. 2014. Modeling host interactions with hepatitis B virus using primary and induced pluripotent stem cell-derived hepatocellular systems. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 111:12193-12198. (*equal contribution)

Ramanan, V.*, **Shlomai, A**.*, Cox, D.B.T.*, Schwartz, R.E., Michailidis, E., Bhatta, A., Scott, D.A., Zhang, F., Rice, C.M., and Bhatia, S.N. 2015. CRISPR/Cas9 cleavage of viral DNA efficiently suppresses hepatitis B virus. *Sci. Rep.* 5. (*equal contribution)

Ricardo-Lax, I., Ramanan, V., Michailidis, E., Shamia, T., Reuven, N., Rice, C.M., **Shlomai, A.**, and Shaul, Y. 2015. Hepatitis B virus induces RNR-R2 expression via DNA damage response activation. *J. Hepatology*. 63(4):789-96

March, S., Ramanan, V., Trehan, K., Ng, S., Galstian, A., Gural, N., Scull, M.A., **Shlomai, A.**, Mota, M.M., Fleming, H.E., et al. 2015. Micropatterned coculture of primary human hepatocytes and supportive cells for the study of hepatotropic pathogens. *Nat. Protocols* 10:2027-2053.

Scheel, Troels K.H., Luna, Joseph M., Liniger, M., Nishiuchi, E., Rozen-Gagnon, K., **Shlomai, A.**, Auray, G., Gerber, M., Fak, J., Keller, I., et al. 2016. A Broad RNA Virus Survey Reveals Both miRNA Dependence and Functional Sequestration. *Cell Host Microbe 19:409-423.*

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Gozlan Y.*, Ben-Ari Z*, Moscona R, Kabat A, Shirazi R, Rakovsky A, Veizman E, Berdichevski T, Weiss P, Cohen-Ezra O, Luria Y, Gafanovich I, Brown M, Cohen-Naftali M, **Shlomai A**, Shibolet O, Zigmond E, Zuckerman E, Carmiel M, Hazan R, Nimer A, Maor Y, Kitay- Cohen Y, Shemer Y, Kra-Oz A, Schreiber L, Peleg O, Mendelson E, Mor O. Analysis of HCV Genotype 1 Subtypes and of Drug Resistance Substitutions at Baseline and in Patients Failing

Direct Acting Antiviral Treatments in Israel. *Antiviral Ther*. 2017 Jan 9. doi: 10.3851/IMP3123.

Grants

	Israeli Science Foundation (ISF)/ Physician-Scientist Grant
2016-2020	US-Israel Binational Science Foundation (BSF) Grant (with CM Rice)

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Pediatric Hemato-Oncology Department
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Pediatric Brain Tumors, Leukemias and Lymphomas

Research

Targeted therapies aimed at new targets identified by in-house analysis of genetic panels studing pediatric cancer patients' DNA.

Immunotherapy with new bispecific antibodies.

Incorporation of checkpoint inhibitors.

T-CARs for patients with relapse/refractory ALL. This innovative treatment has been performed in only a few centers in the USA and was successfully given to 5 patients. Pediatric brain tumors and neuroblastoma studies in the lab including pathogenesis, innovative therapies, discovery of new molecular aberrations, new biomarkers, new therapeutic targets the effect of new drugs on cell lines, primary cells and xenografts, studying the influence of changes in the levels of non-coding RNA's (mirs and link-RNA) on the tumor. Improvement of the activity of cytokine induced killer cells stemming from alfa/beta depleted T cells left over after haploidentical transplantations. Studying the effects of phytocannabinoids, synthetic cannabinoids and endocannabinoid-like substances on pediatric glioblastomas and neuroblastoma.

Main research areas:

1. T-CARS therapy for relapsed/reistant CD19 expressing leukemias and lymphomas
2. The effects of cannabinoids on pediatric tumors
3. Cytokine induced killer cells against pediatric tumors
4. Pediatric brain tumors research

Publications

Zinc enhances temozolomide cytotoxicity in glioblastoma multiforme model systems. **Toren A**, Pismenyuk T, Yalon M, Freedman S, Simon AJ, Fisher T, Moshe I, Reichardt JK, Constantini S, Mardor Y, Last D, Guez D, Daniels D, Assoulin M, Mehrian-Shai R. Oncotarget. 2016.

Yalon M, Tuval-Kochen L, Castel D, Moshe I, Mazal I, Cohen O, Avivi C, Rosenblatt K, Aviel-Ronen S, Schiby G, Yahalom J, Amariglio N, Pfeffer R, Lawrence YR, **Toren A**, Rechavi G, Paglin S Correction: Overcoming Resistance of Cancer Cells to PARP-1 Inhibitors with Three Different Drug Combinations.. PloS One. 2016.

Yalon M, Tuval-Kochen L, Castel D, Moshe I, Mazal I, Cohen O, Avivi C, Rosenblatt K, Aviel-Ronen S, Schiby G, Yahalom J, Amariglio N, Pfeffer R, Lawrence Y, **Toren A**, Rechavi G, Paglin S. Overcoming Resistance of Cancer Cells to PARP-1 Inhibitors with Three Different Drug Combinations. PloS One. 2016.

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Mehrian-Shai R, Yalon M, Simon AJ, Eyal E, Pismenyuk T, Moshe I, Constantini S, **Toren A**.High metallothionein predicts poor survival in glioblastoma multiforme. BMC Med Genomics. 2015

Keidan I, Ben-Menachem E, Berkenstadt H, **Toren A**. A Simple Diagnostic Test to Confirm Correct Placement of Dysfunctional Central Venous Catheters Before Chemotherapy in Children. J Pediatr Hematol Oncol. 2016.

Hutt D, Nehari M, Munitz-Shenkar D, Alkalay Y, **Toren A**, Bielorai B Hematopoietic stem cell donation: psychological perspectives of pediatric sibling donors and their parents. Bone Marrow Transplant. 2015.

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A. Schwannomas exhibit distinct size-dependent gene-expression patterns. Future Oncol. 2015.

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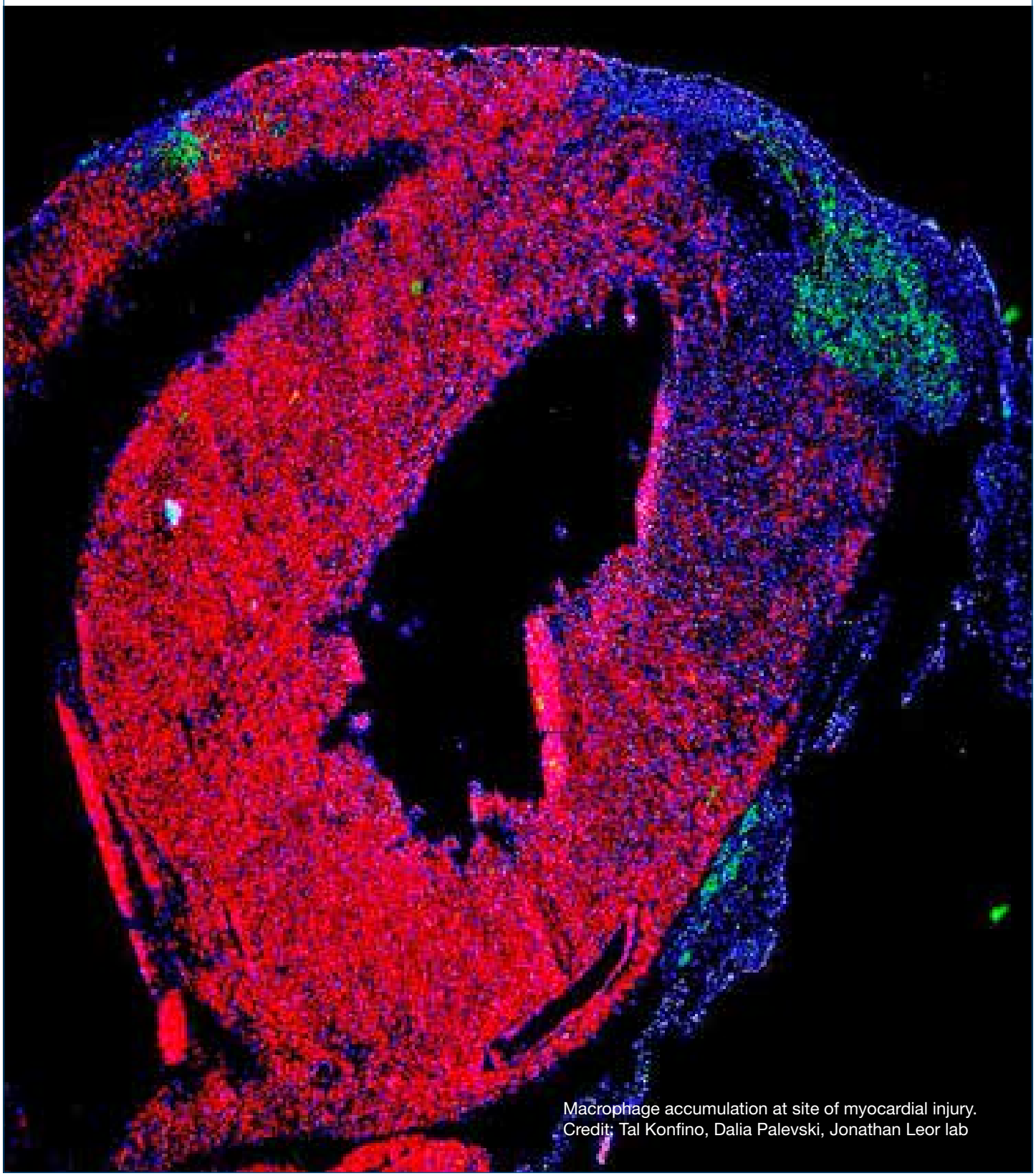
Cardiovascular System



Macrophage accumulation at site of myocardial injury.
Credit: Tal Konfino, Dalia Palevski, Jonathan Leor lab

Prof. Ehud Grossman, M.D.

Internal Medicine D and Hypertension Unit
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Dr. Avshalom Leibowitz, M.D.

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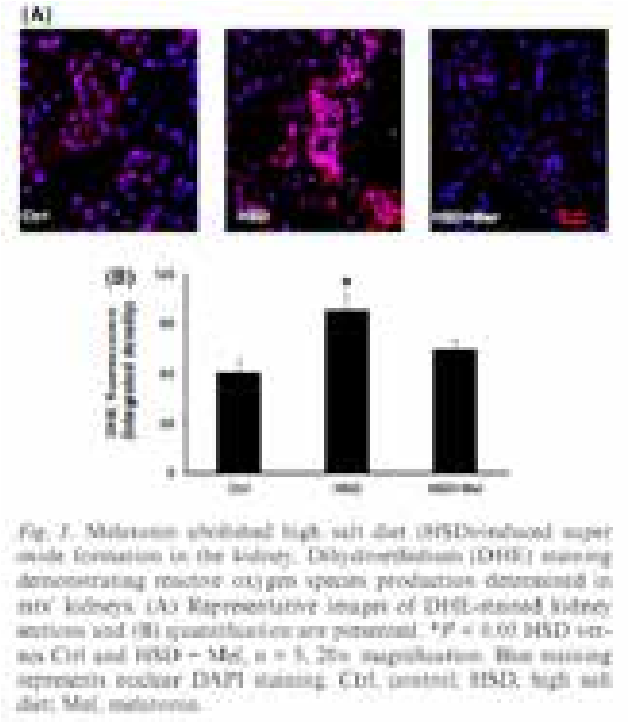
Investigating Hypertension, Diabetes Mellitus and Metabolic Syndrome

Positions (Prof. Grossman)

Head, Internal Medicine D and Hypertension Unit, Chaim Sheba Medical Center, Tel-Hashomer

Professor of Medicine, Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University

Dean, Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University



Leibowitz A, Volkov A, Voloshin K, Shemesh C, Barshack I, **Grossman E.** J Pineal Res. 2016;60:48-54.

Research

Our research concentrates on the impact of coronary calcifications on cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in hypertensive patients. We showed that the presence of coronary calcifications is associated with increased mortality and that diabetic patients without coronary calcifications have a good prognosis. Our team also studied the effect of blood pressure control and stroke outcomes. We showed that elevated systolic blood pressure in acute stroke is associated with poor outcome and that change in BP during the first week after stroke has no effect on outcome. Our main basic research is on metabolic syndrome. How can we improve metabolic syndrome? We also studied the effect of melatonin on the cardiovascular system. Our recent paper in *J Pineal Res* showed that melatonin prevents kidney injury in a high salt diet-induced hypertension model by decreasing oxidative stress.

Publications

Grossman E. Blood pressure: The lower, the better: The con side. Diabetes Care. 2011;34 Suppl 2:S308-312

Grossman E, Verdecchia P, Shamiss A, Angeli F, Reboldi G. Diuretic treatment of hypertension. Diabetes Care. 2011;34 Suppl 2:S313-319.

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Cardiovascular Regulatory Systems Focusing on the Autonomic Nervous System in Human (*Translational Science*)

Position

Associate Professor, Medicine and Physiology

Research

Recanati Autonomic Dysfunction Center

The effect of adrenoceptors activation on the coagulation system

Insight into the regulatory mechanisms of mesenteric flow

Organ-specific flow regulation, e.g. cerebral and penile blood flow

Autonomic nervous system dysregulation in CVD

Autonomic nervous system and pain regulation, including fMRI studies

Postural tachycardia Syndrome (POTS)

Collaborations: Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN, USA, Milano University, Italy, and Eurospace Center, Germany.

Publications

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Atherosclerosis – Research, Treatment and Prevention

Positions

Professor of Medicine, Department of Human Molecular Genetics and Biochemistry, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Acting Vice President of Research and Development and Academy and Chairman, IRB Committee

President, The Bert W. Strassburger Lipid Center, Sheba Medical Center

Chairman, IRB Committee of the Sheba Medical Center

CEO, Vascular Biogenics Ltd (VBL)

Research

We investigate lipid metabolism, atherosclerosis and vascular biology. In our research, we apply advanced research tools, utilizing in-vitro and in-vivo models and performing clinical trials. In our studies, we focus on basic aspects in atherosclerosis progression and developing new treatments for prevention of the disease.

The current research projects are:

The effect of carotenoids and their cleavage products on the activation of the nuclear receptor RXR and atherosclerosis in mouse models.

The effect of carotenoids on Retinitis Pigmentosa.

The effect of carotenoids on Alzheimer in transgenic mice.

The role of the coagulation Factor XI in early and advanced atherosclerosis by using apolipoproteinE/FactorXI double knock-out mice.

The role of apoA5 in atherosclerosis development by using apolipoproteinE/apoAVI transgenic mice.

Publications

Kamari Y., Shaish A., Shemesh S., Vax E., Grosskopf E., Dotan S., White M., Voronov E., Dinarello C.A., Apte R.n., **Harats D**. Reduced Atherosclerosis and Inflammatory Cytokines in Apo E Deficient Mice Lacking Bone Merrow-Derived Interleukin-1alpha. Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications 405(2):197-203, 2011.

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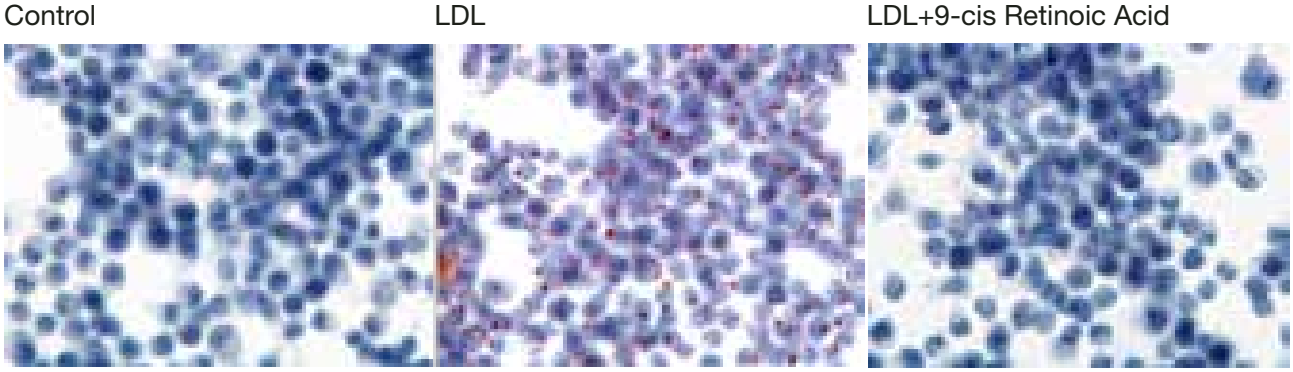

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Grants

2014-2017 Nikken-Shohonsha, 9-cis retinoic Acid-Lipid Metabolism & Atherogenesis

2014-2017 Regeneron, A randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study to evaluate the efficacy and safety of an every four weeks treatment regimen of Alirocumab in patients with primary hypercholesterolemia

2014-2017 Sanofi , Open label extension study of EFC12492, R727-CL-1112, EFC12732, & LTS11717 studies to assess the long-term safety and efficacy of Alirocumab in patients with Heterozygous FH

2015-2017 Pfizer, Phase 3, multi-center, double blind, randomized, placebo-controlled, parallel group evaluation of the efficancy, safety and tolerability of Bococizumab (PF 04950615), in reducing the occurrence of major cardiovascular events in high risk subjects-SPIRE-2

2015-2017 Pfizer, Phase 3, multi-center, double blind, randomized, placebo-controlled, parallel group evaluation of the efficancy, safety and tolerability of Bococizumab (PF 04950615), in reducing the occurrence of major cardiovascular events in high risk subjects-SPIRE-1

Prof. Gad Keren, M.D.

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Elucidating the Molecular & Pathophysiological Mechanisms Leading to the Initiation and Progression of Cardiovascular Diseases

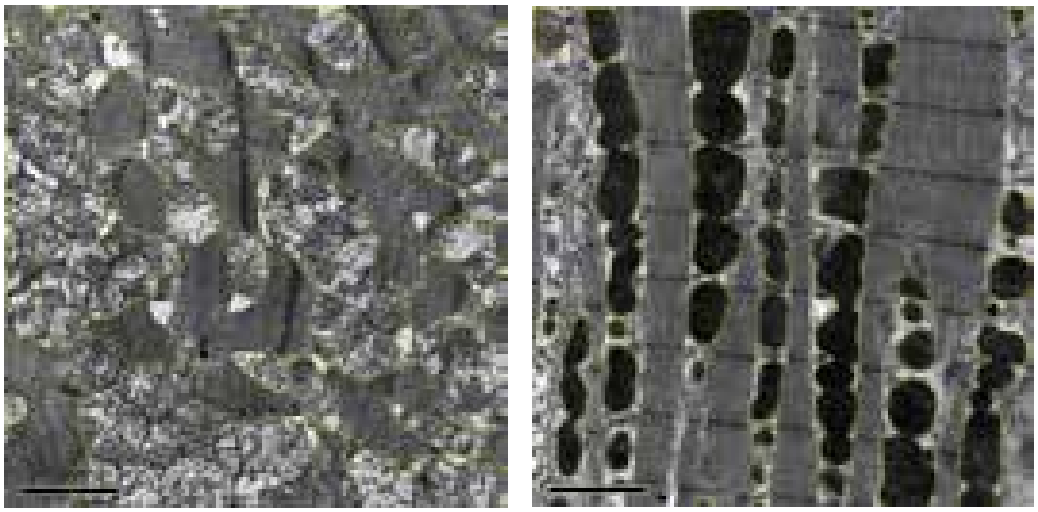
Positions (Prof. Keren)

Head, Cardiology Division, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Professor, Department of Cardiology

Research

We study the molecular networks leading to the initiation and progression of acute versus chronic presentation of various cardiac diseases. Currently we mainly focus on studying the following cardiac pathologies: 1. Acute myocardial infarction leading to left ventricular dysfunction; 2. cardiac volume overload- a prominent pathology in valvular diseases and chronic heart failure; 3. the prevalent presentation of cardio-renal syndrome. Utilizing the appropriate in vivo models as well as various molecular and cellular techniques, we have been trying to identify novel therapeutic targets for attenuating disease progression and to improve the clinical presentation of these devastating conditions.



Captures of transmitted electron microscopy demonstrating the organized structure of cardiac mitochondria in sham-operated control rats (A) compared to the swallawed unorganized structure of the mitochondria in the heart tissue of animals with chronic kidney disease (B).

Main ongoing research topics

The potential involvement of the cation channel TRPV2, which is highly abundant on peri-infarct immune cells, in the recovery processes following an acute myocardial infarction.

Elucidating the therapeutic potential of anti-metalloproteinase antibodies as well as reagents holding anti- histone deacetylase activity for the treatment of cardiac volume overload.

Cardiac mitochondria as a promising target for attenuation of cardiac dysfunction and progression to cardiorenal syndrome in patients with chronic kidney disease.

Publications

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Grant

2015-2018 Medical treatment in old age, Ministry of Science, Technology & Space

Prof. Ran Kornowski, M.D., FESC, FACC

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Rabin Medical Center

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Positions

Full Professor, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Rena Favaloro Chair for Heart Surgery and Interventional Cardiology

Chairman, Division of Cardiology and Cardiac Catheterizations, Rabin Medical Center

President, Israeli Society of Cardiology

Research

Prof. Kornowski has been involved in multiple technology developments and innovative treatment techniques in cardiology. The research activities include:

Development of new techniques geared towards catheter valve interventions, examining feasibility, safety and treatment outcomes.

Innovative imaging techniques of the coronary arteries and physiology.

Study of the cardiac effects of caloric restriction and neuro-hormonal pathways of weight reduction.

Translational studies of coronary thrombosis and progenitor endothelial cells.

Translational cardiovascular research of stem cells and gene therapy.

Development of new medications during and after cardiac catheterizations.

Research of novel drug-eluting stents and biodegradable scaffolds implanted within the coronary arteries.

Development of methods of “hybrid” cardiac interventions combined with minimal invasive cardiac surgery to treat structural and coronary diseases.

Mentoring and guiding students and young cardiologists in the early stage of their career.

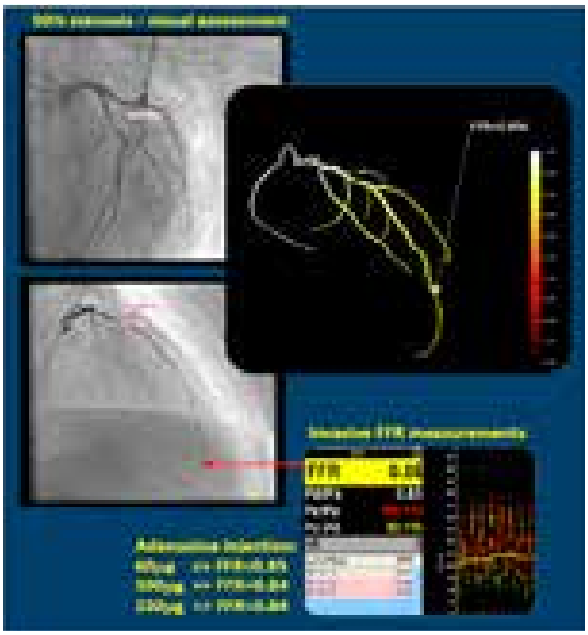

Image display of coronary angiography (Ref. Kornowski R. et al. J Am Coll Cardiol 2016;68:2235-2237)

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Prof. Jonathan Leor, M.D.

Neufeld Cardiac Research Institute, Tel Aviv University; Tamman Cardiovascular Institute, Sheba Medical Center; Sheba Center of Regenerative Medicine, Stem Cells and Tissue Engineering

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Cardiovascular Regenerative Medicine and Targeting of Inflammation and Fibrosis

Positions

Professor of Cardiology, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Director, Neufeld Cardiac Research Institute, Tel Aviv University

Director, Tamman Cardiovascular Research Institute, Sheba Medical Center

Director, Sheba Center of Regenerative Medicine, Stem Cells and Tissue Engineering

Research

Our lab is focused on translational research. Specifically, we study cardiovascular regenerative medicine, stem cells and tissue engineering. In addition, we aim to target cardiovascular inflammation and fibrosis using novel nano-medicine and a theranostic (therapy + diagnosis) approach. We use a combination of gene profiling, new biomaterials, liposomes, tissue engineering, physiological testing, and molecular imaging technologies, to understand heart cell biology in vitro and in vivo. Particularly, we work on the development of novel nano-therapies for cardiovascular disease.

Publications

Roichman A, Kanfi Y, Glazz R, Naiman S, Amit U, Landa N, Tinman S, Stein I, Pikarsky E, **Leor J** and Cohen HY. SIRT6 Overexpression Improves Various Aspects of Mouse Healthspan. *J Gerontol A Biol Sci Med Sci*. 2016.

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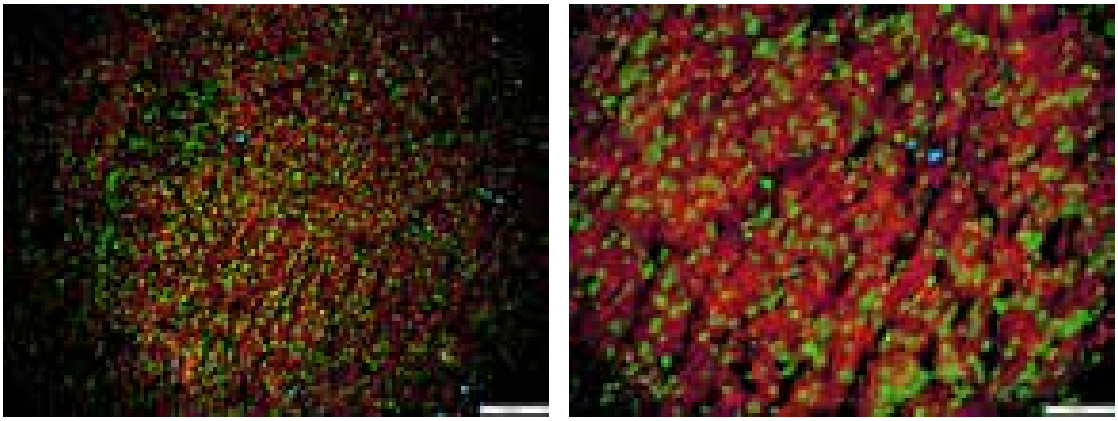

Myocardial regeneration in a neonatal heart of a mouse, 3 days after apical resection. We used the heart of a newborn mouse to study the mechanism of myocardial regeneration and repair. The regenerating myocardium is characterized by cardiomyocyte (cardiac actin, red) dedifferentiation, and proliferation. Phospho-histone 3 immunostaining detects dividing nuclei (blue) and mitotic activity. Nuclei are stained green with DAPI

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Grants

2014-2019 Israel Science Foundations, Role of macrophages in myocardial regeneration

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Intracellular Regulation of Cholesterol Homeostasis

Positions

Senior Lecturer, Department of Human Genetics and Biochemistry, Sackler School of Medicine

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The levels of cholesterol in mammalian cells are tightly regulated by cholesterol itself via multitude of negative feedback mechanisms that coordinate its uptake from plasma lipoproteins and endogenous production in the mevalonate pathway. The major rate-limiting step in the mevalonate pathway is catalyzed by the enzyme HMG-CoA reductase, the target of statins class of cholesterol-lowering drugs.

The intracellular abundance, hence activity, of HMG-CoA reductase is strictly controlled by cholesterol and intermediates of the mevalonate pathway, and the research in our laboratory is aimed to unravel the molecular events and cellular factors that operate in the degradation of HMG-CoA reductase protein.

Our studies have wider implications to our understanding of atherosclerosis and neoplastic processes, and afford new perspectives for devising novel therapeutic modalities to combat these diseases.

Publications

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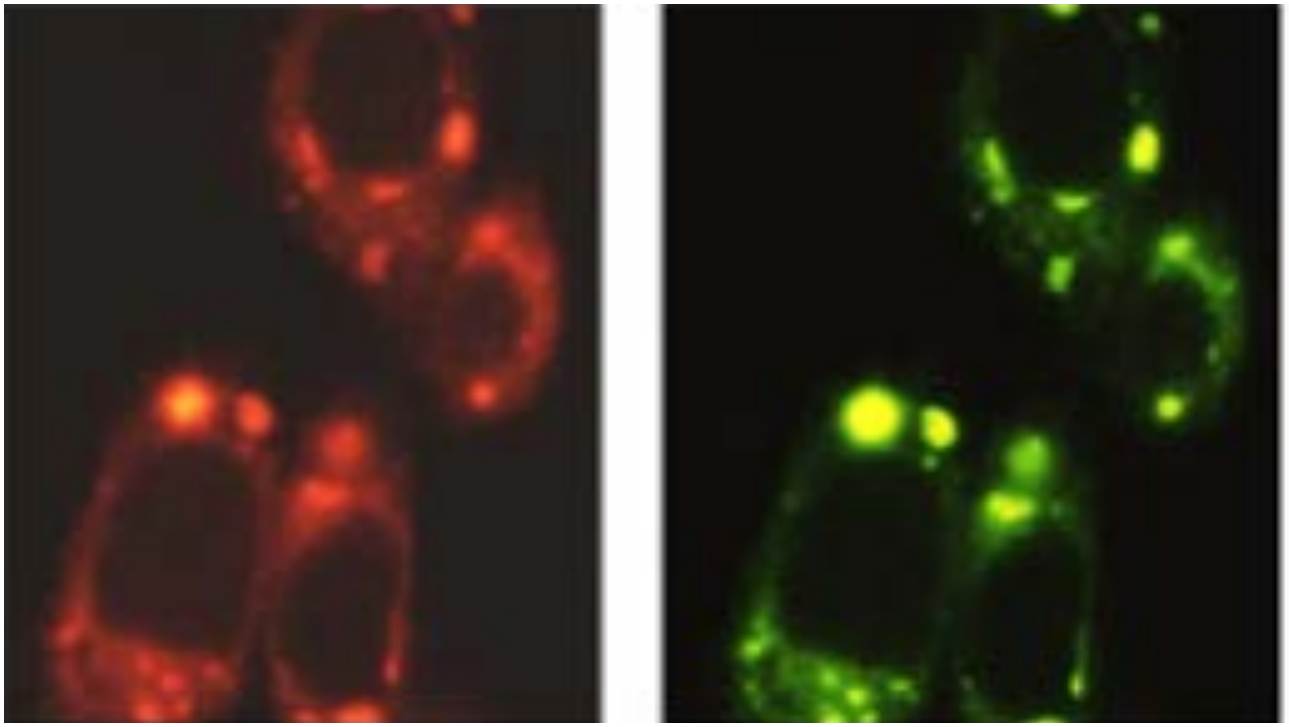

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Stress and Inflammation in the Cardiovascular System

Positions (Prof. Shapira)

Deputy Director General and Director, Rehabilitation Hospital

Associate Dean, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Full Clinical Professor

Research

- Cholinergic regulation of stress and inflammation.
- Exercise-induced urinary protein secretion as a risk for metabolic syndrome.
- Determination of new set of control limits for the identification of patients at risk.
- The influence of work characteristics (burnout and stress) on physical health.

The Tel Aviv Medical Center Inflammation Survey (TAMCIS) is a long-term, ongoing cardiovascular cohort study evaluating stress and inflammation in 22,000 apparently healthy working adults admitting to our medical center for routine annual medical check-ups. It is designed to evaluate the association between physiological and psychological measures of stress, inflammatory profile and their additive effect on cardiovascular risk.

Our database includes more than 50,000 visits with more than 600 parameters per visit; including medical history and medication, laboratory tests (Metabolic profile, Blood chemistry, blood count and Urine tests), ophthalmologist examination, exercise test and spirometry, psychological comprehensive questionnaire consisting of socio-demographic variables, personal and family medical history, health behaviors, among them dietary and sports habits, objective as well as subjective work conditions and various psychological scales such as depression, fear of terror, burnout, perceived control and social support. Research methods include basic molecular biology as well as sophisticated statistical models. The study team includes multidisciplinary researchers and physicians, from internal medicine, cardiology and neurology departments, biology and the School of Management.

Publications

S Shenhar-Tsarfaty, E Ben Assayag, I Bova, L Shopin, M Fried, S Berliner, **I Shapira**, NM Bornstein. Interleukin-6 as early predictor for one-year-survival following an ischaemic stroke/transient ischemic attack. Int J Stroke, 5, 16-20, 2010.

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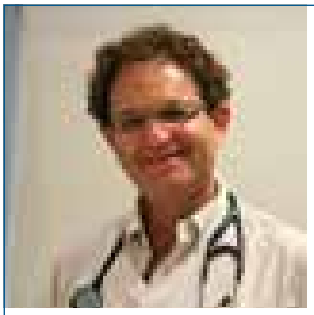

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Positions

Associate Professor, Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Chair, Israel Working Group on Cardica Pacing and Electrophysiology, Israel heart Society

Associate Editor – Circulation

Past Associate Editor – *Heart Rhythm*

Past Associate Editor – *Europace*

Research

We perform clinical studies on cardiac arrhythmias, particularly related to long QT syndrome, Brugada syndrome and early repolarization. We have several ongoing studies on long QT syndrome caused by atrioventricular block, drug induced long QT syndrome, empiric quinidine therapy for Brugada syndrome.

Publications

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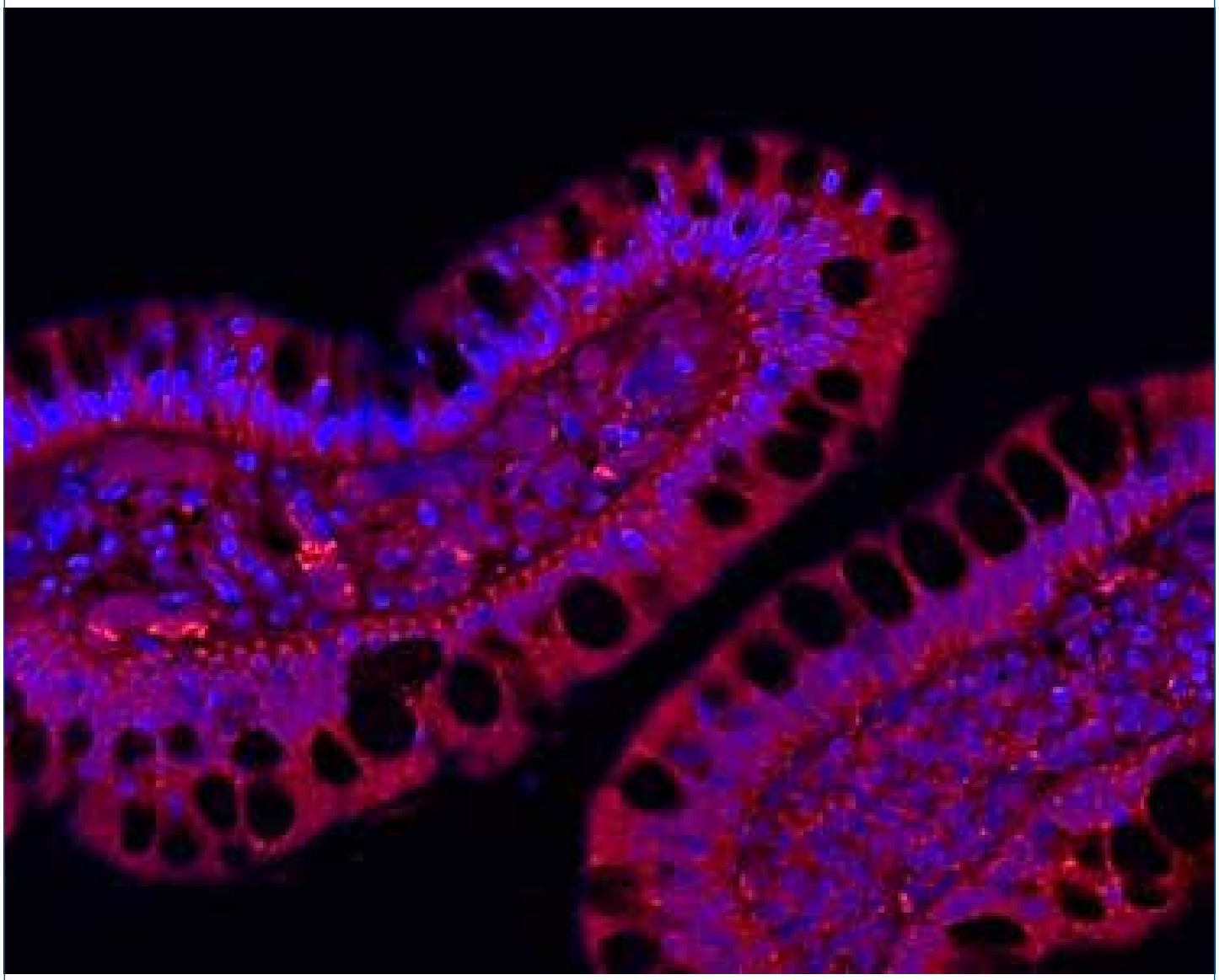
Digestive System



Immunofluorescence of PAR-4 expression in human mucosal biopsy from normal pouch. Credit: Sarit Hoffman, Ilya Borovok, Iris Dotan, Nitsan Maharshak

Prof. Ziv Ben-Ari, M.D.

Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer

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Basic and Translational Research of Liver Diseases

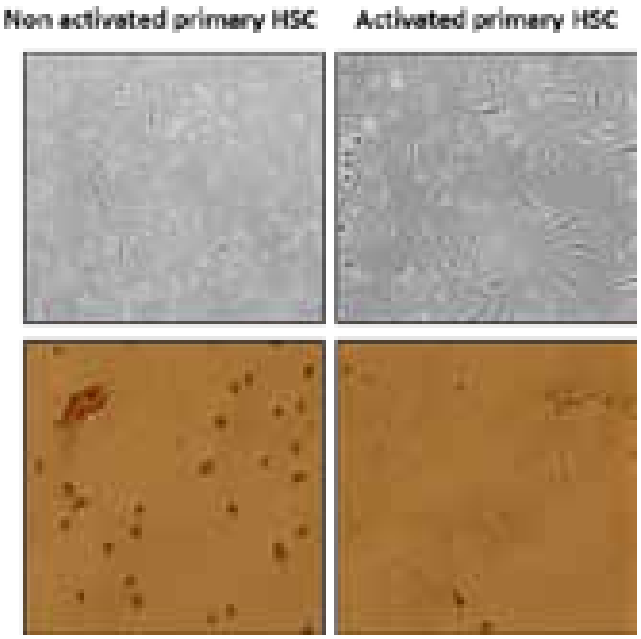
Positions

Director, Liver Disease Center

Research

Our lab is part of the Liver Disease Center at the Chaim Sheba Medical Center. We focus our studies on basic and applied liver disease research to better understand and improve the diagnosis and treatment of different liver diseases. We utilize various methods such as molecular biology, biochemistry, genetics, tissue culture and in-vitro and in-vivo models. The proximity between the Liver Disease Center and the lab creates a unique and highly successful dynamic relationship where the unsolved clinical needs are immediately translated into research for achieving better solutions.

The research in our lab is divided into two main projects:



Phenotypic alterations in HSCs after activation/differentiation to myoblast-like cells.

1. Molecular mechanisms in the development of liver fibrosis

Fibrosis is the excess accumulation of extracellular matrix (ECM), resulting from chronic, non-resolving inflammation. Multiple etiologies underlie development of liver fibrosis, such as chronic viral hepatitis B or C, autoimmune and biliary diseases, alcoholic steatohepatitis (ASH) and nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH). Fibrosis progression toward cirrhosis is the major cause of liver-related morbidity and mortality. Patient with cirrhosis are more prone to develop liver failure, portal hypertension or infection and are at higher risk of developing hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). In the normal liver, hepatic stellate cells (HSCs) constitute quiescent, vitamin A–storing cell. Following activation by specific stimuli released by an injured liver, HSCs undergo “activation”or transdifferentiation, yielding a myofibroblast-like cell. We are currently investigating the interactions between hepatocytes and HSCs in healthy and fibrotic livers in the different chronic liver diseases listed above. Our goal is to advance the research in this field and to establish resolution of liver fibrosis.

2. Microbiome and liver diseases

The human gastrointestinal tract hosts a large number of microbial cells, which exceeds their mammalian counterparts by approximately 3-fold. The genes expressed by these microorganisms constitute the gut microbiome and participate in diverse and essential functions, including digestion, regulation of energy metabolism and modulation of inflammation and immunity. The liver, due to its critical functional relationship with the gastrointestinal (GI) tract, is continually exposed to multiple harmful and beneficial microorganisms derived from the small and large intestines. We study the microbiota signature of patients with different liver diseases (Primary Sclerosing cholangitis (PSC), PSC-IBD, Hepatocellular carcinoma and cirrhosis) and compare

them to healthy control. Moreover, we investigate the correlation between environmental lifestyle and diet patterns, the host microbiome and disease etiologies.

Publications

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Grants

2016	Gut Microbiome signature in Patients with Primary Sclerosing Cholangitis (PSC) with/without IBD and the Impact of Lifestyle patterns, The Israel Society for Liver Research
2015	The role of ADAR1 as a regulator in the development of liver fibrosis and hepatocellular carcinoma. Israel Cancer Association

Prof. Shomron Ben-Horin, M.D.

IBD Service & Laboratory of Gastro-Immunology
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Drug Mechanisms and Immunogenicity in IBD

Positions

Director, IBD Service, Gastroenterology Dept. Sheba Medical Center

Associate Professor of Medicine, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Member, Organization Committee, European Crohn' & colitis Organziation (ECCO)

Research

We focus on translational science, aiming to study drug mechanisms in IBD. Specifically, we study mechanisms whereby immune-modulating and biologic drugs exert their cellular effects and/or cause unwanted adverse events, as well as immunogenicity of biologic drugs, i.e. the eliciting of immune hyper-responsiveness in the recipient towards the biologic drug. We are interested also in studying novel herbal compunds for possible synergistic effects with conventional immune-modulators.

Completed projects include:

1. A study to deciper the delay in onset of action of thiopurine related to gradual depletion of antigen-specific memory T-cells
2. Development of novel and one of the first available assays to measue anti-drug antibodies against infliximab, and later adalimumab and currently vedolizumab
3. Identifying the Fab fragment as the immune-dominant fragment of infliximab, responsible for eliciting anti-drug antibodies
4. Study of cross-immunogenicity of infliximab and its bio-similar drug, CT-P13

Ongoing projects include:

1. Studying cellular mecahnisms responsible for B-cell lymphoproliferation under immune-modulating drugs
2. Studing the decay in immune-suppression following azathioprine withdrawal
3. Studying herbal Chinese compounds effects on cells propogating inflammation

Publications

Ben-Horin S, Yavzori M, Katz L, Kopylov U, Picard O, Fudim e, Coscas D, Goldstein I, Chowers Y. The immunogenic part of infliximab is the F(ab')2 fragment, but measuring antibodies to the intact infliximab molecule is more clinically useful. Gut 2011;60:41-8

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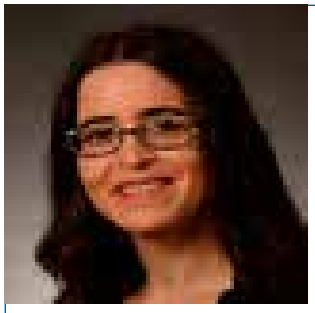
Grants

2015–2020	Horizon 2020 Immungenicity of infliximab, within the SPARE trial (BioCycle consortium)
2017	Takeda Exploring mechanisms for TB induced by anti-TNFs
2014–2017	Celltrion Cross-immunogenicity of infliximab and CT-P13



Dr. Yael Haberman, M.D., Ph.D.

The Pediatric Gastroenterology Unit & Sheba Cancer Center
Sheba Medical Center

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Host: Microbial Interactions - Translational Research in Gastrointestinal Diseases

Positions

Physician-Scientist, Sheba Medical Center

Adjunct Assistant Professor, Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Hepatology, & Nutrition, Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, OH, USA.

Research

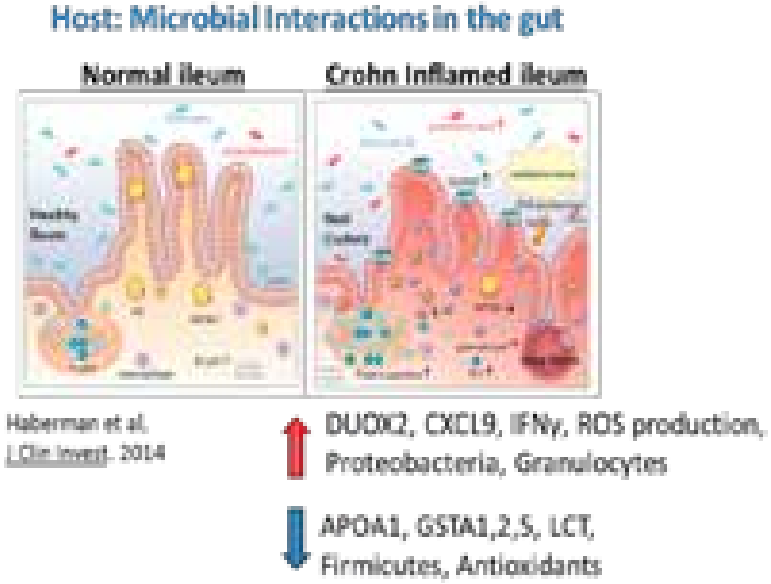
We aim to investigate the pathogenesis of pediatric gastrointestinal disease, with a specific focus on inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) and congenital gastrointestinal manifestations. Our main research uses state-of-the-art sequencing approaches and patients' samples to detect the widest range of microbial shifts and changes in host genes, present in the actual lining of the gut. These analyses are used to better characterize disease phenotype and pathogenesis with an ultimate goal to use this data in the future to better tailor therapy for a specific patient based on gut gene expression, microbial data and genetics.

Within our IBD research we focus on characterizing the role of non-coding elements (non-coding RNAs and GWAS significant non-coding SNPs) and we try to elucidate if and how these non-coding regions take part in the host:microbial interactions.

Another interest of the lab is to elucidate genotype:phenotype associations in patients with congenital gastrointestinal manifestations. Using high throughput genotypic analyses, we aim to explore connections between abnormal gastrointestinal metabolism and development with genetics. We hope that by understanding the genetics underlying those pathologies, we will be able to better understand the phenotype and tailor treatment.

Publications

Rosen MJ, Karns R, Vallance JE, Bezold R, Waddell A, Collins MH, **Haberman Y**, Minar P, Baldassano RN, Hyams JS, Baker SS, Kellermayer R, Noe JD, Griffiths AM, Rosh JR, Crandall WV, Heyman MB, Mack DR, Kappelman MD, Markowitz J, Moulton DE, Leleiko NS, Walters TD, Kugathasan S, Wilson



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Dionisi-Vici C, Shteyer E, Niceta M, Rizzo C, Pode-Shakked B, Chillemi G, Bruselles A, Semeraro M, Barel O, Eyal E, Kol N, **Haberman Y**, Lahad A, Diomedi-Camassei F, Marek-Yagel D, Rechavi G, Tartaglia M, Anikster Y. Expanding the molecular diversity and phenotypic spectrum of glycerol 3-phosphate dehydrogenase 1 deficiency. J Inherit Metab Dis. 2016 Jul 1. [Epub ahead of print].

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Arora K, Sinha C, Zhang W, Moon CS, Ren A, Yarlagadda S, Dostmann WR, Adebiyi A, **Haberman Y**, Denson LA, Wang X, Naren AP. Altered cGMP Dynamics at the Plasma Membrane Contribute to Diarrhea in Ulcerative Colitis. Am J Pathol. 2015;185:2790-804.

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Haberman Ziv Y, Collins M, Rothenberg ME. Chapter 50: Eosinophilic esophagitis. Yamada's Textbook of Gastroenterology. December 2015, Wiley-Blackwell.

Rothenberg ME, Collins M, **Haberman Ziv Y**. Chapter 11: Eosinophilic esophagitis. Yamada's Atlas of Gastroenterology. March 2016, Wiley-Blackwell.

Grants

2016-2017	Israel Gastroenterological Association (IGA)
2016-2017	ISF-INCPM Pilot
2015-2018	Physician-Scientist ISF Grant
2013-2018	Israeli Centers of Research Excellence (I-CORE), Gene Regulation in Complex Human Disease

Dr. Nitsan Maharshak, M.D.

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Investigating the Microbiome-Human Interactions

Positions

Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Head of Bacteriotherapy Clinic

Deputy Chief, Department of Gastroenterology and Liver Diseases

Research

We study the role of enteric bacteria in inflammatory and metabolic related disease conditions in humans and in-vitro. Specifically, we study how bacterial proteases impact the epithelial barrier function and how enteric microbial alterations are related to diseases. Clinically, we study the implication of fecal microbial transplantation in disease conditions.

Publications

Elloumi HZ*, **Maharshak N***, Rao KN, Kobayashi T, Ryu HS, Muhlbauer M, Li F, Jobin C, Plevy SE. A cell permeable peptide inhibitor of NFAT inhibits macrophage cytokine expression and ameliorates experimental colitis. PLoS One. 2012;7:e34172. Equal contribution.

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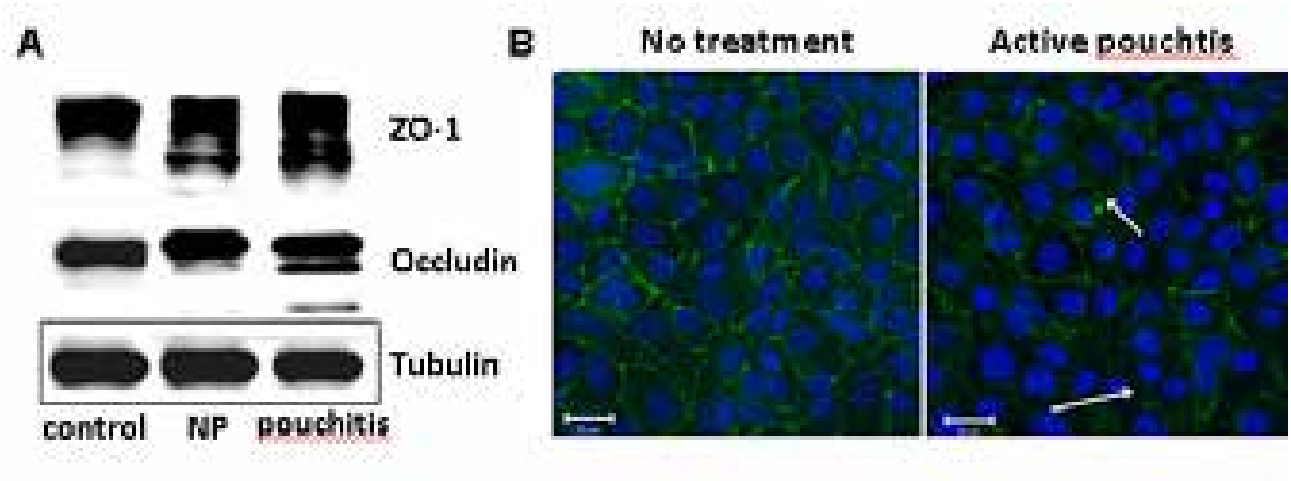

Fecal supernatants from pouchitis patients have increased proteolytic activity, disrupt epithelial tight junctions and increase epithelial permeability. Fecal supernatants isolated from pouchitis patients compared to healthy controls and normal pouch (NP) patients caused: **(A)** disruption of tight junction proteins (ZO-1, occludin) as assessed by Western blot. **(B)** Decrease ZO-1 immunofluorescence (white arrows) of Caco-2 cells mononlayters. Alexa anti mouse 488 was used as the secondary antibody (green). Nuclei were counterstained with DAPI and are shown in blue.

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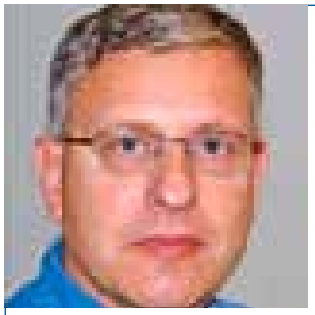

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Dr. Orith Waisbourd-Zinman, M.D.

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Studying Biliary Atresia Pathogenesis

Positions

Shamir – Professor of Pediatrics, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Waisbourd-Zinman - Attending Physician, Schneider Children's Medical Center of Israel

Research

Biliary atresia (BA) is a fibro-obliterative disease of the extrahepatic bile ducts affecting newborns, and is the leading indication for pediatric liver transplant. The etiology remains unknown and there is no effective treatment. We identified an isoflavonoid toxin, biliatresone, that causes BA outbreaks in Australian livestock and we showed that it causes lumen obstruction of neonatal mouse bile duct (NBD) explants. This is a novel tool for the study of BA and allows us to study the primary event in the disease, providing new potential for identifying therapeutic interventions. We found that biliatresone acts by inducing a rapid and transient decrease in reduced glutathione (GSH) and a decrease in SOX17

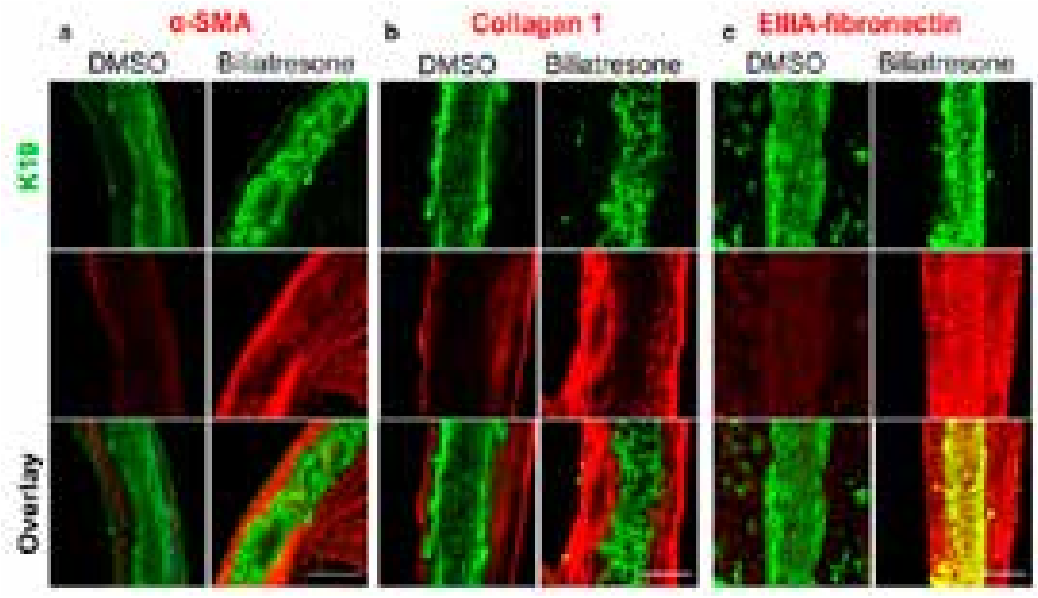

Figure: Biliatresone induces ductal fibrosis. Neonatal mouse bile duct explants were incubated with DMSO or biliatresone for 24 h and stained for the cholangiocyte marker K19 (green) or the myofibroblast marker smooth muscle actin (SMA) or collagen I or the EIIIA splice variant of fibronectin (all red). Scale bars 100 μm.

in cholangiocytes and that cholangiocyte injury can be mimicked using DL-buthionine sulfoximine (BSO) to reduce GSH or by knocking down *Sox17*. NBD cultured *ex vivo* and treated with either biliatresone or BSO showed disruption of the cholangiocyte monolayer, lumen obstruction, and subepithelial myofibroblast differentiation and fibrosis. Both obstruction and fibrosis could be prevented using GSH-protective agents, and were reversible with biliatresone wash out. In this proposal, we aim to define mechanistically the relationship between biliatresone, decreased GSH and downstream signaling molecules (Hey2, Hes1, RhoU, DAAM1 and other WNT signaling pathway genes) in the disruption of cholangiocytes and bile duct integrity. We will study the relationship between changes in cellular tubulin, loss of apical polarity, epithelial permeability and fibrosis and mechanism of repair of cholangiocyte damage and fibrosis. Understanding potential mechanisms of initial injury in BA may lead to new treatments.

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Mononuclear Phagocytes in Digestive Tract Diseases

Positions

Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Department of Clinical Microbiology and Immunology

Director, Research Center for Digestive Tract & Liver Diseases

Research

We are studying the role of mononuclear phagocytes in the pathogenesis of IBD, liver diseases, metabolic diseases and colorectal cancer. We utilize transgenic murine systems as well as human patient tissues to mechanistically unravel the involvement of these cells in the pathophysiology of these diseases. Among our main research topics:

- The interplay between immune cells and extracellular matrix (ECM) remodeling in the pathogenesis of IBD, colorectal cancer and liver fibrosis
- Monocytes and macrophage type of immune cells as pivotal drivers of inflammation and resolution during drug-induced liver injury, liver fibrosis and IBD
- The incretin hormone GIP as key linker between metabolism and immunity in type II diabetes

Publications

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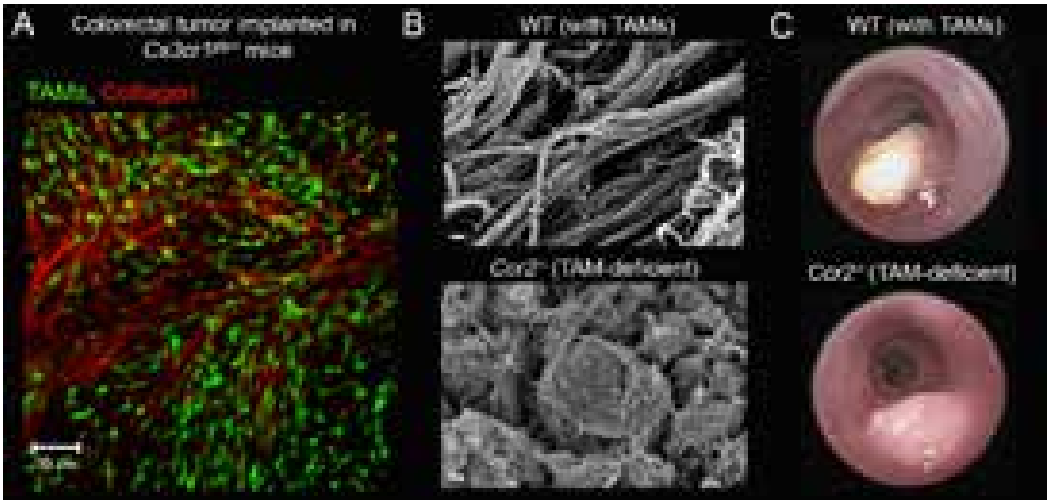
Ehud Zigmond*, **Chen Varol***, Julia Farache, Elinor Elmaliah, Gilgi Friedlaender; Nahum Shpigl, Ivo G Boneca, Guy Shakhar, Zamir Halpern, Steffen Jung. Ly6Chi monocytes give in the inflamed colon



Tumor associated macrophages (TAMs) are pivotal constructors of the colorectal tumor collagenous matrix (Afik et al., JEM, 2016). (A) Confocal imaging showing the co-localization of TAMs (green) with collagen matrix (red). (B) Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) images of decellularized ECM scaffolds extracted from WT and TAM-deficient colorectal tumors. TAMs instruct collagen crosslinking and linearization processes, which are essential for tumor development, expansion and invasion. (C) Murine colonoscopy images showing the impaired colorectal tumor development in the absence of TAMs.

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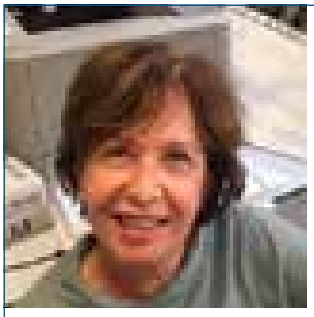
Grants

2016 – present Endogenous-like inhibitors for ADAM17 and ADAM8 –novel therapeutic agents for Inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD), Azrieli Foundation

2016 - 2019 Glucose-dependent insulinotropic polypeptide (GIP) improves adipose tissue inflammation and metabolism through direct regulation of adipose tissue macrophage function, Israel Science Foundation (ISF)



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Investigating the Mechanisms of Liver Steatosis, Obesity and Cholestatic Injury

Positions

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Research

Our lab is investigating two main diseases, liver steatosis in models of diet-induced obesity and insulin resistance and cholestatic liver injury. Obesity and the metabolic syndrome accompanying it affect a large percentage of Western world population and the obesity epidemic is only expected to increase, therefore it's of the utmost importance to understand the mechanisms involved.

Cholestatic liver injury can be caused by various factors that impair bile flow and result in accumulation of bile in the liver, such as genetic defects, structural/ mechanical obstruction of bile ducts impairing bile flow (e.g., common bile duct stones), toxins, and dysregulated function of the immune system. The two main cholestatic disorders in adult human patients are primary biliary cholangitis and primary sclerosing cholangitis for which liver transplantation is the only treatment as the disease progresses to liver failure. Specifically, we are investigating the roles played by sortilin, a trafficking molecule and a co-receptor, in both obesity and cholestatic liver damage, since we have found that sortilin deficiency has a protective role in diet-induced obesity and in murine models of primary sclerosing cholangitis. We are using both isolated liver cells (hepatocytes, cholangiocytes) as well as the cre-flox model where sortilin is deleted in various liver cells in order to further elucidate the mechanisms and signals regulating the protective roles of sortilin.

Publications

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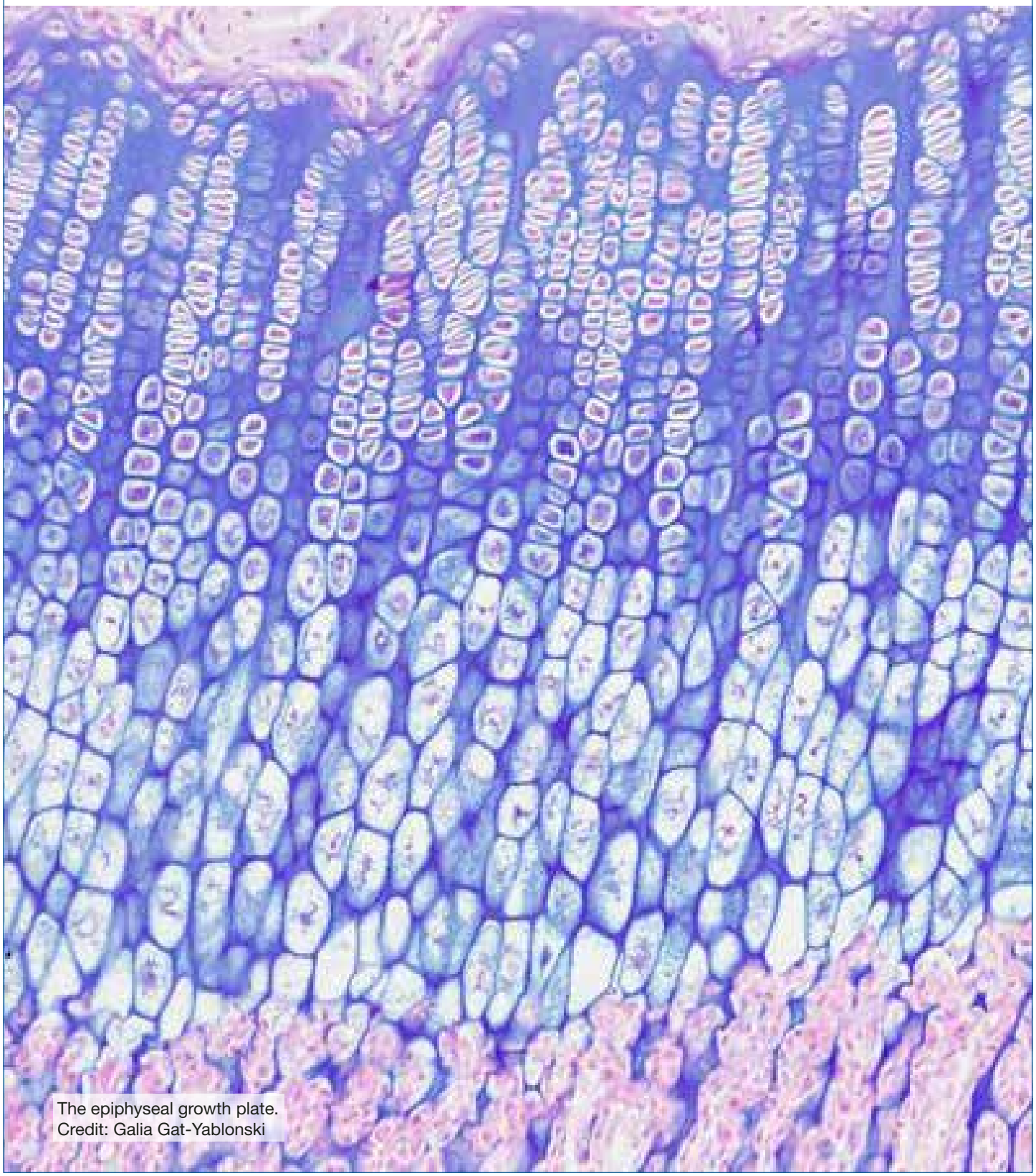
Endocrine Disease



The epiphyseal growth plate.
Credit: Galia Gat-Yablonski

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Investigating the Molecular Basis of Linear Growth in Children and Animal Models

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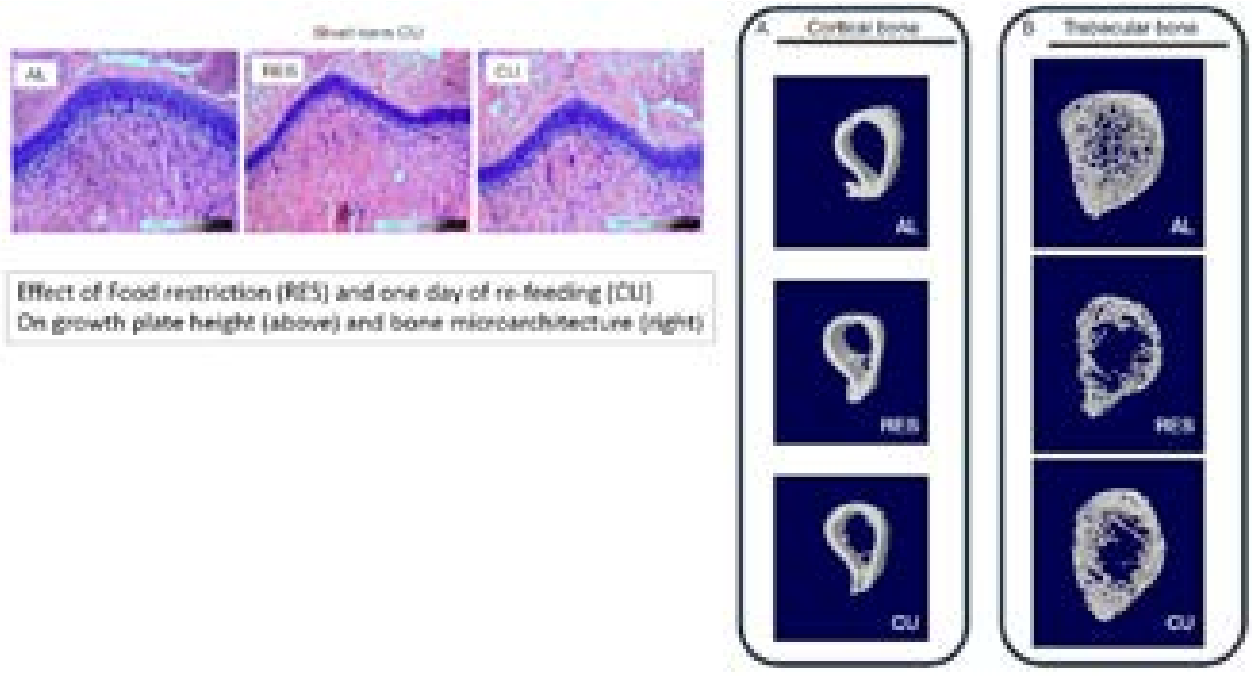
Research

Children's growth is regulated by both genetic and environmental factors. The most effective environmental factor is nutrition; however, the



Effect of food restriction (RES) and one day of re-feeding (CU) On growth plate height (above) and bone microarchitecture (right)

mechanisms connecting nutrition and longitudinal growth are still not fully understood. Deciphering theses mechanisms both in children and in animal models of rats and mice, has been the focus of our research, as currently means to improve growth in short statured children are very limited.

We have identified several novel and important factors that are involved in regulation of this process, including growth factors that are produced and secreted from adipocytes such as leptin and GDF5, transcription factors such as hypoxia inducible factor (HIF)-1, and epigenetic factors such microRNAs and histone deacetylases including SIRT1, HDAC10. We have also studies extensively the effect of nutritional manipulation on bone quality in young rats. We may now exploit these findings as targets of new treatment strategies for children with growth disorders as well as children with special nutritional needs like premature babies, infants and children with chronic diseases associated with nutritional problems.

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Dr. Yehuda Kamari, M.D, Ph.D.

Vascular Biology Research Unit; Bert W. Strassburger Lipid Center; Talpiot Sheba Medical Leadership Program; Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer.

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Investigating Lipid Metabolism and Atherosclerosis

Positions

Senior Lecturer, Medicine, Sackler School of Medicine

Research

Our research interests are within the fields of metabolic inflammation that contributes to the derangements of fat accumulation in atherosclerosis, fatty liver disease and diabetes. Specifically, we study the role of the inflammatory cytokine IL-1α and the ubiquitin-like protein HLA-F Adjacent Transcript 10 (FAT10) in these diseases. We recently discovered that the inflammatory cytokine IL-1α has an important role in early and advanced stages of atherosclerosis and fatty liver disease. We also discovered an unexpected role of IL-1α in determining ovarian lifespan and fertility.

We apply advanced technologies including genetically modified mice (Cre/loxP), molecular and cellular biology and microarray analysis to identify and functionally characterize genes that regulate atherosclerosis with the ultimate aim to prevent and treat this deadly disease.

Publications

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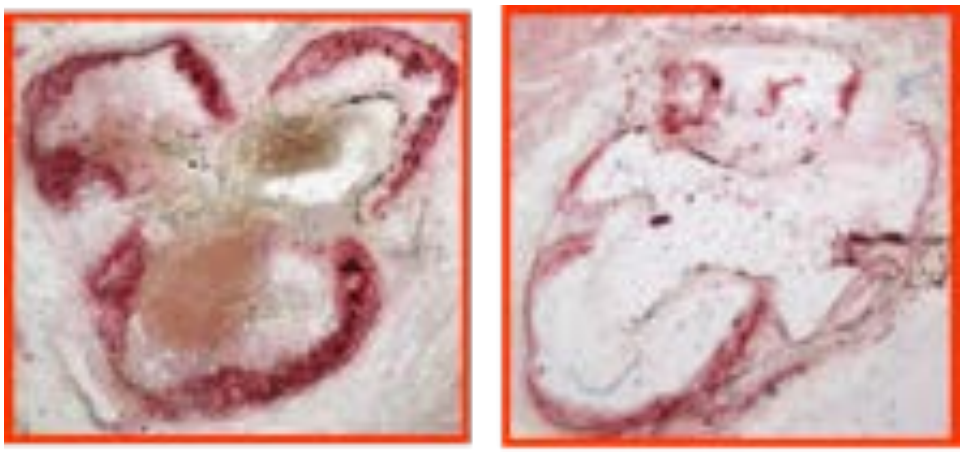

IL-1α+/+ IL-1α-/-

Bone marrow-derived IL-1α deficiency reduces atherosclerosis.

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Investigating the Impact of Maternal Fatty Acids Quality on the Fetal Gene Programming and Fingerprint of Health or Obesity Associated Disease

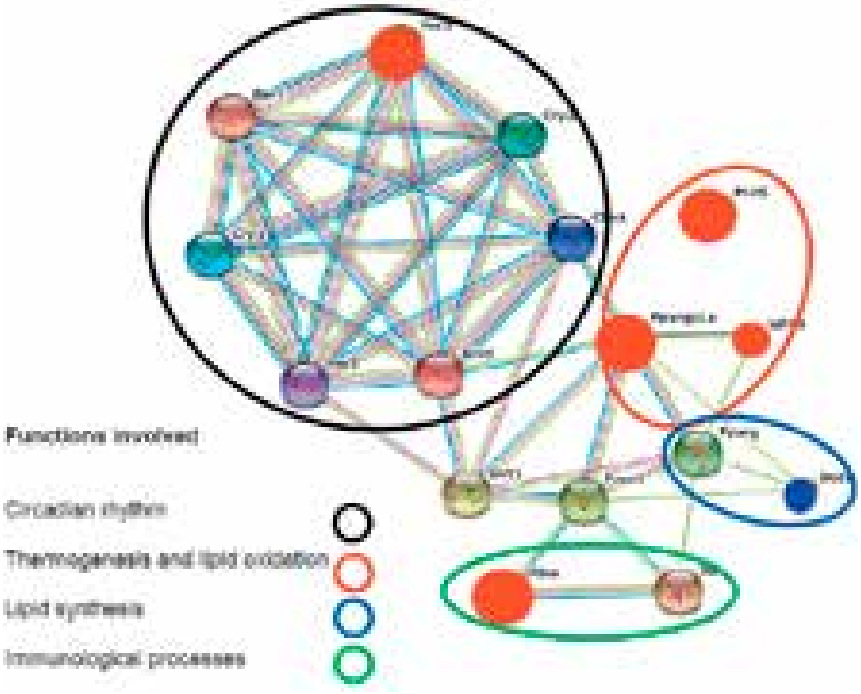
Positions

Associate Professor, CAMEA, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Researcher at the Bert Strassburger Lipid Center, Sheba, Tel Hashomer

Research

We study the effect of maternal dietary fatty acids quality during pregnancy and lactation on the gene networks that are involved in lipogenesis and thermogenesis in the offspring. Obesity-associated chronic metabolic diseases such as Cardiovascular, Type 2 diabetes and Non-Alcoholic Steatohepatosis are purported to have an early in utero origin. The nutrigenetic impact of fatty acids quality in normcaloric diets and healthy mothers during development is almost unknown. We are exploring this question by studying the metabolic and genetic evolution of the offspring from birth to adult age in our animal nutritional model and in humans. We apply the latest methodologies including biochemistry, lipidomics, molecular biology, and microarray analysis to identify and functionally characterize genes that regulate the lipogenic and thermogenic processes that determine the energetic balance leading to obesity or its absence. Understanding the normal or obesity prone gene programming during development and characterizing the associated fingerprint in the offspring at birth is essential for the early diagnosis and design of treatments to prevent long-term metabolic obesity-associated disorders that are leading causes of disease in almost 40% of wold population and death.



Protein interaction between products of genes upregulated (red full) or down-regulated (blue full) by ω3 essential fatty acid (ALA) or saturated fatty acids (SFA). Enriched functions are marked using open colored circles.

Publications

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Review

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Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility- From Basic Science to Clinical Application

Positions

Professor, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Sackler Faculty of Medicine.

Incumbent, Tarnesby-Tarnowski Chair for Family Planning and Fertility Regulation, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Director, Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, Sheba Medical Center

Co-Editor-in-Chief, Reproductive Biology and Endocrinology

Research

Our research includes:

- Various aspects of controlled ovarian hyperstimulation (COH) for in vitro fertilization (IVF).
- The role of GnRH-analogues, and specifically GnRH agonist versus antagonist in COH for IVF.
- The different modes of triggering final follicular maturation.
- Endometrial preparation for frozen-thawed embryo transfer.
- Obesity and IVF outcome.
- Fragile X Associated Premature Ovarian Insufficiency (FXPOI) in FMR1 premutation carriers.
- Pre-implantation genetic screening (PGS) and diagnosis (PGD).
- Several aspects of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS): pathophysiology, prediction, prevention and its relation to the inflammatory response.

Publications

Manuscripts

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Mechanisms for the Development of Obesity and Diabetes – Molecular and Translational Aspects

Position

Associate Professor of Medicine, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Research

With the worldwide epidemic proportions of obesity, its related morbidities such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes have become an emerging threat for public health. While the strong genetic predisposition for these conditions is a subject of intense research, less is known about the strong influence of various environmental factors on the pathophysiology of obesity and diabetes. We have recently established the Endocrinology and Diabetes Research Center at the Institute of Endocrinology at Sheba Medical Center with the vision to promote all aspects of research in the field of obesity, insulin resistance and diabetes.

Our group has focused on the following aspects of the pathophysiology of obesity and diabetes:

a. The role of food preservatives as 'metabolic disruptors': Some environmental and nutritional factors have been demonstrated to act as 'endocrine disruptors', with the ability to act as agonists or antagonists to certain receptors in a wide variety of biological systems. We have identified a common food preservative, with distinct metabolic effects. We were able to demonstrate that this food preservative results in an increase in hepatic glucose production as well as in changes in glucagon and insulin levels leading to liver insulin resistance. Chronic exposure results in weight gain, increase adiposity and systemic insulin resistance in mouse models. We are currently working on translating our pre-clinical results to humans in a series of randomized controlled trial. In addition, we continue to work using in-vitro and in-vivo animal models to assess the effects of micronutrients in modern nutrition on the development of obesity and diabetes.

b. Cellular mechanism linking over-nutrition with inflammation, insulin resistance and diabetes: Previous studies have clearly demonstrated that chronic inflammation and cellular stress is a central feature of obesity and its associated metabolic disease cluster. This inflammatory response is distinct, appears to respond to intrinsic cues, and does not resemble the classical inflammatory paradigm. Significant data have emerged in recent years on the molecular mechanisms leading to the development of these inflammatory and stress responses and how they are linked to metabolic homeostasis. Our research is focused on the regulation and adaptation to inflammation and stress within the tissue milieu in metabolically relevant tissues such as liver and adipose tissue. More specifically, we study cell-cell communication and the propagation of inflammatory and stress signals between cells within a tissue and the potential role of such communication in mediating insulin resistance and metabolic abnormalities.

c. In addition to utilizing basic research tools to promote our understanding on the mechanisms leading to insulin resistance and diabetes, we involve in clinical studies assessing novel risk factors and potential therapeutic approaches for these conditions. We are currently involved in several studies looking at the potential role of the novel adipokine FABP4 (fatty acid binding protein 4) in the insulin counter-regulatory response to hypoglycemia and as a potential contributor to the pathophysiology of gestational diabetes.

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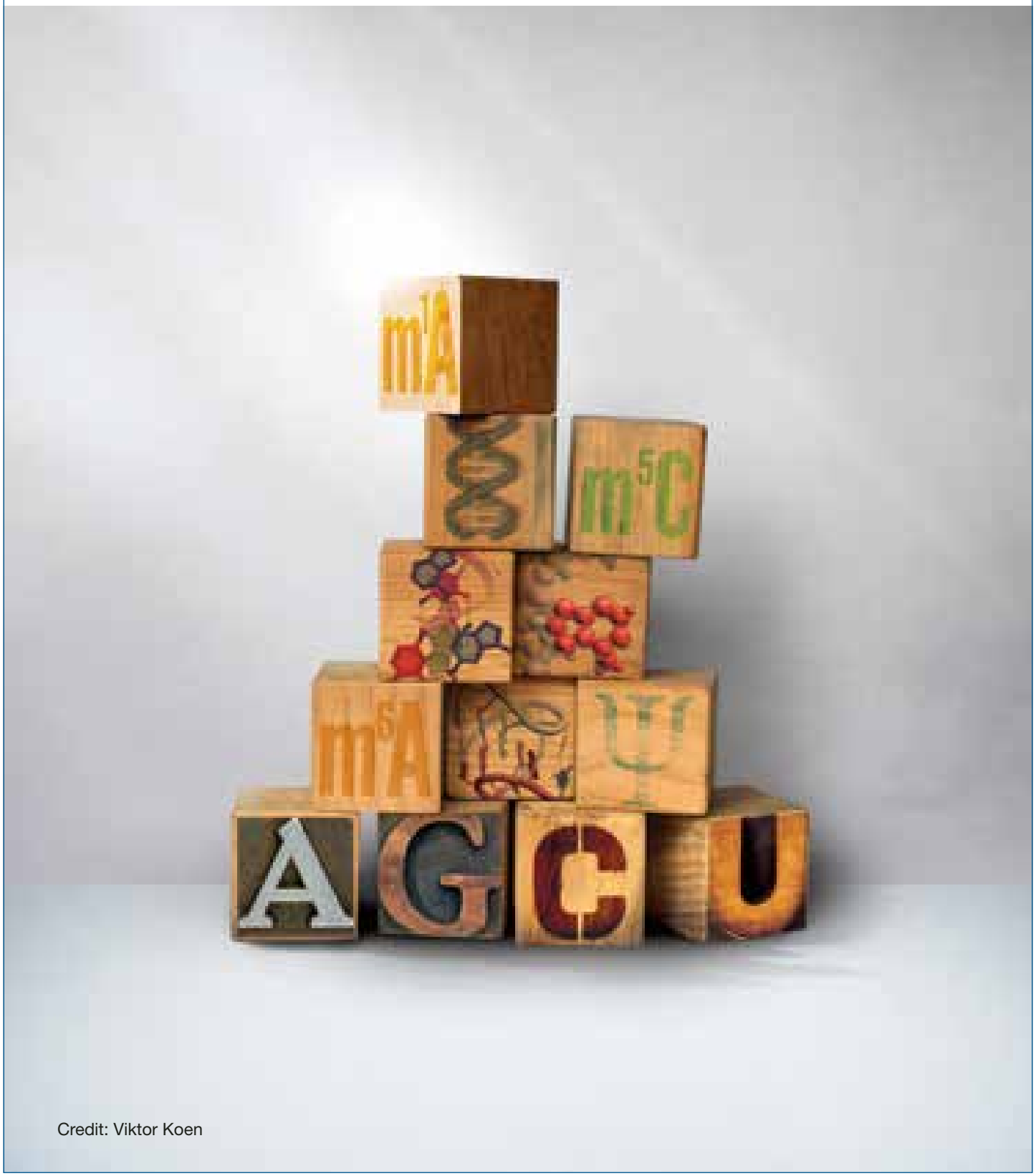
2015-2018 The Research Projects and Fellowships Fund on Food and Nutrition with Implications of Public Health. Israel Ministry of Health, An unexpected role for propionic acid, a commonly-used food preservative, in mediating insulin resistance and weight gain

2016-2019 Innovative Clinical or Translational Science Award. The American Diabetes Association, Acute effects of the food preservative propionic acid on glucose metabolism in humans

Genetic Diseases & Genomics



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Deciphering the Molecular Basis of Inborn Errors of Metabolism and Rare Genetic Disorders

Positions

Professor, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

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Chairman, Israeli Society for Metabolic Diseases (ISMD)

Research

At the Metabolic Disease Unit and the Molecular Biochemistry laboratory at the Sheba Medical Center, we strive to identify and characterize the molecular basis of an array of inborn errors of metabolism (IEM) and other rare inherited disorders. As a referral center for patients with a wide array of IEMs, we take a "bedside to bench to bedside" approach, studying the biochemical pathways and genetic basis of their disease, delineating the functional effects of the disease-causing variants, and aiming our efforts at the exciting possibilities for novel therapeutic approaches.

In the past few years, we were the first to identify a causative association between variants in several genes and a number of new neurometabolic disorders, as published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *American Journal of Human Genetics*, *Brain*, *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, among others. This was the case, for instance, of an autosomal recessive subtype of Polyarteritis Nodosa vasculopathy, caused by

Clinical Features of Polyarteritis Nodosa Associated with Adenosine Deaminase 2 (ADA2) Mutations. Clinical manifestations of polyarteritis nodosa included digital necrosis of the toes in Patient B-III-3 (Panel A) and Raynaud's phenomenon and livedo reticularis in Patient B-III-6 (Panel B). Angiography of the celiac artery in Patient B-III-3 revealed an aneurysm (Panel C, arrow). Periarteritis, fibrinoid necrosis of the media, and destruction of the elastic laminae were revealed in a biopsy specimen of the superior mesenteric artery in Patient A-III-1 (Panel D, hematoxylin and eosin).

variants in the *CECR1* gene, encoding Adenosine Deaminase 2 (ADA2). Since the pucblication of our results [Navon Elkan P et al. *N Engl J Med* 2014], this disorder, manifesting with early-onset cerebral infarctions (among others), has been diagnosed in numerous families worldwide.

Most recently, we identified and characterized a newly recognized inherited neurotransmitter deficiency, caused by mutations in *DNAJC12* [soon to be published in the *American Journal of Human Genetics*]. This disorder was found to manifest in hyperphenylalaninemia, dystonia and intellectual disability. Interestingly, patients with the *DNAJC12*-associated phenotype showed dramatic clinical improvement following early treatment with BH4 and/or neurotransmitter precursors, and thus this unique disorder is a new treatable and preventable cause of intellectual disability.

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Genomics and Epitranscriptomics

Positions

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Head- The Wohl Institute of Translational Medicine, Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer

Research

Our main interest lies in the deciphering of novel genetic and epigenetic mechanisms affecting global gene expression and their implication in cancer and neuronal disorders.

Our research interests are:

- The deciphering of the role of RNA epigenetics, including RNA editing and RNA methylation in the regulation of gene expression and cell fate.
- The study of transposable genetic elements in cancer and development
- Genetic and genomic studies relevant to cancer and genetic diseases
- Genetically non-identical tumors

Publications

Manuscripts

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Grants

2013-2017 Israel Centers of Research Excellence (I-CORE)

2013-2018 Ernest and Bonnie Beutler Research Program

2014-2017 CRBC Hematological Research Grants Program

2014-2019 Flight Attendants Medical Research Institute FAMRI

2016-2018 ISF-Joint Israel-Canada Health Research Program

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Rare Diseases Diagnosis and Research

Positions

Pediatrician - Medical Geneticist, Sheba Medical Center

Director, Institute for Rare Diseases

Associate Professor, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

National Coordinator, Orphanet Israel

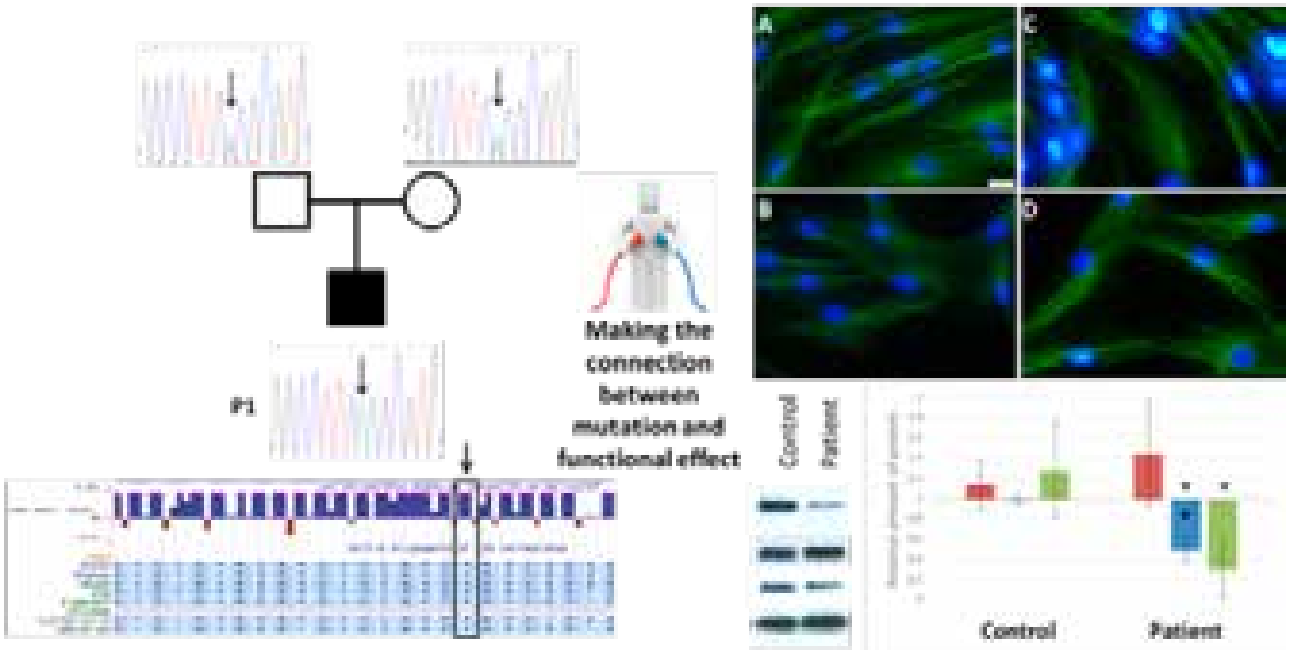
National Coordinator, Rare Diseases National Registry

Research

There are more than 6000 rare diseases affecting more than 60 million people in Europe and the US alone. Most of these diseases are affecting children , are chronic and are of genetic etiology.

Advances in rare disease research are very quickly changing the pediatric care for children affected with these non identified diseases which are very often complex. Research is one of the basics stones for building an accurate care of patients and families. Here, we wish to incorporate research to awareness, diagnosis, treatment and health policy. Our goals include identification of rare diseases causing genes, study the function of the abnormal protein , and finally deciphering new protein pathways in order to establish new therapies. Since the laboratory is in a clinical setting the results of the work is translated into genetic counseling and clinical care and sometimes treatment (MPS II-MPS IV-Fabry disease). With this in mind we are performing cellular studies and drug screens targeted to rare diseases in collaboration with other laboratories, aiming to better understand pathways such as the one linked to mucolipin 1 involved in the mucolipidosis IV clinical symptoms with the goal to provide a specific therapy.

In the field of clinical research, we focus on different subjects that include different topics such as: Natural history of MPS III (Hetz project; Understanding of the practical aspects of the medical genetics (Genet Med. 2016;18(4):372-7); Ongoing project on how the patients are dealing with the information linked to the results of the use of new technologies such as CNV and Exome sequencing.



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New Gene Identification and Genotype-Phenotype Correlation

Positions

Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Human Molecular Genetics and Biochemistry, Sackler School of Medicine

Committee Member, Israel Medical Association, Israeli Board of Medical Genetics, American Society of Human Genetics, American Board of Medical Genetics, Institutional Review Board (Helsinki) Assaf Harofeh

Member, Research and Development Committee, Tel Aviv University

Research

We study genetically undefined families using homozygosity mapping and EXOME analyses, in collaboration with other leading centers, to define disease causing genes. Once a causative mutation is defined, further functional studies are carried out. We identified at least five new genes in the last decade that enabled counseling patients and prenatal diagnosis.

We investigate the genotype-phenotype correlation of newly defined mutations to expand the disease spectrum and impact of genetic disorders.

Publications

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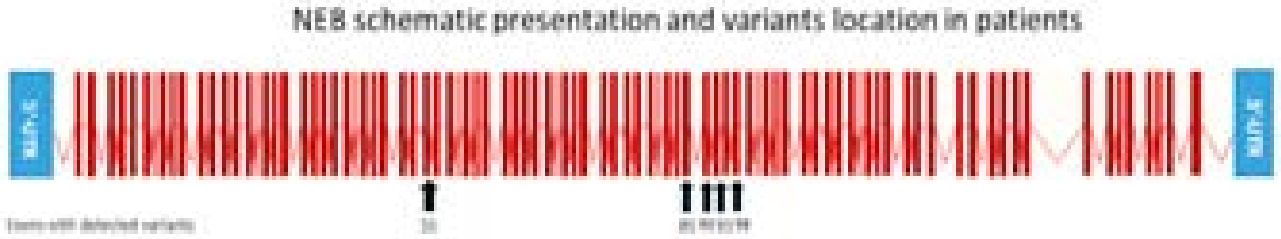

NEB gene schematic presentation. The gene contains several transcripts ranging from 149-183 exons. The arrows point at specific exons where variants were detected in patients with prenatal AMC.

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Investigating the Molecular Genetics of Skin Diseases

Positions

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Research

Our laboratory has been investigating the genetic basis of skin disorders for the past 15 years. Monogenic skin disorders are known to be prevalent among Middle Eastern populations, and at this regard, our laboratory is ideally situated to carry research in that field. These efforts have led to the deciphering of the molecular basis of more than 20 genetic diseases by members of our group. The deciphering of the molecular basis of a monogenic disorder invariably reveals a novel pathway whose importance is exemplified by the disease resulting from its malfunction. We systematically explore the mechanistic aspects of these new pathways using almost exclusively humanized models such as three-dimensional skin equivalents, hair organ cultures and chimeric mouse models. Once the function of a novel gene product is established, this new knowledge can be translated in the form of new treatments for rare and more common diseases alike. For example, we have found that defective expression of P-cadherin causes hair loss due to disrupted Wnt signaling. We are now developing small inhibitors for this new pathway as a new treatment for conditions associated with excessive hair growth. Based on a similar paradigm we are now also investigating the genetic basis of complex skin traits including psoriasis and pemphigus, a dreadful autoimmune disorder associated with 90% mortality if left untreated.

Artificial human skin grown in vitro

Ex vivo culture of human hair follicles

Publications

Samuelov L, Sarig O, Harmon RM, Rapaport D, Ishida-Yamamoto A, Isakov O, Koetsier JL, Gat A, Goldberg I, Bergman R, Spiegel R, Eytan O, Geller S, Peleg S, Shomron N, Goh CSM, Wilson NJ, Smith FJD, Pohler E, Simpson MA, McLean WHM, Irvine AD, Horowitz M, McGrath JA, Green KJ, **Sprecher E**. Desmoglein 1 deficiency results in severe dermatitis, multiple allergies and metabolic wasting. Nat Genet, 45, 1244-8, 2013.

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Review

Sprecher E. What's in a disease name? Br J Dermatol, 170, 1005-1007, 2014.

Grants

2014-2017 Israel Science Foundation-National Science Foundation of China Joint Scientific Research Program: "The genetic foundations of pemphigus vulgaris". Investigators: Eli Sprecher (PI), Xuejun Zhang (PI), Ofer Sarig (co-PI), Xianfa Tang (co-PI), Xianbo Zuo (co-PI), Hui Chen (co-PI), Fusheng Zhou (co-PI)

2014-2018 Binational Science Foundation: " Modulation of IGFBP7 expression as a new therapeutic approach in psoriasis". Investigators: Eli Sprecher (PI) and Peter Marinkovitch (PI)

2017-2020 COST: "A European Network for Connective Tissue Calcifying Diseases". Investigators: PI Ludovic Martin (PI); Eli Sprecher et al (co-PIs)

2017-2019 Kamin Fund, Israel Ministry of Economy: "SAMD9 as a molecular target for the treatment of skin inflammatory diseases" PI: Eli Sprecher, Co-PI: Ofer Sarig

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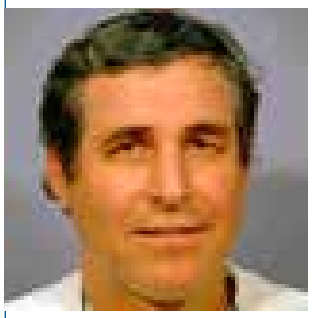

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The Lab for microRNA Research

microRNAs in human disorders: Psoriasis

One of the main research subjects in the lab is the involvement of miRNAs in the psoriasis. We found that the miRNAs' expression differs between psoriatic and normal skin. Some of these miRNAs are involved in biochemical cycles which regulate skin development and others regulate the interplay between immunocytes and keratinocytes. We are exploring how the expression of these miRNAs is regulated and how they affect the pathogenesis of the disease.

Skin cancer squamous cell carcinoma (SCC)

Skin carcinogenesis, as in most other cancer types, is believed to be a multi-step process with several steps along its malignant evolution: Solar elastosis (SE), actinic keratosis (AK or KIN1-2), a more advanced stage of AK; (KIN3) and CSCC. Using high-throughput deep sequence analysis of five stages along the malignant evolution we clearly see that miRNAs expression is distinct in each of the predefined five stages of malignant progression, a typical signature characterizes each stage. Currently we are investigating the biochemical pathways regulated by these miRNAs and their role in the malignant transformation of keratinocytes.

The lab researchers and students

Parasites exosomal miRNAs as diagnostic tool and their effect on host immune cells

Parasitic infections are responsible for considerable human suffering. Currently, diagnosis and management of parasitic infections is challenging in many settings. We hypothesize that pathogen-specific miRNA can be utilized to understand, diagnose and manage parasitic infections. We have undertaken a pilot study of schistosomiasis as preliminary proof-of-concept for need and feasibility of miRNA-based diagnosis for parasitic infections. Schistosomiasis is a parasitic disease caused by helminthes (blood-flukes) of the genus Schistosoma that affects more than 200 million people, mostly in the developing world. Infection in returning travelers has received increasing attention, including among Israeli travelers. We were able to detect the presence of schistosomal miRNAs in the micro-vesicles fraction harvested from the patient sera. The Schistosoma parasites have developed multiple mechanisms for modulating or suppressing host immunity. We hypothesize that the adult Schistosoma utilizes secreted exosomes as a mechanism to manipulate and escape the immune system. Currently, we have data suggesting this hypothesize.

The lab researchers and students. PhD students: Mizrahi Adi, Masalha Moamen (MD/PhD student); Postdoc fellow: Dr Layani Adi; Former lab members - PhD students: Dr Lerman Galya, Dr Zehavi Liron, Dr Bonen Hamutal; M.Sc students: Vestin Assaf, Volman Ella, Weinstein Jonathan; Scientist: Dr Elharrar Einat. Location: Sheba Medical Center.

Publications

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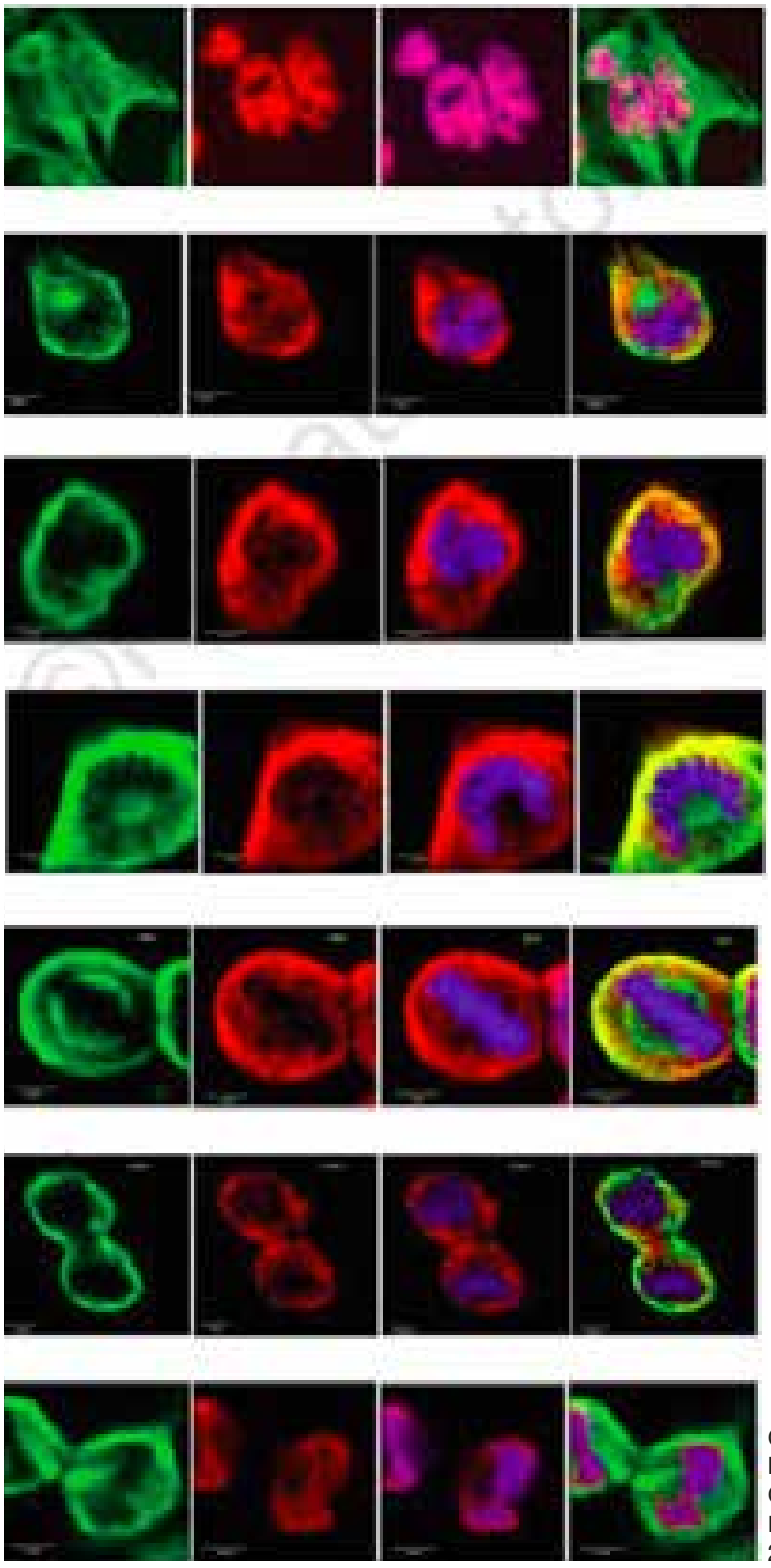
Immunology & Hematology



Cell cycle-dependent localization of codanin-1. Credit: Noy-Lotan et al. Haematologica 94:629-37, 2009

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Molecular and Cellular Studies of Rare Disorders of Hematopoiesis

Positions

Professor of Pediatrics, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Director, Hematology Unit, Schneider Children's Medical Center of Israel

Research

We study rare hematological disorders, using different cellular model systems. The roles of codanin-1 in normal hematopoiesis and in the pathogenesis of congenital dyserythropoietic anemia type I (CDA I). CDA I is a rare disorder causing anemia and bone abnormalities. We have identified CDAN1, the gene causing CDA I, in 2002, by linkage analysis. Codanin-1, encoded by CDAN1, is ubiquitously expressed and necessary for early embryonic development. However, its roles in hematopoiesis are not known. We generated erythroid tissue specific KO mice, and identified early anemia and embryonic lethality caused by a complete lack of codanin-1. We are also utilizing other model systems for the disease, including K562 cell line, murine fetal liver erythroid differentiation system, and primary human erythroid cultures. Understanding the roles of codanin-1 in red blood cells development may shed light on specialized processes involved in erythropoiesis. Even more significant, elucidating the role of codanin-1 in CDA I may help develop novel therapeutic approaches to alleviate the anemia in these patients.

Cdan1 erythroid conditional mice embryo are small and pale, with no visible erythropoiesis in the fetal liver.

The pathomechanisms of severe congenital neutropenia and cyclic neutropenia through patients will be understandood by using derived induced pluripotent stem cells. We use the cutting edge technology of induced pluripotent stem cells generated from patients with congenital neutropenia as a model system for severe congenital neutropenia and cyclic neutropenia, caused by ELANE mutations. We aim to define the granulopoietic defects caused by these mutations, establish a genotype-phenotype correlation of iPSC lines carrying ELANE mutations causing both diseases, and study novel potential therapies by pharmacological correction of the granulopoietic defects detected.

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Grants

2016-2018 Understanding the pathomechanisms of severe congenital neutropenia and cyclic neutropenia through patients derived induced pluripotent stem cells. Germany Israel Foundation (GIF)

2016-2019 The European Diamond-Blackfan Anemia Consortium. E-Rare

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Primary Immunodeficiencies (PIDs) – From Bed to Bench and Back

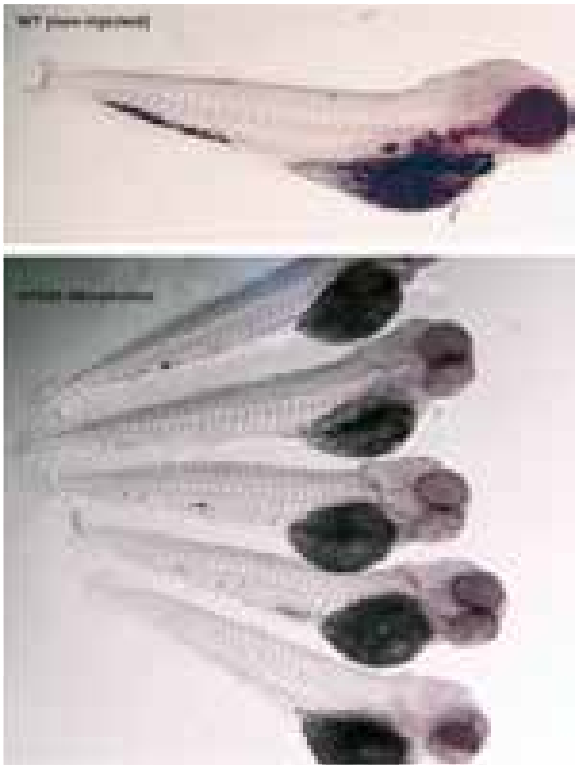
Positions

Head, Pediatric Department, Immunology Services

Research

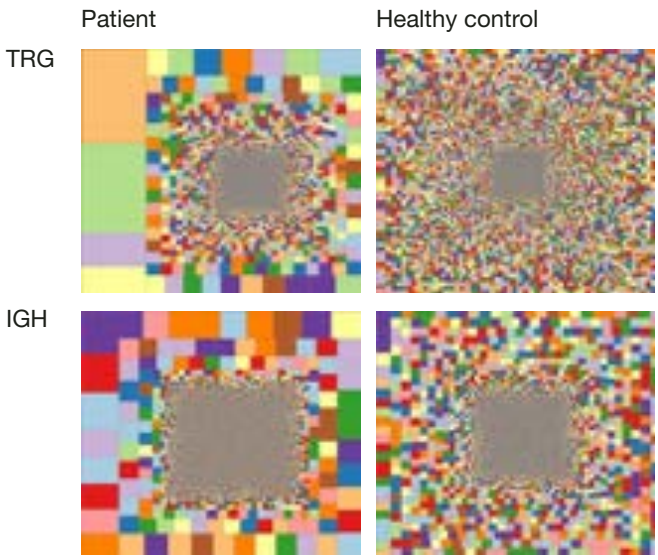
Our research focuses on:

1. Primary immunodeficiencies - finding and characterizing novel diseases
2. Newborn screening for immunodeficiency
3. Investigating fetal immunity in health and diseases
4. Next generation sequencing to illustrate and understand for T and B cell receptor repertoires



Myeloperoxidase signals in wild-type and Vps45 knockdown zebrafish embryos. In situ hybridization of WT non-injected embryo and five VPS45 deficient morpholino injected embryos 5 days after fertilization. Results of whole-mount in situ hybridization with the use of a digoxigenin-labeled RNA probe against zebrafish myeloperoxidase are shown. The myeloperoxidase detects neutrophils in the caudal hematopoietic tissue.

Our pediatric immunology clinic and laboratory are dedicated to the diagnostic evaluation, treatment, monitoring and research of patients with disorders of the immune system, including congenital immunodeficiencies and autoimmune diseases. In addition, we are leading Israel in the field of newborn screening for severe immunodeficiency and recently became the national laboratory for validating results obtained from this program. We are acknowledged as a "Jeffrey Modell Diagnostic and Research Center for Primary Immunodeficiency" (www.jmfworld.org) – which is the "gold standard" benchmark for excellence in this field. Part of our service is in-house laboratory which is well-experienced in the most advanced immunological and molecular assays that are used world-wide to assess immune function. We are interested in thymus functions in health (embryonic development and neonates) and in PIDs, as reflected by V(D)J rearrangement and thymic output of T cells, as well as B cell development, using advanced molecular methods, such as TREC and , KREC analyses and next generation sequencing (NGS). We use whole exome sequencing (WES) to discover new PIDs. This approach led us to identify to date several novel mutations that cause inherited PIDs. We found that mutations in two of these mutated novel genes, *VPS45* (*New England Journal of Medicine,* 2013) and *STN1* (*Journal of Experimental Medicine*, 2016) cause syndromic PIDs, i.e. severe congenital neutropenia (SCN5) and Coats plus, respectively. In our large PID cohort of patients some mutations were found in genes that have not been known until now to be involved in the development of the immune system. We continue to find such mutations in novel genes that cause PIDs



Immune repertoire determined by NGS for Ataxia Telangiectasia (AT) patient. Tree map representation of T cell receptor Gamma (TRG) and B cell Immunoglobulin heavy chain (IGH) repertoires in PBMCs samples from patient with AT deficiency and healthy control. Each dot represents a unique V to J joining and the size of the dot represents relative frequency within that sample. The dominant and expanded clones in TRG and IGH repertoires of a patient with AT deficiency can be noted.

with atypical clinical characteristics and study their pathophysiology mechanisms, using also a zebra fish model. Characterization of proteins encoded by the activity of these genes in immune cells of patients compared with those of healthy individuals enable us a better understanding of the development and function of the immune system, as well as designing new targeted drugs or gene therapy to the immune deficiency the patients suffer from. Another interest in our lab is to investigate T and B cell development and repertoire productions in health and disease including the development of the immune system in fetal life (*Science Translational Medicine*, 2015). We have used traditional methodologies (e.g. flow cytometry or PCR analysis) to illustrate cell repertoire in patients with immunodeficiency, autoimmunity and in developing human embryos. Yet the recent development of next generation sequencing (NGS) techniques enabled analysis of these immune repertoires to a depth that was unreached before. This was already used by us in various pathologic conditions including immunodeficiencies, autoimmune disorders and infections. One of the advantages of the NGS technology over the traditional methodologies for investigation of the expanded clones and for clinical follow-up is that it ensures finding of the clonal receptor rearrangements in every patient due to the enormous depth of sequencing. It allows for the detection of multiple sub-clones, specific preferential usage of V, D and J gene segments and complementarity determining region 3 (CDR3) characteristics and to look for clonotypic sharing in patients with a similar disease. In addition, with the use of the CRISPR-Cas9 genome editing platform, we are modeling relevant primary immunodeficiency causing genes, such as RAG1/2, DCLRE1C (artemis) and ATM in wild type human lymphocytic cell-lines, and are using this 'bed to bench and back' approach to correct these mutated genes as a strategy to develop innovative curative gene correction therapy in patients' cells.

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Reviews

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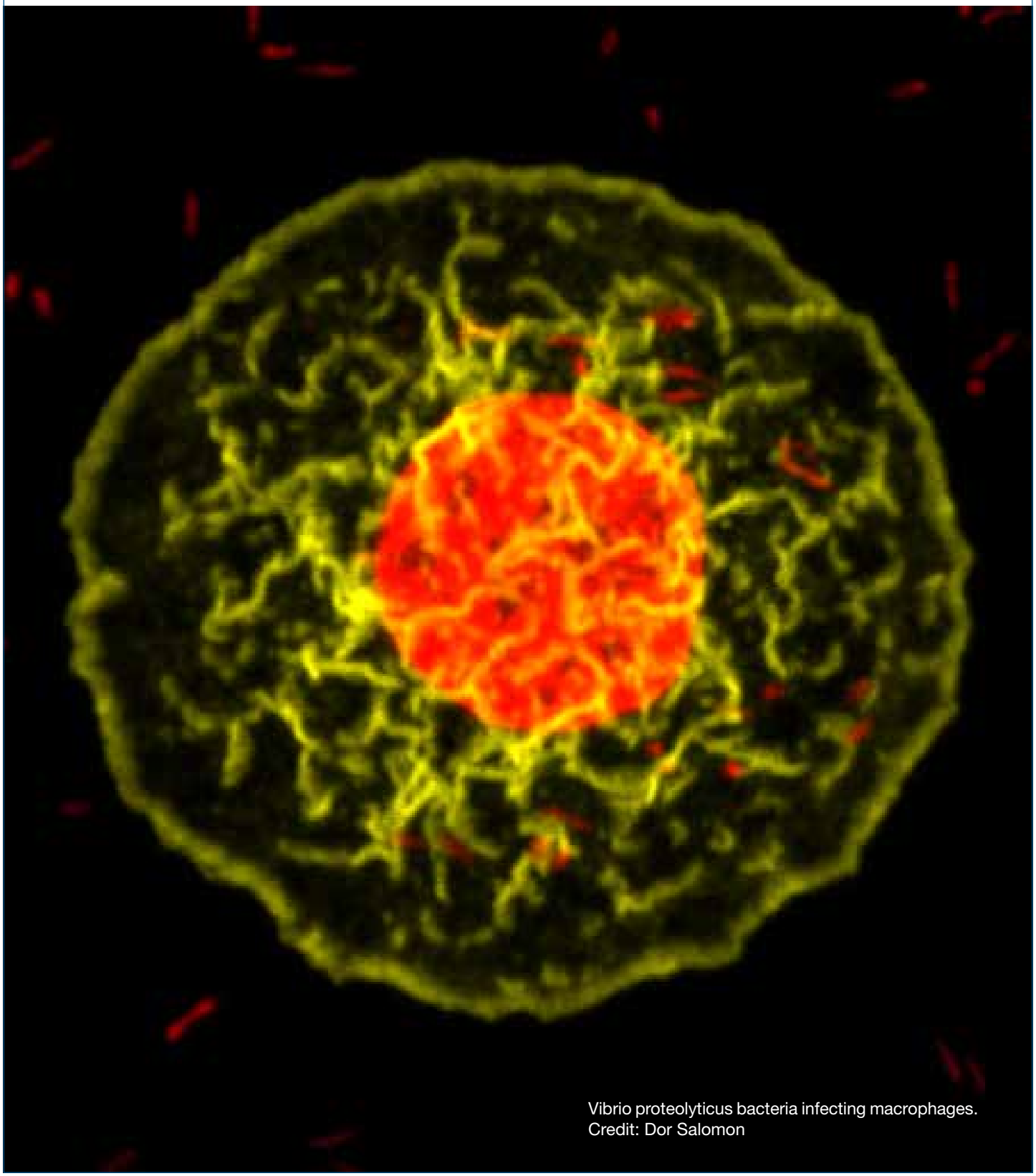
Infectious Diseases



Vibrio proteolyticus bacteria infecting macrophages.
Credit: Dor Salomon

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Mechanisms of Virulence and Drug Resistance in Pathogenic Fungi

Positions

Senior Lecturer, Sackler School of Medicine

Head, Infectious Diseases Unit, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

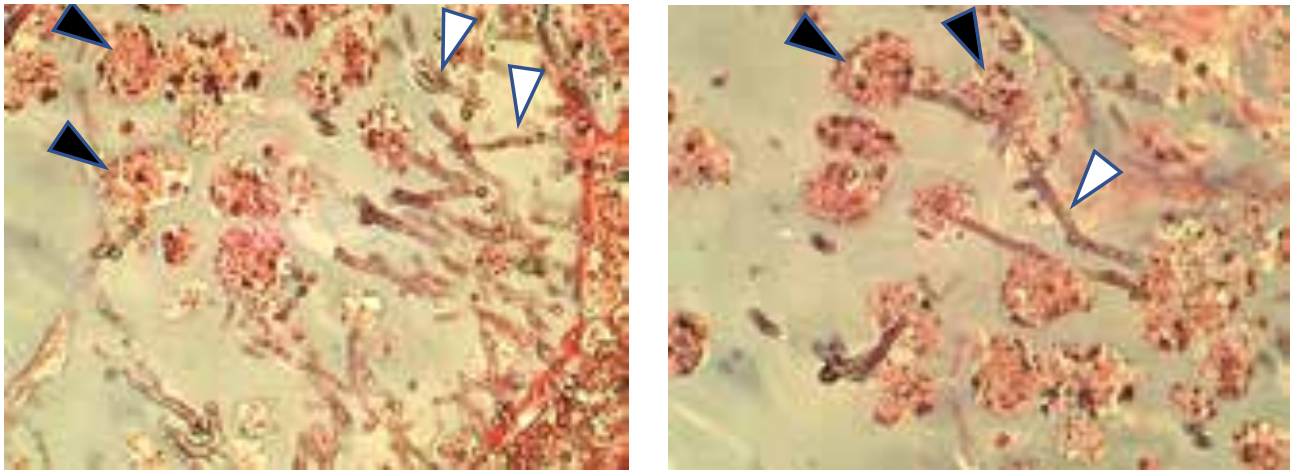
Director, Molecular Mycology Laboratory, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Research

We study the pathobiology and epidemiology of medically important fungi. Fungal infections are encountered with increasing frequency in advanced medical settings, and are associated with high mortality rates. Specifically, *Candida* species are frequent causes of hospital-acquired bloodstream infection, particularly in the intensive care setting, whereas *Aspergillus* species and other pathogenic filamentous fungi cause sinopulmonary and disseminated infections in immunocompromised patients.

Our work has outlined the incidence, drug resistance patterns, geographic distribution, risk factors and outcomes of *Candida* bloodstream infections in Israeli hospitals. A multicenter effort is currently underway to study the epidemiology of invasive mold infections in Israel.

We are specifically interested in *Candida glabrata*, an opportunistic pathogen notable for its limited susceptibility to antifungal agents and its tendency to rapidly evolve resistance following exposure to antifungal azole drugs. Using population analysis techniques, we showed that clinical strains of *C. glabrata* are often heterogenous at the cell-population level with respect drug resistance. This phenomenon, termed heteroresistance, facilitates the expansion of drug-resistant subpopulations during antifungal treatment. We discovered that heteroresistance is associated with over-expression of efflux transporters, and that heteroresistant strains can persist *in vivo* despite high-dose azole treatment. Heteroresistance is not captured by standard susceptibility tests performed at clinical laboratories, and may explain the mismatch between susceptibility data and treatment outcomes.



In vivo assay for angiotropism and angioinvasion: Matrigel plugs implanted subcutaneously induce the formation of endothelial cell networks (black arrowheads). *A. fumigatus* forms hyphae (white arrowheads) that invade neovessels. Genetic manipulation is used to dissect *A. fumigatus* genes responsible for angiotropism and angioinvasion.

Additional work has focused on the emerging species *Candida auris*. Unknown until recently, *C. auris* is a multidrug resistant organism that has caused simultaneous outbreaks of invasive infections in multiple countries in Europe, North and South America, Africa and Asia. We characterized the drug resistance and pathogenicity traits of *C. auris* isolates. Ongoing work at our lab aims to define optimal treatment strategies for *C. auris* infection using in vitro and animal models.

Invasion of host blood vessels is characteristic of invasive Aspergillus fumigatus infection. We have previously shown that angioinvasive *A. fumigatus* produces gliotoxin, a secondary metabolite which down-regulates host angiogenesis. We hypothesized that angioinvasion is essential for *A. fumigates* virulence. Research conducted at the Tel Aviv Medical Center Mycology laboratory and at the laboratory of Prof. Nir Osherov at the Sackler School of Medicine aims to understand the genetic underpinnings of angiotropism and angioinvasion. We predict that this line of research will uncover novel targets for the treatment and prevention of invasive aspergillosis.

Publications

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Investigating Infectious Diseases

Positions

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Research

Our research focuses on improving the treatment and management of patients with severe infections and at the same time, focusing on interventions that will reduce the rise of resistance to antibiotics in micro-organisms. Our main goal is to reduce mortality and suffering caused to patients by these infections.

Together with partners in Denmark, we have developed a computerized decision support system for antibiotic treatment in patients with moderate to severe infections. It was tested in a multi-center trial in three countries, and was shown to improve the outcome of patients, while at the same time reducing unnecessary use of antibiotics and hospital stay.

Our studies, systematic reviews and meta-analyses and clinical studies, served to change international guidelines and improve patient's management. For example:

- Study that stopped the use of single-dose antibiotics for urinary tract infection.
- A clear evidence on the benefit of appropriate empirical antibiotic treatment
- Antibiotic prophylaxis for neutropenic patients.
- Discontinuing the use of beta-lactam/aminoglycoside combinations.
- Proof that some antibiotics (tigecycline and cefipime) are less effective than others.
- Current projects
- Optimizing diagnosis, treatment and outcome definitions in elderly patients with bacterial infections (Ministry of Science, Technology and Space).
- The impact of a decision support system for antibiotic decisions on appropriateness of treatment, morbidity and mortality, consumption of antibiotics and resistance to antibiotic drugs (The Israeli national institute for health policy research).
- AIDA: Investigator-driven clinical trials of off-patent antibiotics. Preserving old antibiotics for the future (EU- FP7-HEALTH-2011-two-stage).
- Combatting Bacterial Resistance in Europe – Molecules against Gram Negative Infections (IMI – COMBACTE-MAGNET).
- Transnational Research Projects on the Transmission Dynamics of Antibacterial Resistance (ERA-NET/JPI-EC-AMR).

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Grants

2015-2017	The Israel National Institute for Health Policy Research: The impact of a decision support system for antibiotic decisions on appropriateness of treatment, morbidity and mortality, consumption of antibiotics and resistance to antibiotic drugs
2011-2017	EU- FP7-HEALTH-2011-two-stage: AIDA: Investigator-driven clinical trials of off-patent antibiotics. Preserving old antibiotics for the future
2016-2021	IMI – COMBACTE-MAGNET: Combatting Bacterial Resistance in Europe – Molecules Against Gram Negative Infections
2016-2019	ERA-NET/ JPI-EC-AMR: Transnational Research Projects on the Transmission Dynamics of Antibacterial Resistance

Neurological & Psychiatric Diseases

Functional MRI results, scanned at the Strauss Computational Neuroimaging Center, TeL Aviv University
Credit: Tom Schonberg

Dr. Yuval Bloch, M.D.

Cognitive and Emotion Research Lab
Shalvata Mental Health Center
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Investigating Cognitive and Emotional Difficulties that Typify Different Psychopathologies in Life Span: Therapeutic Brain Stimulation

Positions

Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Co-Cordinator, Course of Continuing Medical Education in Psychiatry, TAU

Head, Child and Adolescent Outpatient Clinic "Shalvata"

Research

Our research work is embedded in our clinical dielemas and difficulties. Our studies have focused on: Cognitive and emotional domains in the course and development of different pathologies, especially depression and ADHD. We are interested in the interplay between anxiety and ADHD and a differential effect of Methylphenidate on state anxiety. We were able to show effects of depression on cognition in depressed adolescents with some cognitive domains related to state the depressive episode and others to the the trait. In recent years, our studies have focused on brain stimulation, especially deep transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS), effects of pharmaco and psychotherapy and placebo on emotions and cognition.

Publications

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Grants

The Israel National Health Policy (NIHP) grant "Collecting routine outcome measures" in the mental health system". 2014-present

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Investigating Chronic and Acute Pain Mechanisms and New Ways for Pain Modulation and Relief

Positions

Head, Institute for Pain Medicine, Sourasky Medical Center

Research

Chronic pain is a complex physiological condition affecting around 17% of the population. While acute pain, following noxious stimuli or tissue damage, is useful as a warning sign and usually disappears when the trauma is over, chronic pain persists even though the tissue has been healed. Moreover, chronic pain often triggers an array of neurologic, immunologic, physical and psychological changes that worsen the patient's situation and are not related to the original cause of the pain.

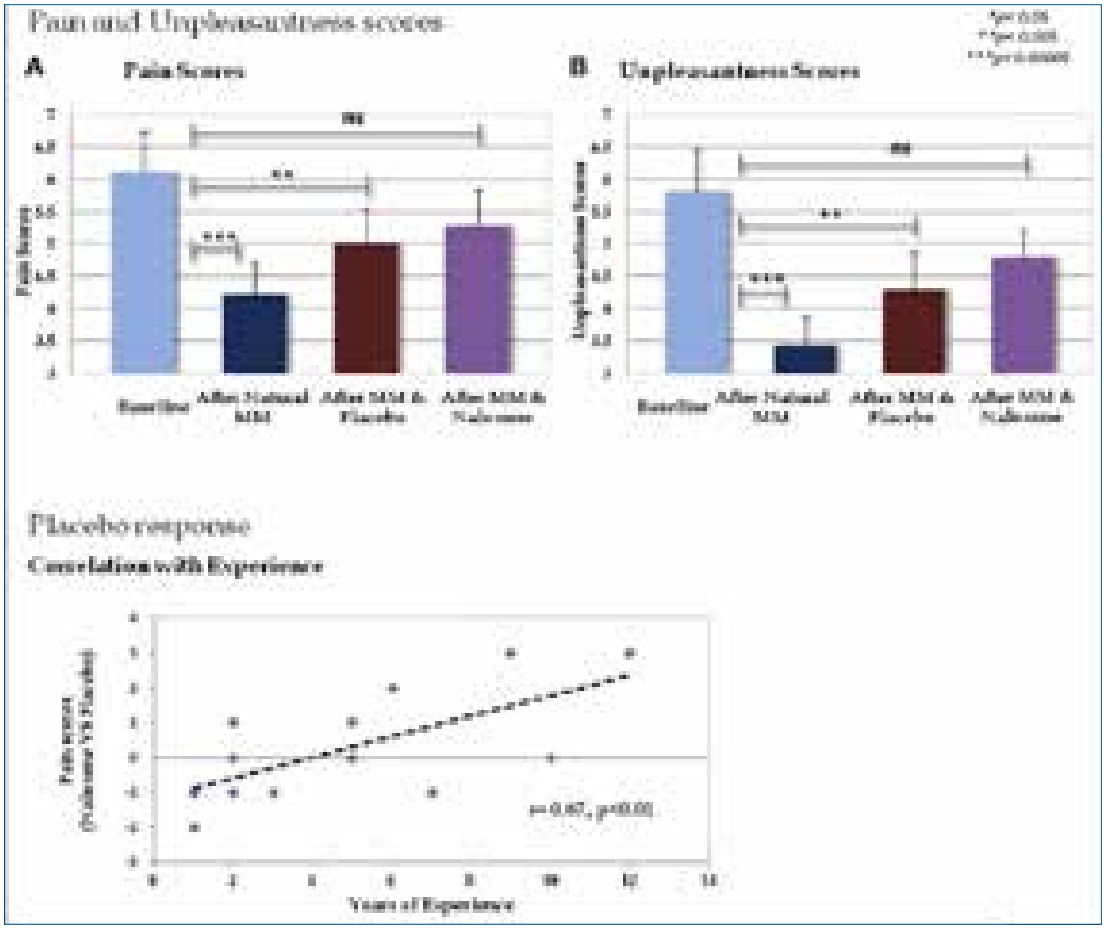

Figure: (Top panel) Mean pain and unpleasantness scores. Mean pain (A, left panel) and unpleasantness scores (B, right panel) following: a painful cold stimulus (baseline); natural meditation; meditation after placebo administration; and meditation after naloxone administration, respectively. Bars represent standard error. (Bottom panel) The differences in pain scores following naloxone vs placebo and participants' mindfulness meditation (MM) experience. The positive correlation of the response to intervention with years of experience suggests reduced response to placebo with increasing experience.

At the Institute for Pain Medicine, we focus on the biochemical basis of pain transmission and pain relieving treatments. For example, in a recent study we showed, for the first time, that meditation involves endogenous opioid pathways, mediating its analgesic effect. In another study, we investigated gender effect on the relationships between parasympathetic activity and pain modulation. We found that women demonstrated higher parasympathetic activity compared to men, which resulted in a subsequent lower pain perception. In a third study, we showed that many patients suffering from complex regional pain syndrome (CRPS), are diagnosed with alexithymia which can be regarded as an outcome of CRPS, highlighting the importance of early CRPS diagnosis and support. These and additional research findings hold promising therapeutic implications and further elucidate the fine mechanisms involved in human pain modulation.

Future research/programs: TMS TDCS Biofeedback, Pain rehabilitation programs, Cannabis database

Publications

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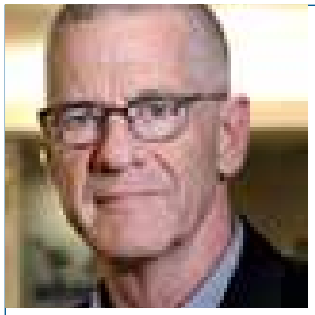

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The Pathophysiology and Development of Movement Disorders and Specifically Parkinson's Disease

Positions

Full Professor, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Chairman, Tel Aviv Institute of Neurology, Tel Aviv Medical Center

Director, Department of Neurology and Neurosurgery, Sackler School of Medicine

Incumbent, Sieratzki Chair in Neurology, Sackler School of Medicine

Sagol School of Neuroscience

Research

We have been leading a large-scale research endeavor to clinically and epidemiologically characterize the Ashkenazi Jewish Parkinson's Disease (PD) population in Israel and to identify genes that influence the risk of developing the disease in this population. In recent years our group has conducted groundbreaking research on the influence of mutations in two major genes - LRRK2 and GBA. The research was first aimed at identifying the prevalence of mutations in these genes in patients with PD and explores differences in phenotype. Our research then evolved to include first degree relatives of these patients to explore early markers of disease in healthy asymptomatic carriers. In addition to examining the contribution of risk mutations, the existence of protective haplotypes or genes was also investigated. For example, recent work has shown that immune system B cells may contribute to protection from the disease or influence its progression. The above described research has opened new avenues of exploring disease identification, progression and even prediction and could potentially impact treatments in PD.

We are also keenly interested in understanding the relationship between cognitive functions and quality of gait, as well as the risk of falling and the neurophysiological basis of the phenomenon of Freezing of Gait (FOG) in Parkinsonism. Our early work on identifying and quantifying FOG resulted in a standardized validated and widely used questionnaire (FOGQ). In addition, our group makes use of accelerometers and gyroscopes to record gait during usual activities, in both the laboratory setting and in the home environment, to better understand changes in performance during daily activites, medication cycles, habits and behavior. Using specified indices, the importance of the variance between different steps was identified, as a measure of fall risk and as a sensitive measure of sub-clinical changes, susceptibility to cognitive loads and perhaps a marker of disease.

In recent years, we have also been involved in exploring new interventions for the patients with PD. These include exploring the effects of tDCS stimulation and virtual reality to improve motor-cognitive function and functional abilities of patients with PD. This work builds on the study of movement disorders, on the one hand, and on examining ways to ameliorate motor symptoms in patients with PD.

Publications

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Grants

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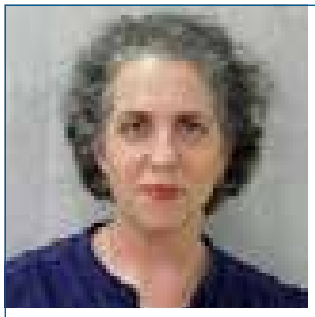

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Using Functional Imaging to Investigate Affective Neuroscience

Positions

Professor, Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Sagol School of Neuroscience

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Research

Our group has been applying advanced brain imaging techniques, including functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), Diffusion Tensor imaging (DTI) intracranial and scalp electroencephalography (EEG) and magnetic encephalography (MEG) to study mental processing in the healthy and diseased human brain. Our research theme has focused on portraying the neural underpins of individual emotional experience and expression. The accumulative work in affective neuroscience in the last two decades has paved the way for promising translations of imaging technologies for the cure to mental suffering. For example, the lab has pioneered the development of a new real-time imaging approach for the non-invasive identification of "neural finger-prints" that can reliably depict deep limbic areas through trans-modalities' learning computation (e.g. from fMRI to EEG). This new method enables accessible bed-side Brain Computer Interface procedures aimed to alleviate and/or prevent stress related psychopathologies.

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Grants

2011-2018 Representative of TAU for the competition on Israel-Centers of Excellence Program in Advanced Cognitive Science. Awarded the joint center (with the Weizmann Inst and Bar Ilan University): The Recursive Mind: From Perception to Memory and Back

2013-2016 BRAINTRAIN: FP7 Health Program (Consortium partner, leader of a WP), Taking Imaging into the Therapeutic Domain: Self -regulation of the brain systems for mental disorders

2016-2018 Israeli Ministry of Science and Technology. A specific, non-invasive, closed loop neuromodulation system for treatment of chronic pain in a natural environment

2016-2019 US Department of Defense. Emotional Brain Fitness via Limbic Targeted Neurofeedback

Prof. Carlos R. Gordon, M.D.

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Investigating the Vestibular and Ocular Motor Systems

Positions

Professor, Department of Neurology, Sackler Faculty of Medicine.

Director, Dizziness and Balance Disorders Service, Department of Neurology, Meir Medical Center

Head, Machado-Joseph Disease (MJD) Clinic (recognized by the Israel Ministry of Health)

Research

The vestibular system stabilizes gaze during head movements, ensuring clear vision of the seen world. This is mainly accomplished by the vestibulo-ocular reflex (VOR), which produces compensatory (opposite) eye movements for head rotations. Then, eye position in space is held steady and images do not slip on the retina. During everyday life activities, the vestibular system acts with the optokinetic and visual fixation systems to hold images of the seen world steady on the retina; while saccades, smooth pursuit and vergence eye movements obtain and hold images of objects of interest on the fovea. Moreover, in everyday life activities, the vestibular, visual, ocular motor, propioceptive and motor systems work together to reach exquisite balance, equilibrium and perform accurate motor tasks. Interaction between sensory (vestibular, visual, proprioceptive) and motor (eye movement, locomotion) systems; i.e sensory-motor integration is essential to maintain balance, equilibrium and perform accurate motor tasks including locomotion. Our Vestibular and Eye Movement Laboratory is fully equipped with modern systems for measuring vestibular function, all type of eye movements and balance and gait function.

Our three major ongoing interest and research projects include:

1. Vestibulo-Ocular Reflex (VOR) and eye movement abnormalities as possible biomarkers of Spinocerebellar Ataxia Type 3.

Spinocerebellar Ataxia Type 3 (SCA-3), also known as Machado-Joseph Disease (MJD), is an autosomal dominant neurodegenerative disorder for which genetic testing can reveal those at risk for developing the disease. Quantitative measures that would identify pre-symptomatic gene carriers at the threshold of clinical diagnosis would be extremely valuable in early diagnosis, tracking disease progression, and assessing treatment. This is a crucial subject of investigation not only in SCA-3 but also in other neurodegenerative diseases. Eye movement abnormalities have been reported as reliable neurophysiologic biomarker and even proposed as “a window into disease prevention.” By using bedside vestibular tests and laboratory recording of eye movements, we have described severe VOR deficit and different saccadic abnormalities in patients with SCA-3. Our specific aim is to investigate if VOR and eye movements can be used as biomarkers to quantify the appearance and progress of SCA-3 even pre-symptomatically.

2. Dizziness, vertigo, balance: Clinical and basic research

Dizziness, vertigo and problems with balance are among the most frequent complaints at all ages. Our current research focuses on the following topics:

The contribution of VOR impairment to the perceptual and emotional experience of blurred vision, dizziness and oscillopsia (in collaboration with the School of Psychological Sciences, Psychobiology Research Unit, Tel Aviv University).

The relationship between vestibular pathology and the development of anxiety, balance impairment and spatial disorientation (in collaboration with the School of Psychological Sciences, Psychobiology Research Unit, Tel Aviv University).

The evaluation of a novel specs device with stabilizing marks on the peripheral visual field to alleviate dizziness.

The search for novel physical and virtual reality strategies to improve balance and alleviate dizziness.

3. Cerebellar Disorders

As our Neurology Department at the Meir Medical Center houses the only Machado-Joseph Clinic in Israel recognized by the Ministry of Health, we therefore have access to most MJD sufferers and many other cerebellar patients in the country and focusing on the following research topics:

Respiratory function in cerebellar degeneration.

Autonomic nervous system function and emotional features in cerebellar diseases.

Cognitive and behavioral changes in cerebellar degeneration.

Physical and pharmacological treatment of cerebellar disorders.

Language and reading difficulties in cerebellar diseases (in collaboration with the School of Education, Tel Aviv University).

The role of the cerebellum in the hedonic experience of music (in collaboration with the Functional Brain Center, Wohl Institute for Advanced Imaging, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center).

The mutational origins of Machado-Joseph Disease in the Jew Yemenite subpopulation in Israel (in collaboration with the IBMC - Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology, and IPATIMUP – Institute of Pathology and Molecular Immunology of University of Porto, Portugal).

Publications

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Neurogenetics Syndromes

Positions

Professor, Psychiatry & Sagol School of Neuroscience

President, Israel Society of Biological Psychiatry

Director, The Behavioral Neurogenetics Center

Director, The Child Psychiatry Division, Sheba Medical Center

Research

We have been studying neurogenetics syndromes - 22q11.2 deletion syndrome (22q11.2DS) and Williams syndrome for two decades. 22q11.2DS is the most common known microdeletion syndrome. The 22q11.2DS phenotype consists of cleft and cardiovascular anomalies and immunological abnormalities. Additionally, all individuals with 22q11.2DS cope with cognitive deficits and one-third of the patients develop schizophrenia-like psychotic disorders and many manifest with autism spectrum disorder. We study the pathways leading to psychosis, autism and cognitive deficits in 22q11.2DS. Our focus is identifying cognitive, behavioral and psychiatric risk factors associated with the evolution of psychosis in 22q11.2DS. We also study molecular and immunological pathways to psychosis and to the behavioral and cognitive phenotype of the syndrome using blood samples and animal models. We collaborate with many centers from US and Europe under the umbrella of the International Brain and Behavior Consortium funded by the NIMH.

Publications

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Reviews

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Grants

2013–2017 NIMH

2017–2020 National Institute of Psychobiology

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Investigating the Association between Drug Use and Psychiatric Disorders

Positions

Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Physician-in-Chief, Lev Hasharon Medical Center

Research

We study the association between drug use and psychiatric disorders. We harness epidemiological and clinical approaches aimed at improving the understanding of mental health related aspects of drug use.

Specifically, much of our current reseach focuses on psychiatric outcomes of cannabis use. In recent decades, there has been a significant increase in the prevalence of cannabis use, as well as in the potency of cannabis consumed. This holds several medical and social implications, some of which are yet unclear. We focus on exploring mental-health related outcomes of cannabis use by conducting epidemiological research using large population-based samples and analysis of "big-data" based on internet-based sources. In addition, we expolore specific neuro-biological and neurocognitive aspects of heavy cannabis use by utilizing advanced functional technologies such as Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS). Our studies regarding the effects of cannabis on depression and anxiety are commonly cited in World Heatlh Organization publications, and our reports on mental-health related aspects of medical marijuana and prescription opioids have served as a based for national policy papers.

Publications

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Dr. Abigail Livny-Ezer, Ph.D.

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Functional Neuroimaging Laboratory

Positions

Head, Functional Neuroimaging Laboratory, Department of Diagnostic Imaging, Sheba Medical Center, affiliated to Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Researcher, Sagol Neuroscience Center, Sheba Medical Center.

Research

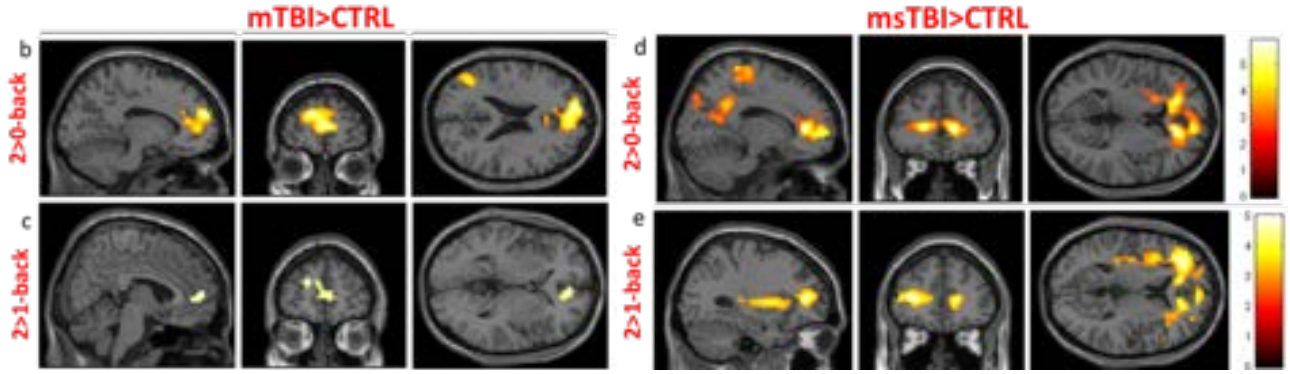
The Functional NeuroImaging Lab Studies brain pathologies, in particular the way the brain reorganizes due to brain injury (TBI). We use various tools including: advanced structural MRI and fMRI protocols using tailor-made fMRI tasks to examine the deficits after TBI. We apply also extensive neuropsychological batteries in order to investigate cognitive impairments. Furthermore, we examine symptoms and emotional status using validated questionnaires and scales. This data is integrated and analyzed to identify networks and patterns which will further our understanding of neuropathology and neuronal reorganization. Our research aims to improve the prediction of brain pathology's progression, to plan medical and rehabilitative interventions for the well-being of patients with brain diseases and head injuries.

Publications

Livny A., Biegon A., Kushnir T., Harnof S., Hoffman C., Fruchter E., Weiser M. Mild Traumatic Brain Injury Linked to Persistent Cognitive Deficits and Smaller Insular Volume. Journal of Neurotrauma. 2016.

Weinstein A., **Livny A.,** Weizman A. Brain imaging studies on the cognitive, pharmacological and neurobiological effects of cannabis in humans: Evidence from studies of adult users. Current Pharmaceutical Design. 2016.

Livny A., Ravona Springer R., Heymann T., Priess R. Kushnir T., Tsarfaty G., Rabinov L., Moran R., Hoffman H., Cooper I., Greenbaum L., Silverman J., Sano M., Johnson S., Bendlin B., Schnaider Beeri M. Long-term variability in glycemic control is associated with white matter hyperintensities in APOE4 genotype carriers with type 2 diabetes. Diabetes Care. 2016; 39(6): 1056-9.



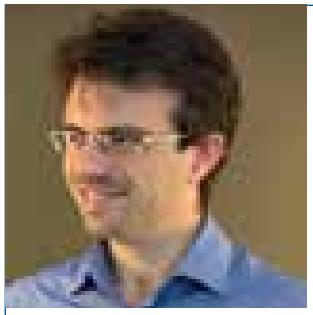
The relation between severity of TBI and working-memory brain activation during an n-back task. Maximum intensity projections in three orthogonal views of the brain (from left to right: sagittal, coronal and axial) depict areas of significant activation ($p<0.005$, $k>100$) in a one-tailed-t statistic contrasting MR signal increases. The color scale shows t-values to the right. a, c: 2->0-back= high WM load; b,d: 2->1-back= WM load increase; CTRL= controls; mTBI= mild TBI; msTBI= moderate-severe TBI. mTBI patients further activated bilateral prefrontal and left parietal regions. msTBI patients revealed greater activation than controls in frontal, parietal and limbic regions.

Krasovsky, T., Landa, J., Bar, O., Ahonniska-Assa, J., **Livny, A**., Tsarfaty, G., Silberg, T. Functional plasticity in the absence of structural change: Apraxia and body scheme disorder 10 years after childhood brain injury. Journal of Child Neurology. In press.

Grants

2016-2017 Monitoring brain changes following a traumatic brain injury in structure and functioning through clinical testing, neuropsychological, anatomic and functional MRI and EEG analysis; Principal-Investigator; Magneton Grant.

2015-2017 Neuromodulation of the pain inhibitory pathways: an fMRI and psychophysical study of the mechanism and treatment of central pain after spinal cord injury; Co-investigator; International Foundation for Research in Paraplegia.



Dr. Nicola Maggio, M.D., Ph.D.

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Sackler Faculty of Medicine

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The Role of Neuroinflammation and Neurocoagulation in the Pathophysiology of Neurological Disorders

Positions

Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Senior Neurologist and Neurophysiologist, Department of Neurology, Chaim Sheba Medical Center, Tel HaShomer

Research

Our research focuses on the understanding of the role of coagulation factors, as well as their interaction with neuroinflammation in the physiology and pathophysiology of the nervous system. We have recently discovered that thrombin, the factor that ignites the coagulation cascade, is synthesized in the brain and has a fundamental role in regulating synaptic plasticity. However, we have also shown that high concentrations of thrombin (that reach the brain upon haemorrhage) can cause seizures and epilepsy. Our research has contributed in designing novel compouds that are currently being tested in order to counteract the pathogenic actions of thrombin in the brain. We apply cutting-edge technologies including mouse genetic tools, behavioural analysis, electrophysiology and molecular and cellular biology.

Publications

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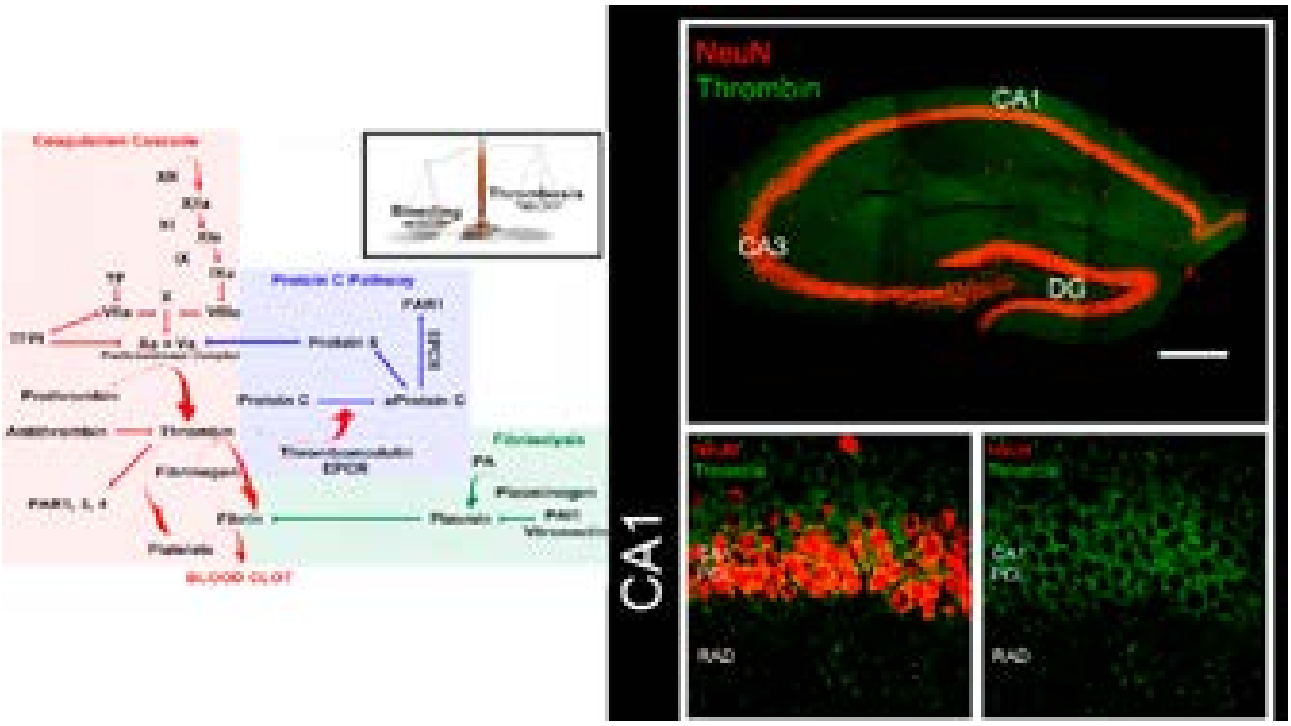

The coagulation pathways play fundamental roles in the physiology and pathophysiology of the nervous system. Immunofluorescence analysis reveals the expression pattern of thrombin in the hippocampus.

granule cells with hilar basal dendrites in mouse entorhino-hippocampal slice cultures. PLoS One; 7(11):e48500.

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Bushi D, Chapman J, Katzav A, Shavit-Stein E, Molshatzki N, **Maggio N,** Tanne D. (2013) Quantitative detection of thrombin activity in an ischemic stroke model. J Mol Neurosci. 51(3):844-50.

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Willems L.M., Zahn N., Hick M., Ferreirós N., Scholich K., **Maggio N.**, Deller T., Vlachos A. (2016) Sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor inhibition prevents denervation-induced dendritic atrophy. Acta Neuropathologica Communications. 4:28.

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Lenz M., Ben Shimon M., Vlachos A.* and **Maggio N.*** (2016) Pilocarpine- induced status epilepticus is associated with changes in the actin-modulating protein synaptopodin and alterations in long term potentiation in the mouse hippocampus. Neural Plasticity, accepted, in press. *Equal contributors and last authors.

Maggio N., Firer M., Zaid H., Bederovsky Y., Aboukaoud M., Gandelman-Marton R., Noyman I., Ekstein D., Blatt I., Marom E., Schwartzberg E., Israel S., Brautbar C., Ingber A., Eyal S. (2016) Causative drugs of Stevens Johnson syndrome and toxic epidermal necrolysis in Israel. Journal of Clinical Pharmacology, in press.

Grants

2016 – 2018 German Israeli Foundation (GIF), Role of Thrombin and Protease-Activated Receptor (PAR-1) in hyperexcitable neuronal networks: from seizures to maladaptive plasticity

2016-2018 Israeli Ministry of Economy – The Office of Chief Scientist – Kamin Grant Program, Development of novel peptides for the therapy of neuroinflammation

Prof. Shimon Rochkind, MD., Ph.D.

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Investigating Reconstruction of Peripheral and Central Nervous Systems Following Injury

Positions

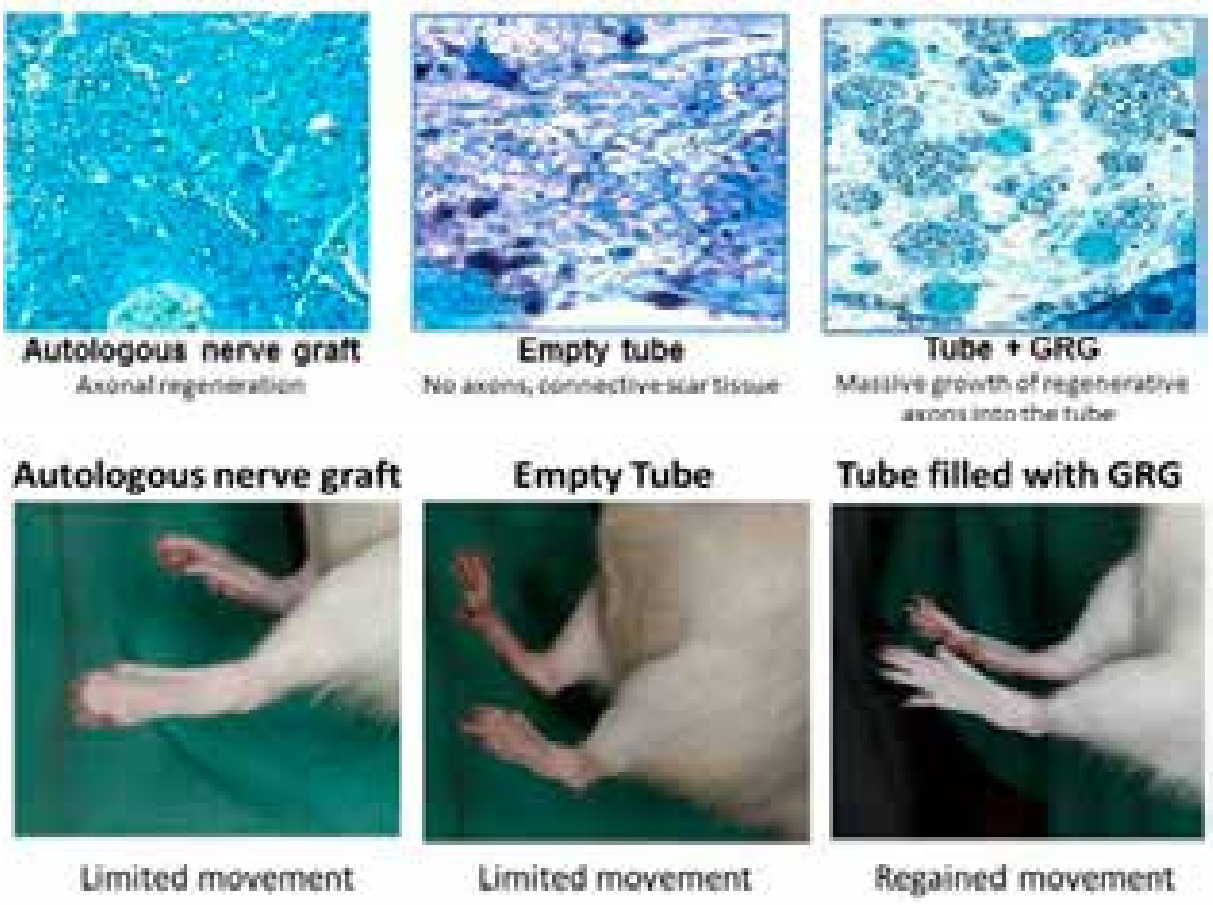
Associate Professor, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Director, Division of Peripheral Nerve Reconstruction, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center

Research

The research group is involved in projects targeting improvement in nerve reconstruction and rehabilitation from several aspects, aiming at the creation of innovative treatments to both peripheral nerve (PN) and spinal cord (SC) injuries. RCNR major projects include:

Creation of artificial nerve for nerve reconstruction using the innovative Guiding Regenerative Gel (GRG) to improve and accelerate regeneration of peripheral nerve injury (PNI) with massive defect. The GRG is a special milieu that was developed in collaboration with Prof. Zvi Nevo from Tel-Aviv University, Israel. The unique composition of GRG has recently been shown to be as efficient as autologous nerve graft, promoting axonal growth and sprouting without dependence on the addition of any external growth factors. In a short-term *in vivo* study it was shown that GRG loaded into a conduit promoted axonal sprouting of nerve cells and enabled the regeneration of a 15mm long nerve gap in rats,



which is not possible when bridging with an empty conduit (regeneration of up to 7mm). Therefore, the GRG allows a simpler procedure with less side effects, since its implantation does not involve other nerve origin, sensation loss or cosmetic defect as the "gold standard" treatment, therefore, GRG can provide a promising simple of the shelf solution for clinical use for complete PNI.

Based upon our encouraging results with the GRG, which shed light on the utilization of this innovative composite implant to bridge a gap, we postulate to improve this approach and attempt reconstruction of experimental complete SCI. Since astroglial scarring is one of the main obstacles for axonal growth and therefore spinal cord recovery, we have developed an Antigliotic Guiding Regenerative Gel (AGRG) which contains Guiding Regenerative Gel (GRG), and was proven to promote axonal sprouting and survival as well as antigliotic agents, which presented *in vitro* highly significant antigliotic activity, while reducing the amount of GAGs by more than 84%, thus inhibiting scar growth barrier formation in the site of injury.

The effect of laser phototherapy (low power laser irradiation) was explored on neuronal cells and peripheral nerve. In nerve cell cultures, laser irradiation significantly accelerated axonal sprouting (Rochkind et al., Lasers Surg Med, 2009). Animal studies in a model of incomplete peripheral nerve injury showed that laser phototherapy has an immediate protective effect, maintains functional activity of the injured nerve, decreases scar tissue formation at the injury site, decreases degeneration in corresponding motor neurons of the spinal cord and significantly increases axonal growth and myelinization. In a model of complete peripheral nerve injury with segmental loss, the laser-treated group showed more intensive axonal growth and morphological reconnection compared with the control group (Rochkind. Neurosurgical Focus, 2009). Recently, we found that in early stages of muscle atrophy, laser phototherapy may preserve the denervated muscle by maintaining creatine kinase activity and the amount of acetylcholine receptors. (Rochkind and Shainberg, Photomed Laser Surg, 2013). The current projects are intended to test and validate the beneficial effect of laser phototherapy on severely injured PN with a view to move forward to clinical study.

Publications

Rochkind S, Shainberg A. Muscle Response to Complete Peripheral Nerve Injury: Changes of Acetylcholine Receptor and Creatine Kinase Activity over Time. Journal of Reconstructive Microsurgery; doi: 10.1055/s-0037-1598619; 2017.

Mandelbaum-Livnat M.M, Almog M, Nissan M, Loeb E, **Rochkind S**. Photobiomodulation in Peripheral Nerve Injury with Aspect to Muscle Response. Photomedicine and Laser Surgery; 34(12):638-645; 2016.

Meyer C, Wrobel S, Raimondo S, **Rochkind S**, Heimann C, Shahar A, Ziv-Polat O, Geuna S, Grothe C, Haastert-Talini K. Peripheral Nerve Regeneration Through Hydrogel-Enriched Chitosan Conduits Containing Engineered Schwann Cells for Drug Delivery. Cell Transplantation; 25(1):159-82; 2016.

Regev GJ, Drexler M, Sever R, Dwyer T, Khashan M, Lidar Z, Salame K, **Rochkind S**. Neurolysis for the treatment of sciatic nerve palsy associated with total hip arthroplasty. The Bone & Joint Journal; 97-B(10):1345-9; 2015.

Shapira Y, Tolmasov M, Nissan M, Reider E, Koren A, Biron T, Bitan Y, Livnat M, Ronchi G, Geuna S, **Rochkind S**. Comparison of results between chitosan hollow tube and autologous nerve graft in reconstruction of peripheral nerve defect: An experimental study. Microsurgery; 36(8):664-671; 2015.

Rochkind S, Nevo Z. Recovery of peripheral nerve with massive loss defect by tissue engineered guiding regenerative gel. BioMedical Research International; 2014:327578; 2014.

Rochkind S, Strauss I, Shlitner Z, Graif M. Clinical Aspects of Ballistic Peripheral Nerve Injury: Shrapnel versus Gunshot. Acta Neurochirurgica; 156(8):1567-75; 2014.

Rochkind S, Shainberg A. Protective Effect of Laser Phototherapy on Acetylcholine Receptors and Creatine Kinase Activity in Denervated Muscle. Photomedicine and Laser Surgery; 31(10):499-504; 2013.

Rochkind S, Geuna S, Shainberg A. Phototherapy and Nerve Injury: Focus on Muscle Response. International Review of Neurobiology; 109:99-109; 2013.

Grothe C, Haastert-Talini K, Freier T, Navarro X, Dahlin LB, Salgado A, **Rochkind S**, Shahar A, Pinto LF, Hildebrandt M, Geuna S. BIOHYBRID: Biohybrid templates for peripheral nerve regeneration. Journal of the Peripheral Nervous System; 17(2):220-2; 2012.

Grants

2017-2018 The Colton Family Next Generation Technological Institute and The Miles Nadal institute for Technological Entrepreneurship, Advanced Reviving Matrix – Anti-Gliotic Guiding Regenerative Gel (AGRG) for Reconstruction of Severely Injured Spinal Cord.

2017-2019 German Israeli Foundation, Development of GRG advanced chitosan nerve guides – NerveMatrix.

2017-2018 Israeli Ministry of Defense, On-site treatment of crushed muscle due to prolonged pressure, aimed at decreasing damage extent and rapid regaining of physical competence.

2016-2017 Dr. Herman Schauder Memorial Endowment Fund, the Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University; Innovative Guiding Regenerative Gel (GRG) for Functional Recovery following Peripheral Nerve Injury with Massive Nerve Loss.

2016-2017 Israeli Ministry of Defense, Improvement and acceleration of muscle and nerve recovery after peripheral nerve injury.

2015-2018 Moxie Foundation, Treatment of Complete Spinal Cord Injury using Innovative Composite Implant containing Guiding Regenerative Gel (GRG).

Dr. Ariel Tankus, Ph.D.

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Sackler Faculty of Medicine

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The Neuronal Encoding of Human Speech

Positions

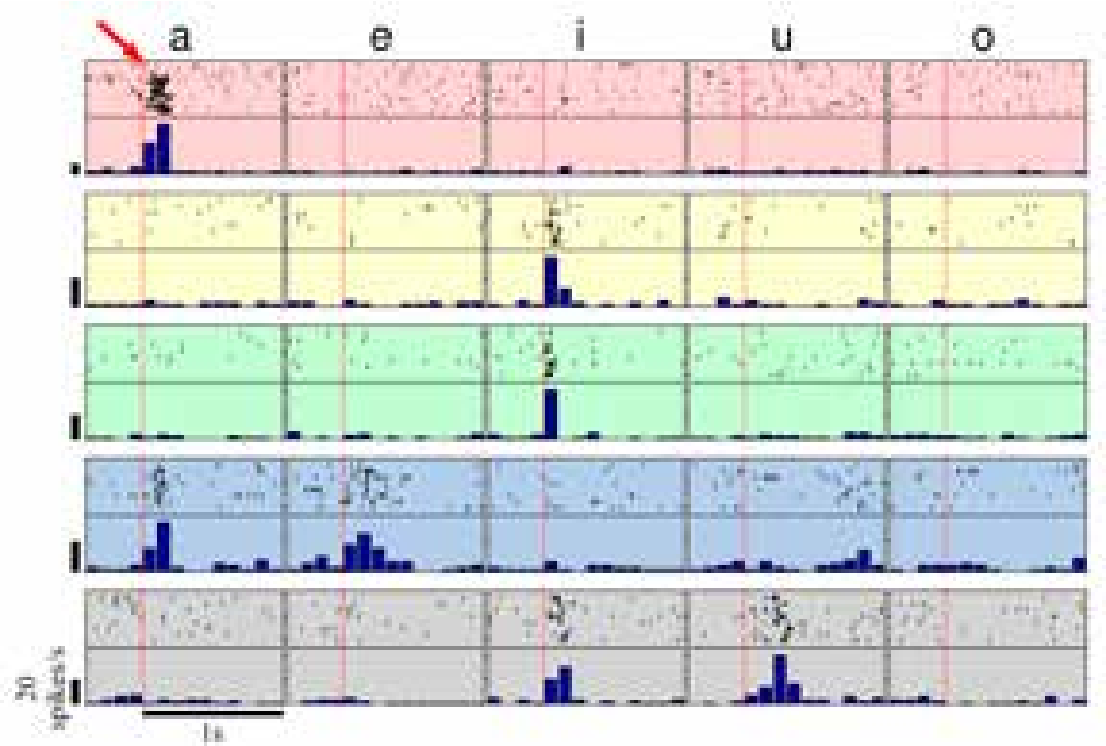
Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine and Sagol School of Neuroscience

Senior Researcher and Neurophysiologist, Functional Neurosurgery Unit, Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center ("Ichilov")

Research

We study the neuronal representation of speech production, perception and imagery in the human brain. We explore the acoustic, phonetic and phonological levels, and the deterioration in speech due to neurological disorders, for example in Parkinson's disease. Our main focus is the encoding of speech features by single neurons (for example, see Figure 1). We also aim to develop brain-machine interfaces for restoring speech faculties in completely paralyzed persons by decoding their neuronal activity (i.e., inferring speech contents solely from spiking activity).

We take advantage of a unique clinical "opportunity" to work with neurosurgical patients undergoing implantation of electrodes for clinical reasons. Experiments are conducted intra-operatively with awake patients with movement disorders or in the ward, with epilepsy patients. Understanding the neuronal representation of human speech is essential for understanding the underlying mechanisms of speech disorders, for the development of new



Medial–frontal units that we have discovered, with high specificity to vowels. Raster plots and peri-stimulus time histograms of five units (rows) during the articulation of the five vowels a, e, i, u and o (columns). The response of each unit is specific to one or two vowels only.
Red vertical dashed lines indicate speech onset. All vertical scale bars correspond to firing rates of 20 spikes/s (from: Tankus *et al.*, Nature Communications, 2012).

therapeutic procedures, and for restoration of the ability to speak. The research thus bears enormous potential to greatly improve the quality of life of millions of people around the globe.

Publications

T. Barsky, **A. Tankus**, and Y. Yeshurun: Classification of fingerprint images to real vs. spoof. *International Journal of Biometrics*, 4(1):1–21, 2012.

A. Tankus and I. Fried: Visuomotor Coordination and Motor Representation by Human Temporal Lobe Neurons. J*ournal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 24(3):600–610, 2012.

A. Tankus, I. Fried and S. Shoham: Sparse decoding of multiple spike trains for brain-machine interfaces. *Journal of Neural Engineering*. 9:054001, 2012.

A. Tankus, I. Fried and S. Shoham: Structured neuronal encoding and decoding of human speech features. *Nature Communications*, 3:1015, 2012.

R. Mecca, **A. Tankus**, A. Wetzler, and A.M. Bruckstein: A direct differential approach to photometric stereo with perspective viewing. *SIAM Journal on Imaging Sciences*, 7(2):579–612, 2014.

O. Perez, R. Mukamel, **A. Tankus**, Y. Yeshurun and I. Fried: Preconscious prediction of a driver's decision using intracranial recordings. *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience*, 27(8):1492–1502, 2015.

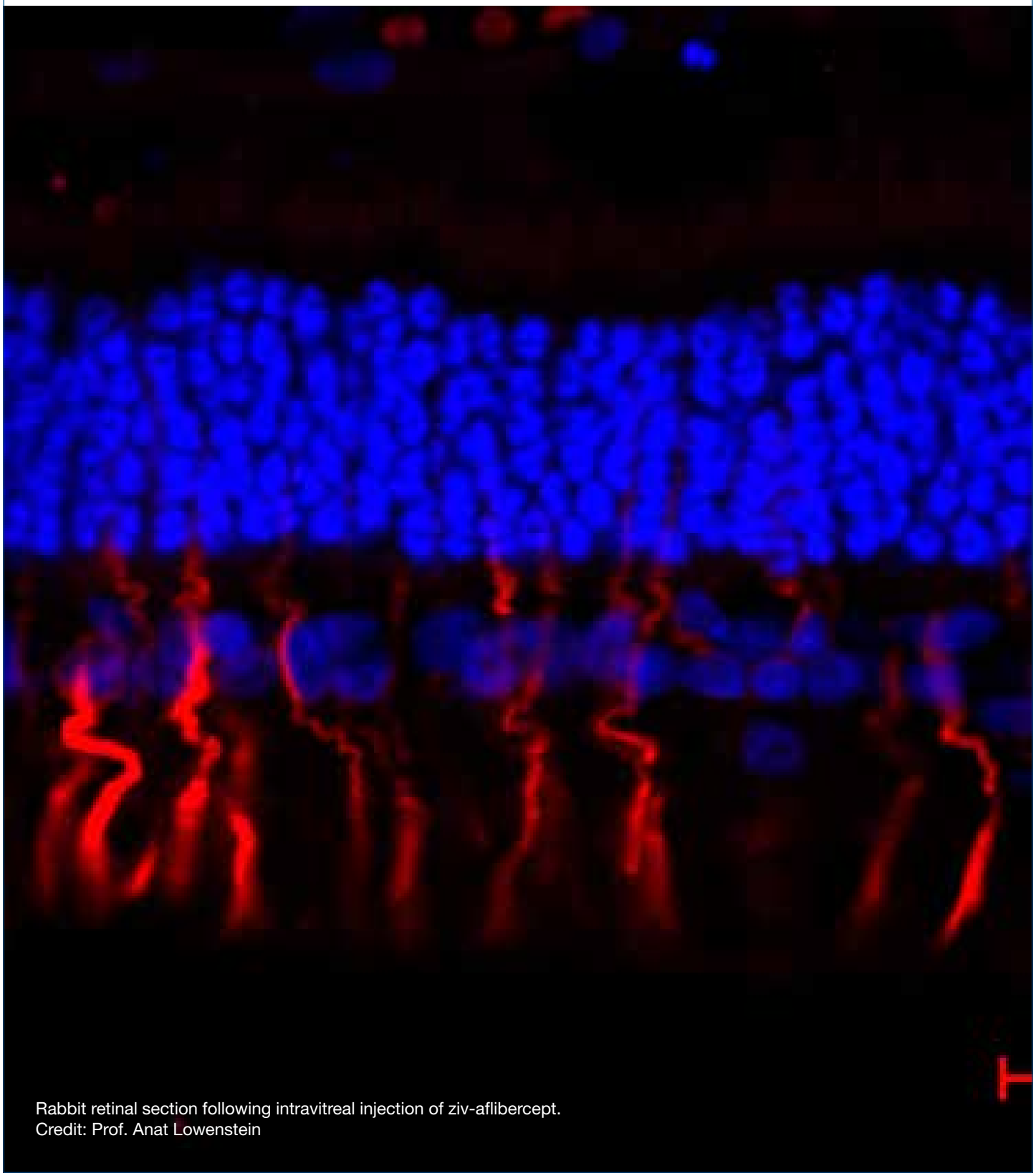
T. Iluz, A. Weiss, E. Gazit, **A. Tankus**, M. Brozgol, M. Dorfman, A. Mirelman, N. Giladi, J.M. Hausdorff: Can a body-fixed sensor reduce Heisenberg's uncertainty when it comes to the evaluation of mobility? Effects of aging and fall risk on transitions in daily living. *Journals of Gerontology: Medical Sciences*, 1–9, 2015.

Grants

2015 – 2017 Speech Representation at the Single Neuron Level in the Subthalamic Nucleus of Parkinson's Disease Patients, W. Schreiber Research Fund.

2016 – 2017 Phonetic and Phonological Representations by Single Neurons in the Human Subthalamic Nucleus and Their Impairment by Parkinson's Disease, The National Institute for Psychobiology in Israel.

Ophthalmology



Rabbit retinal section following intravitreal injection of ziv-aflibercept.
Credit: Prof. Anat Lowenstein

Prof. Anat Loewenstein, M.D.

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Investigating Age-Related Macular Edema and Diabetic Retinopathy

Positions

Professor of Ophthalmology, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Assistant Dean, Sackler Faculty of Medicine

Head, Department of Ophthalmology

Incumbent, Sydney A. Fox Chair in Ophthalmology

Editorial board member: *Retina*, *European Journal of* Ophthalmology, *Ophthalmologica*, *Graefes for Archives and Research in Ophthalmology*

Associate editor, *International Journal of Retina and Vitreous*

Editor in Chief, *Case Reports in Ophthalmology*

Chairperson, National Ethics Review Board Committee, State of Israel Ministry of Health

Board member, Israeli Council of Surgery and Anesthesia

Chair, Academia Ophthalmologica Internationalis

General Secretary of the Board, Euretina Society

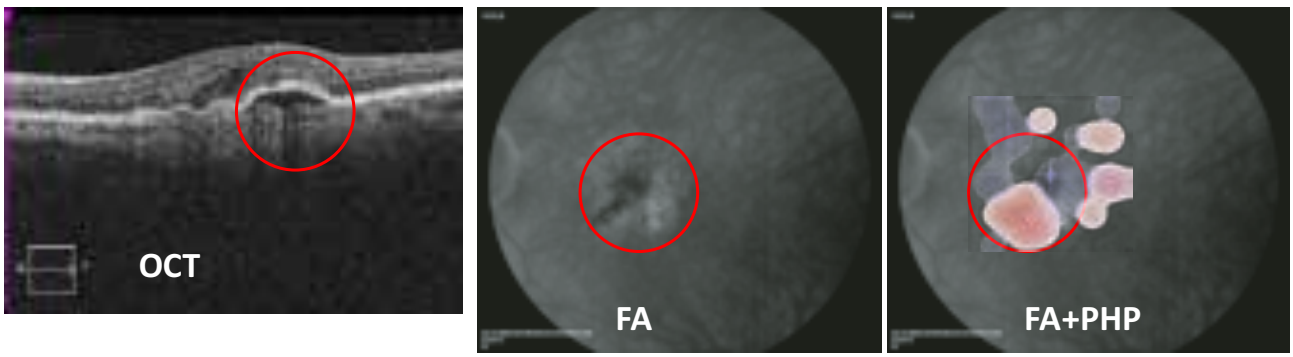
International Committee Member, Macula Society

Research

Prof. Loewenstein's main research area is early detection of macular degeneration, including development of novel technology, which is approved and used now in the USA, as well as development of automated techniques for interpretation of ophthalmic imaging. She has vast interest in toxicity to the retina of drugs. In addition, she is developing devices for slow release devices for drug administration in the retina. One of the latest toxicity studies was that of the toxicity of ziv aflibercept, a drug that can be potentially used for the treatment of ascular retinal disease was evaluated and shown to have local toxicity. This is one example of a toxicity study with significant clinical correlation.

Publications

Wolf S, Bandello F, **Loewenstein A**, Slakter J, Katz T, Sowade O, Korobelnik. Baseline Characteristics of the Fellow Eye in Patients with Neovascular Age-Related Macular Degeneration: Post Hoc Analysis of the VIEW Studies. Ophthalmologica. 2016; Jul 23. [Epub ahead of print



Retinal imaging (Optical coherence tomography- OCT and Fluorescein angiography- FA) of a very early neovascular macular degeneration lesion detected by the preferential hyperacuity perimetry technology developed for early detection of macular degeneration.

Chakravarthy U, Goldenberg D, Young G, Havilio M, Rafaeli O, Benyamini G, **Loewenstein A**. Automated Identification of Lesion Activity in Neovascular Age-Related Macular Degeneration. Ophthalmology. 2016;S0161-6420(16)30098-7.

de Carlo TE, Rosenblatt A, Goldestein M, Baumal CR, **Loewenstein A**, Duker JS. Vascularization of Irregular Retinal Pigment Epithelial Detachments in Chronic Serous Chorioretinopathy Evaluated with OCT Angiography. Ophthalmic Surg Laser Imaging Retina. 2016;47(2):128-33.

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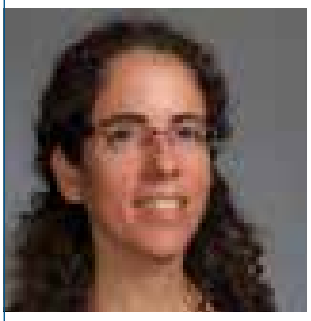

Dr. Ifat Sher, Ph.D.

Lab Manager & Senior Researcher

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Neurodegeneration in the Eye

Positions

Director, Electrophysiology Unit and Retinal Research Laboratory, Goldschleger Eye Institute, Sheba Medical Center, Tel Hashomer

Senior Lecturer, Sackler Faculty of Medicine, Tel Aviv University

Member, Sagol School of Neuroscience, Tel Aviv University

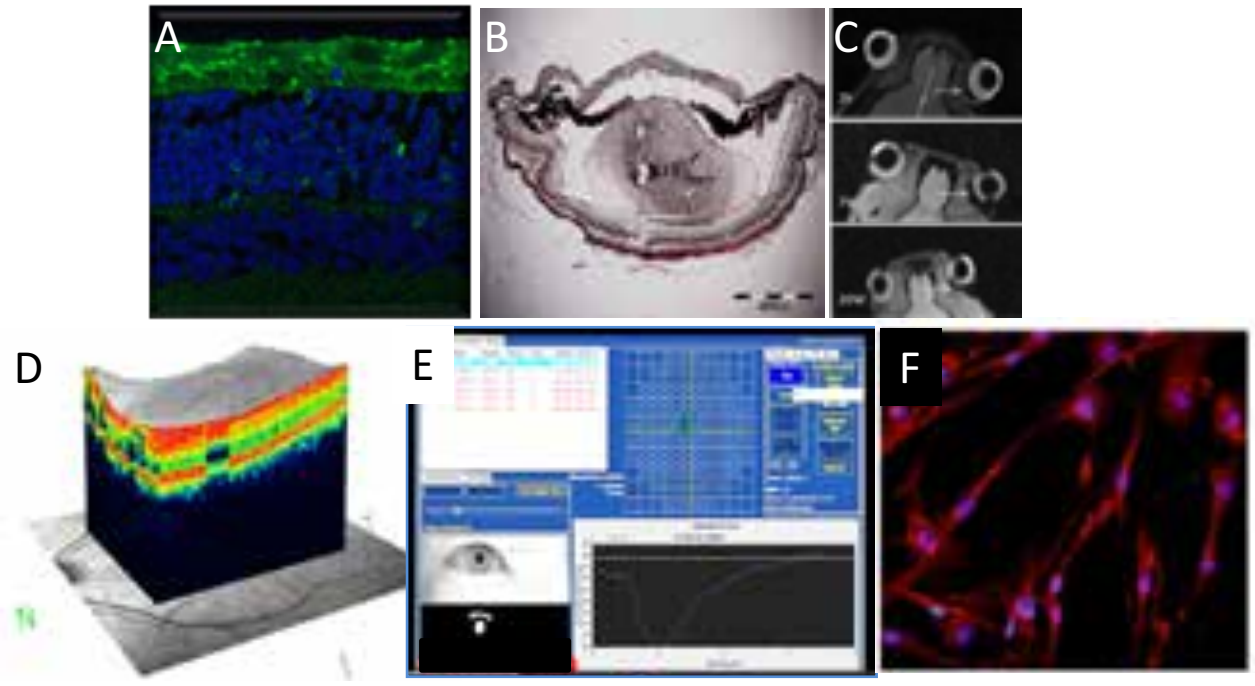
Chair, Association for Research in Vision & Ophthalmology (ARVO) Ethics and Regulations in Human Research Committee

Founder and Medical Director, Epitech-Mag Inc. Israel

Founder and Medical Director, EVERADS Inc. Israel

Medical Advisor, Accutome, Halma Inc. USA

Member, Sheba Medical Center Patent Committee



Immunofluorescence analysis (A), histopathology analysis (B) and MRI (C) for monitoring stem cell therapeutic effects in animal models. Multicolor OCT imaging (D) and chromatic multifocal pupilloperimetry (E) for objective structure & function clinical assessment. Nanotherapy for stem cell modulation (F).

Research

We lead basic science, translational medicine and clinical studies in an attempt to solve the unmet needs in neurodegenerative diseases in the eye and brain. The research focuses on clinical trials, basic science and translational medicine aimed at development of novel treatments and diagnostic tools for retinal degeneration and brain pathologies (such as Alzheimer disease and increased intracranial pressure) using a multidisciplinary approach in an attempt to discover treatments and develop drug delivery and diagnostic platforms for studying these leading incurable diseases.

Current research projects include:

- Development of novel treatments for neuroretinal degeneration
- Development of innovative diagnostic tools for macular, retinal degeneration and optic nerve diseases
- The eye as a window to the brain – using retinal structure and function measurements as novel early and objective biomarkers for brain neurodegeneration diseases (e.g. Alzheimer's disease and multiple sclerosis), brain injuries and brain tumors.

Publications

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Tzameret A, Sher I, Belkin M, Treves AJ, Meir A, Nagler A, Levkovitch-Verbin H, **Rotenstreich Y***, Solomon AS*. (* Equal contribution, corresponding authors) Epiretinal transplantation of human bone marrow mesenchymal stem cells rescues retinal and vision function in a rat model of retinal degeneration. Stem Cell Res. 2015;15(2):387-94.

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Grants

2015-2017 Drug delivery of advanced therapies into the posterior pole, Moxie Foundation

2015-2017 Microglia-targeted pharmacotherapy - a new therapeutic strategy for treating neuro-retinal degeneration, National Network of Excellence in Neuroscience, TEVA

2016-2017 A Novel Portable Chromatic Multifocal Pupillometer for objective triage & assessment of head injuries, Israel Defense Force Health Research Grant

2016-2017 Determination of Physical Parameters Relevant to Ophthalmic Lasers, Israel Defense Force Health Research Grant

2016-2018 The association between retinal and medial temporal lobe structure and function in people with high risk for Alzheimer disease National Network of Excellence in Neuroscience, Israeli Science Foundation (ISF)

2016-2018 Retinal structure and vasculature measures as novel objective biomarkers for Alzheimer diseases, National Network of Excellence in Neuroscience, TEVA

Public Health

Prof. Gabriel Chodick, Ph.D., MHA

Epidemiology & Preventive Medicine
School of Public Health

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Website: http://www2.tau.ac.il/Person/medicine/researcher.asp?id=adkdighde

Positions

Head, Epidemiology & Database Analysis Department, Maccabi Institute for Research & Innovation, Maccabi Healthcare Services

Associate Professor, Epidemiology & Preventive Medicine Division, School of Public Health, Tel Aviv University

Adjunct Investigator, Radiation Epidemiology Branch, Division of Epidemiology and Genetics, National Institute of Cancer, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda (MD), USA

Head, Academic Department of Public Health, Medical Division. Maccabi Healthcare Services

Research

Our primary research interests focuses on the use of Maccabi's large database to examine multiple dimensions of health care quality, including safety (e.g. adverse effects of IVF, renal effects of chronic medications), efficacy and effectiveness of healthcare technologies (e.g. glycemic control and outcomes in patients treated with new generation therapies for diabetes), medical and economic burden of chronic diseases and health events (e.g. congestive heart failure, hepatitis C infections) as well as pharmacoepidemiology studies such as medication adherence studies (e.g. tamoxifen in breasr cancer patients) and pleiotropic effects (e.g. statins). Our other interests include health effects of low dose ionizing radiation and specifically cancer and cataract.

Publications

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Cohen R, Senecky Y, Inbar D, **Chodick G**, Shalev V, Shuper A, Raz R. Prevalence of Epilepsy and Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder: A population-based study. Journal of Child Neurology 2013;28:120-123.

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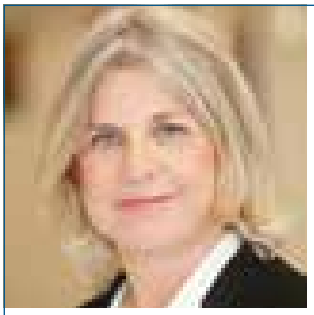
Grants

2016–2017	Co-PI, Israel Cancer Society, Adherence with breast cancer therapies
2016–2017	Co-PI, Israel Ins. Health Policy, Effectiveness of generic med
2016–2017	Co-PI, BSF, CT in testicular cancer



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Using Medical Databases for Personalized Medicine

Positions

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Research

The emergence of precision medicine technologies has allowed medical scientists to address complex questions which necessitate very large datasets and patients' numbers. Unlike traditional methods such as randomized trials, the richness of very large sets of data enables more rapid advance toward personalized medicine. At the Maccabi Institute for Research & Innovation, we utilize large real-world databases to investigate clinical issues for better provision of care and improved outcomes. In addition to traditional and pragmatical clinical trials, we condocut multiple observational analysis using advanced data platform to enable data science studies based on Maccabi's database of 2.5M members' medical files. One example for personalized medicine is our newly developed method for identifying individuals at increased risk of harboring colorectal cancer by analyzing their complete blood counts records. We have developed a computational model using a large derivation dataset of over 450 000 Israeli individuals and validated it on 2 separate and independent datasets of primary care patients, consisting of over 139 000 Israeli and over 25 500 UK individuals. Our approach applies novel methods both in feature generation (where we use a set of linear models to handle sparse and irregular measurements along time) and in model construction (where we combined 2 tree-based models – RF and Gradient Boosting). We showed that our approach can detect 50% of CRC cases 3–6 months before diagnosis at 88% specificity in the Israeli dataset and 94% specificity in the UK dataset. The system is already successfully implemented in routine practice at Maccabi.

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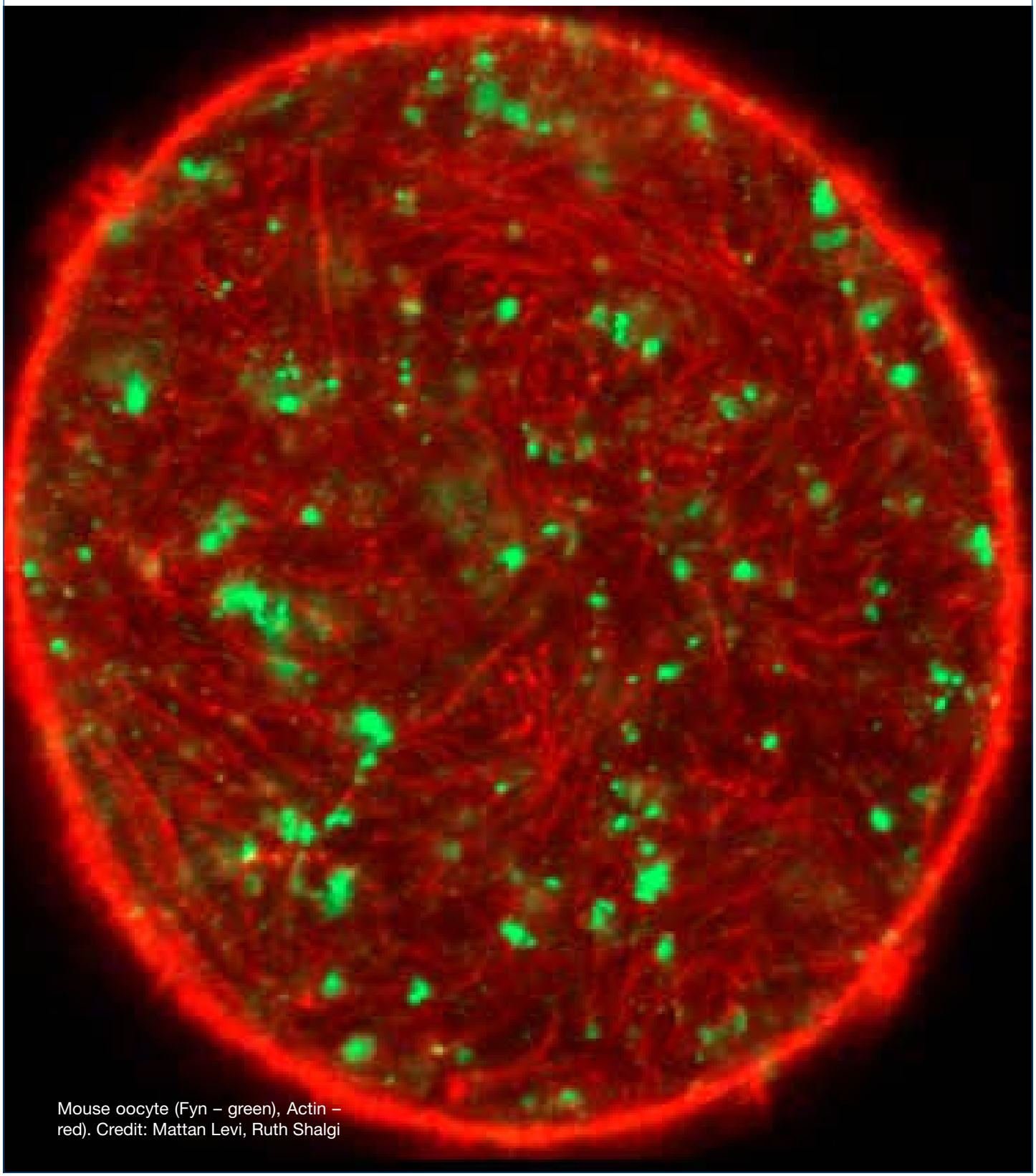
Reproduction



Mouse oocyte (Fyn – green), Actin – red). Credit: Mattan Levi, Ruth Shalgi

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Folliculogenesis and Ovulation in the Human Ovary – Fertility Treatments and Control

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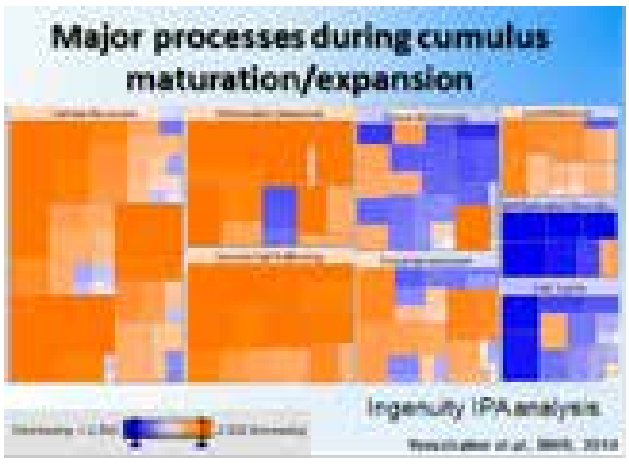
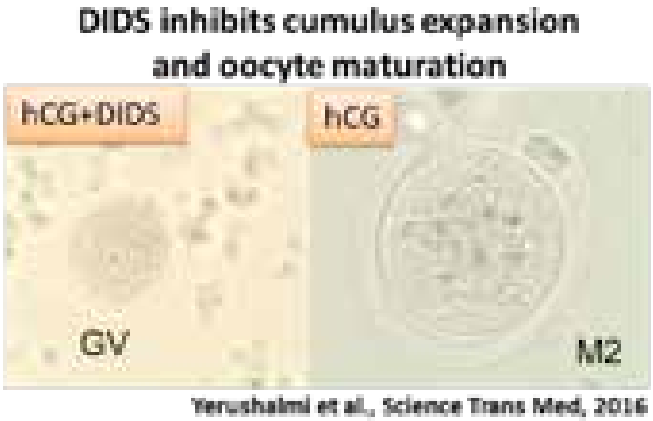
Research

Our laboratory's aim is the molecular characterization of the ovulatory cascade in the human ovary. We undertook to systematically identify novel ovulation-associated genes. Differentially expressed candidate genes (n = 1746) were identified by comparing the transcriptome of cumulus granulosa cells from compact pre-ovulatory germinal vesicle (GV) cumulus oocyte complexes with those of expanded post-ovulatory Metaphase II COCs. We assumed that differentially expressed genes likely serve as regulators of ovulation, cumulus expansion, and/or oocyte maturation. To complete the identification of factors involved in the ovulatory process, we generated a library of global miRNAs involved in this process, and by bioinformatics tools link the ovulatory miRNA library with the mRNA library. The bioinformatics analysis enables us to identify new regulatory mechanisms responsible for the oocyte maturation process and ovulation.

The resulting database provides unprecedented insight into the processes and pathways involved in follicular maturation and ovulation. This effort led us to identify and characterize several new genes involved in the human ovulatory process such as sFRP4, ADAMTS-1, Decorin and Lumican. Recently, prompted by the observation that prostaglandin transporter (PGT) constitutes a highly expressed peri-ovulatory transcript, we set out to investigate the physiological role of this key transporter protein in the ovulatory process. We were able to show that PGT is an indispensable mediator of ovulation, the inhibitors of which may constitute potential novel candidates for non-hormonal contraception (Science Translational Medicine, 2016).

These studies will contribute significantly to the understanding of the complex process of ovulation in





human which is central to the reproductive processes. The implications of improved understanding of this process may contribute to further development of strategies for in vitro maturation of oocytes and follicles, improve IVF success rates especially in difficult clinical conditions. Genes that their expression levels correlate with oocytes clinical outcome can be future markers for oocyte quality and selection. Elucidating new human ovulatory genes may contribute to our understanding of infertility conditions such as anovulation, and development of novel strategies for fertility control.

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Research

Our research center is specialized in fertility preservation. We have a fully equipped basic research laboratory, together with a large clinical database with a significant number of incoming patients. This makes our research center unique for high quality basic research with clinical relevancy. Our research focuses on:

- Ovarian follicle research and the biological clock.
- Cryopreservation / transplantation of ovarian tissue and IVF.
- The effects of toxic agents and chemotherapy on reproduction and gametes.
- Modalities and agents that protect the gametes and prevent toxic damage.
- Genetic injury to the gametes.
- Methods 6to detect cancer cells in tissue.
- Endometrial receptivity.
- Interpreting cancer patients' information regarding endocrine, reproductive and psychological effects.

Publications

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Stem Cells & Regenerative Medicine

An artist's view of how single-cell clones represented by a specific color emerge during kidney development, maintenance, and regeneration. Credit: Dekel Lab, Pediatric Stem Cell Research Institute, Sheba Medical Center.

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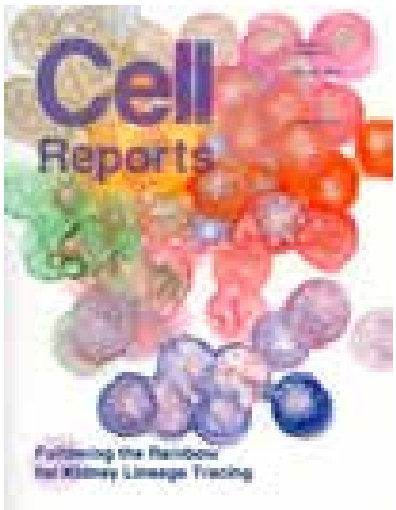
Member, American Society of Clinical Investigation

President, Israel Stem Cell Society



The cover illustration shows how single-cell clones emerge during development, maintenance, and repair to generate a multicolored kidney**.** *Dekel and colleagues* report that continued growth of the mammalian kidney in adulthood is performed by lineage-restricted clonal progeny that continuously add new epithelial cells to each segment of the kidney and are responsive to Wnt signaling. Lineage-restricted progenitors are also observed in development after renal epithelial induction and during acute renal injury. Rainbow mice, which express one of four alternative fluorescent reporters in each cell, allow genetic lineage tracing of individual clones.

Research

Our laboratory takes a multi-disciplinary approach including genetics, genomics, molecular biology, biochemistry, and the development of preclinical human-mouse models to cast light on fundamental problems of kidney developmental biology, tissue regeneration, and cancer; while, at the same time, holding promise for novel disease therapies. Our central hypothesis is that *normal and transformed tissue stem cells* drive these processes and therefore we aim to discover such cells and study their molecular mechanisms. In the field of human kidney development and pediatric renal cancer (Wilms tumor), we have pioneered the identification and isolation of normal and malignant renal stem/progenitor cells and have shown how these novel cell types are of relevance to human disease; on one hand utilization of the normal stem cells in tissue repair and regeneration and on the other hand development of targeted therapy against cancer stem cells and tumor eradication. These bench discoveries have been fundamental to translation to bedside; our approach for tumor stem cell eradication has already sparked a multicenter clinical trial for the treatment of patients with relapsing Wilms' tumors.

Publications

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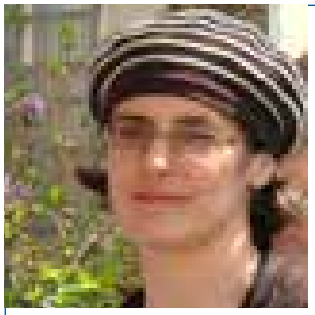

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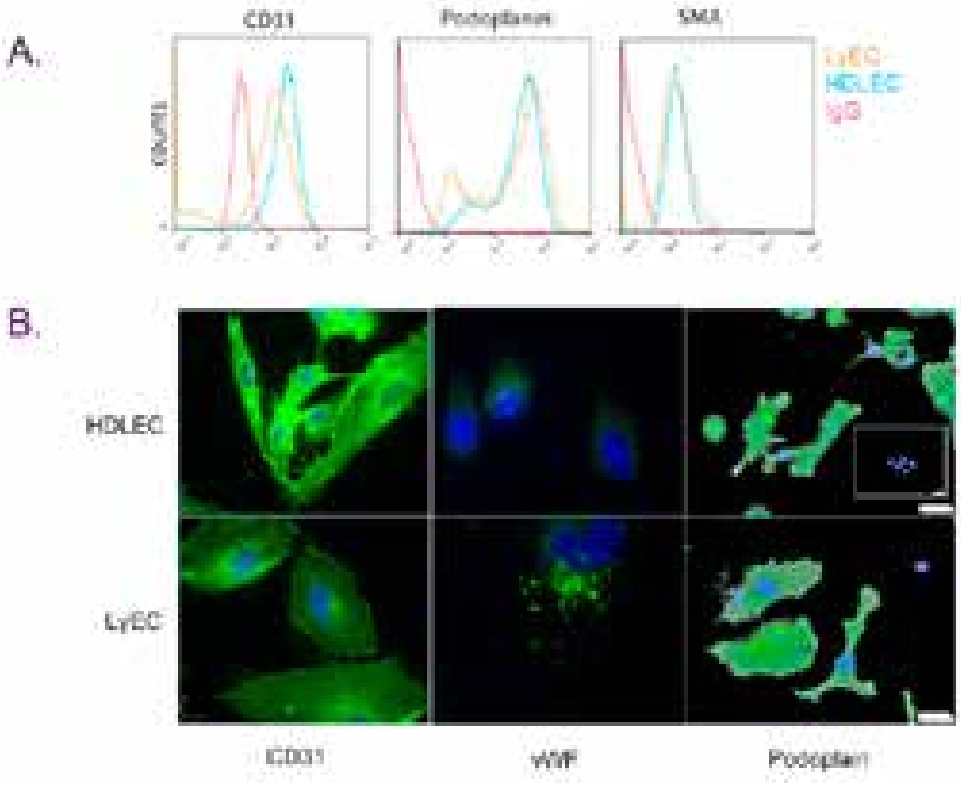
Research

We study skin diseases with a focus on angiogenesis and lymphangiogenesis. Deficiency in development or function of the vascular or lymphatic vasculature causes various anomalies in humans, and active angiogenesis and lymphangiogenesis play a significant role in tumor metastasis. The presence of vascular anomalies can cause emotional and social problems. Moreover, some malformations are painful or even life-endangering. Current treatments for these diseases do not achieve optimal results. The goal of my research is to isolate and characterize the endothelial cells, the major cellular component of the vascular malformations in order to develop targeted therapy for these lesions. We apply cutting-edge technologies including molecular biology, and microarray analysis to characterize the molecular paths that regulate the endothelium development. Other areas studied in the lab are editing in psoriasis and Cutaneous graft versus host disease



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hESCs in Development, Genetic Disorders and Cell Therapy

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Research

The Wolfe PGD-Stem Cell Lab focuses on studying issues related to early embryonic and developmental processes, genetic disorders and different aspects of cell therapy using our unique collection of PGD-derived human embryonic stem cells (hESCs).

We derive hESCs directly from affected embryos, which are obtained as a by-product of the preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) procedure. PGD is performed for couples at high risk of transmitting a genetic defect and who wish to ensure the birth of a healthy child. It requires in vitro fertilization (IVF), which makes the pre-implantation embryos available for biopsy and single-cell molecular analysis. Following IVF-PGD, embryos diagnosed as being disease-free are transferred into the uterus for implantation, whereas the affected embryos that would be otherwise discarded are used to establish hESC lines that carry the naturally inherited mutations. This setup provides the benefit of efficient coordination between the generously donated affected embryos and the stem cell lab that focuses on researching these very unique samples. By means of these capabilities, we have already established >50 mutant hESC lines associated with 18 different inherited disorders.

These lines make it possible for us to study the molecular and pathophysiological mechanisms underlying the genetic disease of which they were diagnosed. In addition, since we have a large collection of hESC lines derived under the same conditions, we are able to perform different studies on the pluripotent, genetic and epigenetic properties of these cells.

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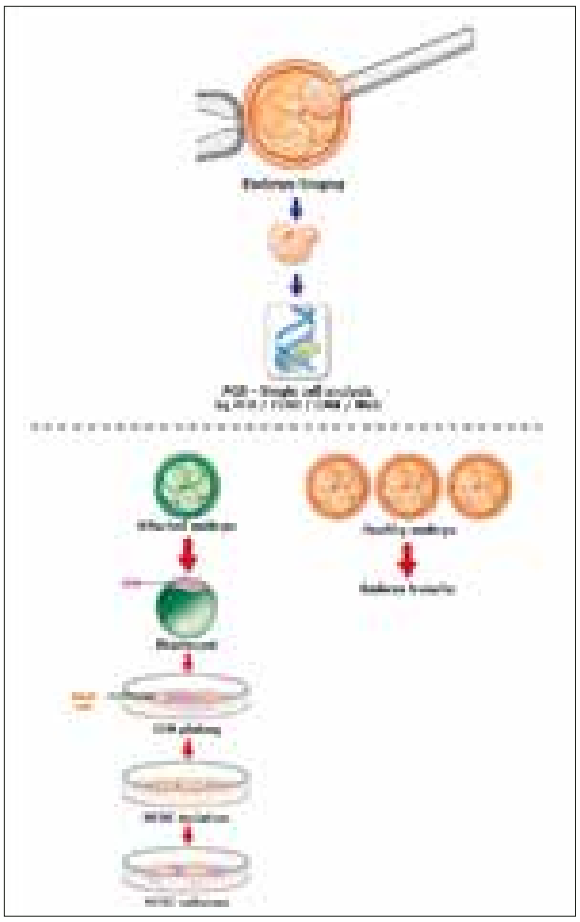

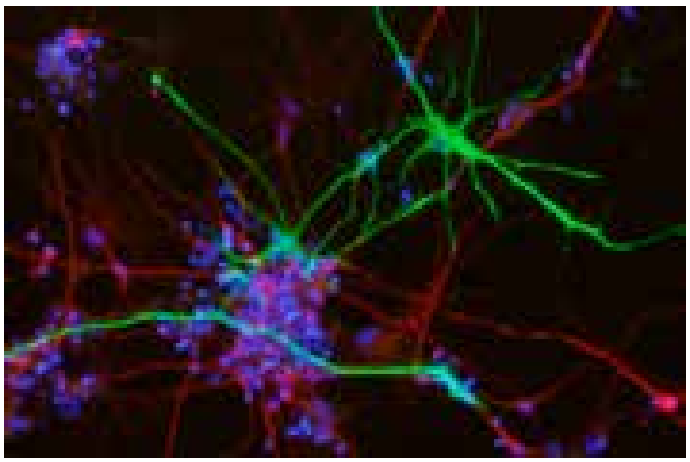

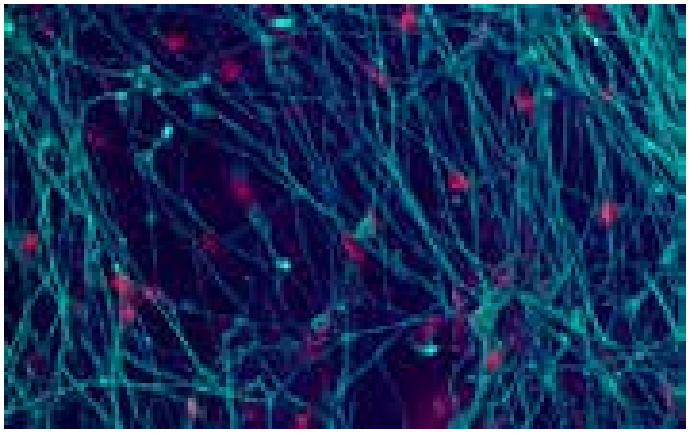

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Grants

2017-2018	Leo Mintz Faculty Grant
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2015-2017	Israel Cancer Research Foundation (ICRF)
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