



**Nominations for Appointment to the Grants Working Group (GWG)**

**APPOINTMENT OF CIRM BOARD PATIENT ADVOCATE OR NURSE MEMBERS**

**Yael Wyte, MSW**

Program and Education Manager  
Alzheimer’s Association, California Southland Chapter

Yael Wyte is the Program and Education Manager at Alzheimer’s Association, California Southland Chapter. She has served in this role since 2016, providing resources and education to families through care consultations, leading support groups for caregivers and PWDs, facilitating support group trainings with volunteers and staff, identifying and collaborating with community partners, and creating and leading adult learning models for first responders.

Yael earned her Master of Social Work from the Southern California and a Bachelor of Science degree in Speech-Language Pathology from University of Arizona. Since her MSW, she has worked in various capacities to promote education and support related to caring for the elderly and those with Alzheimer’s. A Global Trainee at Warner Brothers, she established an Elder Care Awareness program for employees. At Leeza’s Care Connection at Olympia Medical Center, she directed a free resource and support center for caregivers and their loved ones. At Alzheimer’s Greater Los Angeles, she oversaw Memories in the Making (MIM), a fine arts program for people with Alzheimer’s disease or other dementias that allows them an opportunity to communicate non-verbal way through art. At Silverado Senior Living, among other accomplishments, she launched a new independent living floor and created a unique social outing program for PWD still living at home. She has also been working with Hilarity for Charity, leading monthly caregiver support groups.

**REAPPOINTMENTS**

CIRM is seeking the reappointment of the individuals listed in the table below. Their updated biographies follow.

**Proposed Reappointments to GWG**

Last	First	Term	Years	Expertise
Cheng	Linzhao	2	2	Stem Cell Models for Hematopoiesis and Blood Diseases; Gene Editing
Cicchetti	Francesca	3	6	Neurodegenerative Disorders, Animal Models, Biomarkers, Immunology, Cell Transplantation
Meissner	Alexander	3	6	Stem Cell Biology; Epigenetic and Cellular Reprogramming
Pollack	Seth	2	4	Oncology; Immunotherapy for Sarcoma; Adoptive T-Cell Therapy

**Linzhao Cheng, PhD**

Linzhao Cheng, PhD, the Edythe Harris Lucas and Clara Lucas Lynn Professor of Hematology, is a professor of medicine, oncology and gynecology/obstetrics. He is a founding member of the Stem Cell Program in the Institute for Cell Engineering, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Dr. Cheng is also the associate director for basic research in the Division of Hematology and a member of the Johns

Hopkins Kimmel Cancer Center. Cheng received his Ph.D. in molecular biology and genetics from The Johns Hopkins University in 1991 and joined its faculty in 1999.

While a doctoral student, Dr. Cheng worked on human DNA replication models and transcriptional factors, including one of the first two DNA-binding proteins from mammalian cells (NF- $\kappa$ B/CTF). He initiated his stem cell research career as a postdoctoral fellow, helping establish mouse pluripotent stem cell lines from primordial germ cells, a landmark study published in *Nature* in 1992. Since 1994, his research has focused on human stem cell biology and cell engineering. Dr. Cheng led groups within the industry and at Johns Hopkins and has published more than 78 original research papers, including those in *Nature Biotechnology*, *Nature Medicine*, *Nature Genetics*, *Cell*, *Stem Cell*, *Blood*, and *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. His lab is currently focused on using human stem cells for blood disease modeling and treatment.

Dr. Cheng's involvement in stem cell research has included investigations at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), in the biotech industry, and as a faculty member at Johns Hopkins. He was the recipient of the USA Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers in 2003. In 2012, Dr. Cheng was elected as a fellow of American Association for Advancement of Sciences (AAAS). Dr. Cheng also received an award in 2004 from National Natural Sciences Foundation of China (NSFC) to promote international collaborations. He has served frequently as a reviewer/adviser for granting agencies including the NIH, NSF (USA), Cancer Research UK, Canada FFI, Swiss NSF, NSFC, and STCSM (Shanghai) and as an editorial board member for *Stem Cells (USA)*, *Regenerative Medicine (UK)*, and *Cell Research (China)*. Dr. Cheng is a member of the International Affairs Committee for the International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR), the Stem Cell Policy and Ethics (SCoPE) Program at The Johns Hopkins University, and the (international) Hinxton Group focusing on stem cell policies and ethics. Dr. Cheng has served as a GWG member for 6 years.

#### **Francesca Cicchetti, PhD**

Dr. Francesca Cicchetti is a professor in the department of psychiatry and neurosciences at the Faculty of Medicine at Université Laval, a researcher at the CRCHU de Québec and a fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. Dr. Cicchetti's research work aims to understand the cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying the development of neurodegenerative diseases with the goal to identify novel therapeutic targets. Her interests combine fundamental and clinical research and as such, a number of her discoveries have led to patents and are now being considered for clinical trials. Aware of the societal impact of these disorders, Dr. Cicchetti is actively involved in disseminating scientific breakthroughs to the general public via various media whom solicit her expertise, in organizing patient outreach activities or by participating to fundraising events.

Dr. Cicchetti obtained her PhD in neurobiology at Université Laval in Québec (Canada) in 1998. In 2002, she completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School in the field of cell replacement therapy for neurodegenerative disorders. She is now professor at the department of Psychiatry & Neurosciences, Faculty of Medicine of Université Laval in Québec. Dr. Cicchetti has published over 130 manuscripts in various high impact journals including in PNAS, Annals of Neurology, Acta Neuropathologica, Trends in Pharmacology, Brain. She has received numerous awards and distinctions including the Canadian Institute of Health Research New Investigator Award (2007-2012), the Fonds de Recherche en Santé du Québec (FRSQ) Junior Research Award (2003-2006 and 2006-2007), Young Investigator Award from NARSAD (2006) and Parkinson Society Canada (2002), the National Researcher award from FRQS (2014-2017) more recently followed by an FRQS research Chair (2017-2021). Three of her publications (2014, 2015, 2016) have been awarded most influential papers in the field of Huntington's disease. She is an active member of several scientific committees and editorial boards.

Dr. Cicchetti has served as a GWG member for 8 years. She has reviewed for Clinical and Discovery program awards.

### **Alexander Meissner, PhD**

Alexander Meissner studied *Medical Biotechnology* at the Technical University Berlin before starting his PhD studies with Rudolf Jaenisch at the Whitehead Institute/MIT in 2002. He completed his PhD in 2006 and spent the next year and a half working with Rudolf Jaenisch and Eric Lander before starting his own lab as an assistant professor in the Department of Stem Cell and Regenerative Biology at Harvard University and as an associate member of the Broad Institute in 2008. He was promoted to associate professor in 2012 and full professor with tenure in 2015. In 2017 he has been appointed as Director and Head of the Department of Genome regulation at the Max Planck Institute for Molecular Genetics.

Dr. Meissner's laboratory develops and uses genomic tools with a particular focus on epigenetic regulation. The term epigenetic refers to stable modifications of the chromatin and DNA that do not alter the primary nucleotide sequence. The global epigenetic makeup of a cell is a powerful indicator of its developmental state and potential. His laboratory applies next generation sequencing technologies to study the epigenome in stem cells, early development and cancer.

Dr. Meissner has published over 190 papers in peer-reviewed journals including Nature, Nature Genetics, Nature Biotechnology, Cell, Cell Stem Cell and Developmental Cell (h-index 104). He is on several advisory boards and co-founded Harbinger Health.

Dr. Meissner has served as a GWG member for 13 years. He has reviewed for Discovery program awards.

### **Seth Pollack, MD**

Dr. Seth Pollack, MD is an expert sarcoma specialist serving as the Director of the Sarcoma Program at the Lurie Cancer Center and the Steven T. Rosen Professor of Cancer Biology at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University. As a physician-scientist, he is developing novel immunotherapies for patients with advanced sarcoma and leveraging unique features of sarcoma immunobiology to improve immunotherapy for all patients with cancer. His work targeting the cancer-specific protein NY-ESO-1 using adoptive cellular therapies and vaccines has led to important breakthroughs in our understanding of the sarcoma immune microenvironment. He has led multiple, important, early-stage sarcoma immunotherapy trials and his publications have helped to shape the current state of sarcoma clinical care. He is currently collaborating with veterinarians and organizations like the Canine Cancer Alliance ( <https://www.ccralliance.org> ) to try and learn lessons that might be applicable to humans from pet dogs who naturally develop sarcoma. Our lab website is: <https://sites.northwestern.edu/thepollacklab/>

As a clinician and sarcoma expert, he has chaired sessions at the annual meetings of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), the Japanese Society for Medical Oncology (JSMO), the Connective Tissue Oncology Society (CTOS) and the British Sarcoma Group. Some of his awards have included the V Foundation Translational Award, the Alliance for Cancer Gene therapy, grants from the Sarcoma Foundation of America and the SARC Career Development Award. His research is funded by the National Institutes of Health and the Department of Defense. He has twice been featured in the widely followed audio/cd/podcast series Research-to-Practice and he was lead author of the invited review on sarcoma immunotherapy for the Journal of Clinical Oncology. He is on the National Leiomyosarcoma Foundation Executive Committee and sits on the NCCN guidelines panels for both soft tissue sarcomas and gastrointestinal stromal tumors. During his 12 years treating patients with sarcoma at the University of Washington and Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, he received the Sig Kohl Legacy award from the Northwest Sarcoma Foundation for an "outstanding and enduring contribution to the care of sarcoma patients in the Northwest." He is thrilled to be living in Chicago and serving at the Lurie Cancer Center.

Dr. Pollack has served as a GWG member for 6 years. He has reviewed for Clinical program awards.