



Break Through Cancer, A New Research Consortium, Names First Class of Scientists Designated as Catalysts for Innovation and Collaboration

Highly skilled professional scientists at partner institutes will spur development of novel approaches to understanding cancer and developing new treatment strategies

(CAMBRIDGE, MASS.) APRIL 25, 2023 – Break Through Cancer, a foundation designed to find new solutions to some of the most intractable challenges in cancer, has named four individuals as *Break Through Cancer Scientists*—Neelkanth Bardhan, Sreyashi Basu, Paola A. Guerrero, and Thomas R. Pisanic II. They are professional scientists who cooperate on and lead projects with the skills, knowledge, and insights to maximize the impact of the cross-institutional collaboration.

The *Break Through Cancer Scientists* were carefully selected based on their expertise in early diagnostics, single-cell genomics data and materials science, and specific types of cancer. They will work together with the TeamLabs, a coalition of researchers and physicians from the five institutional partners, to look beyond conventional therapies.

“We have identified a cadre of professional scientists who are leaders in their field and play an invaluable role in our research portfolio,” said Tyler Jacks, president of Break Through Cancer. “These newly named *Break Through Cancer Scientists* have cultivated stellar reputations and demonstrated outstanding success in working across scientific disciplines to establish a collaborative environment. We are excited to add each of them to our team.”

The first *Break Through Cancer Scientists* are:



Neelkanth (Neel) Bardhan, PhD

Based at MIT’s Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research, Neel works with the [Intercepting Ovarian Cancer](#) TeamLab, helping design an optical imaging system for highly sensitive detection of early precursor lesions in ovarian cancer. A scientific innovator, his previous research has already led to three U.S. patents issued and numerous pending patent applications.



Sreyashi Basu, PhD

A Research Group Leader at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center's Immunotherapy Platform, Sreyashi is a member of the [Revolutionizing GBM Drug Development](#) TeamLab. Currently focusing on immunogenomic profiling as a way to identify immune cell changes in response to therapy and predictive biomarkers of therapeutic benefit, Sreyashi's group previously identified CD73+ immunosuppressive myeloid cells as a resistance mechanism to immune checkpoint therapy in GBM.



Paola A. Guerrero, PhD

A Research Group Leader at MD Anderson's Pancreatic Cancer Research Center, Paola leads innovative research on patient-derived models and biospecimens. Now working with the [Conquering KRAS in Pancreatic Cancer](#) and [Demystifying Pancreatic Cancer Therapies](#) TeamLabs, Paola previously showed that limited biopsies can capture a full range of key cell types; and she identified mechanisms that may enable immune evasion in the tumor microenvironment.



Thomas R. Pisanic II, PhD

An Associate Research Professor at The Institute for NanoBioTechnology and The Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins, Tom has two decades' experience in developing new clinical diagnostic approaches, including molecular diagnostic assays for early, noninvasive detection of cancer. Now engaged with the [Intercepting Ovarian Cancer](#) TeamLab, Tom is applying his background in cancer epigenetics to explore how epigenetic alterations contribute to the progression of the precursor lesions of the fallopian tube that later lead to ovarian cancer.

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About Break *Through* Cancer

Founded in 2021, Break *Through* Cancer empowers outstanding researchers and physicians to both intercept and find cures for several of the deadliest cancers by stimulating radical collaboration among outstanding cancer research institutions, including Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Sidney Kimmel Comprehensive Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, MIT's Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research, and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Break *Through* Cancer is looking beyond conventional therapies, utilizing new strategies, structures, and thinking from across disciplines to accelerate the pace of discovery.

Break *Through* Cancer is led by Tyler Jacks, Ph.D., founding director of MIT's Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research, the David H. Koch (1962) Professor of Biology, and Co-director of the Ludwig Center at MIT. The Foundation is supported by a board that includes leaders from each of the five Break *Through* Cancer partner institutions and by a Scientific Advisory Board

made of cancer experts from around the country. The Foundation was launched with an extraordinary challenge pledge of \$250 million from Mr. and Mrs. William H. Goodwin, Jr. and their family, and the estate of William Hunter Goodwin III. However, this is a fraction of the funding and resources that are needed to solve the complex problems the cancer community faces. We will need the support and creative minds from across the public and private ecosystem to make this happen. We are just getting started.

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