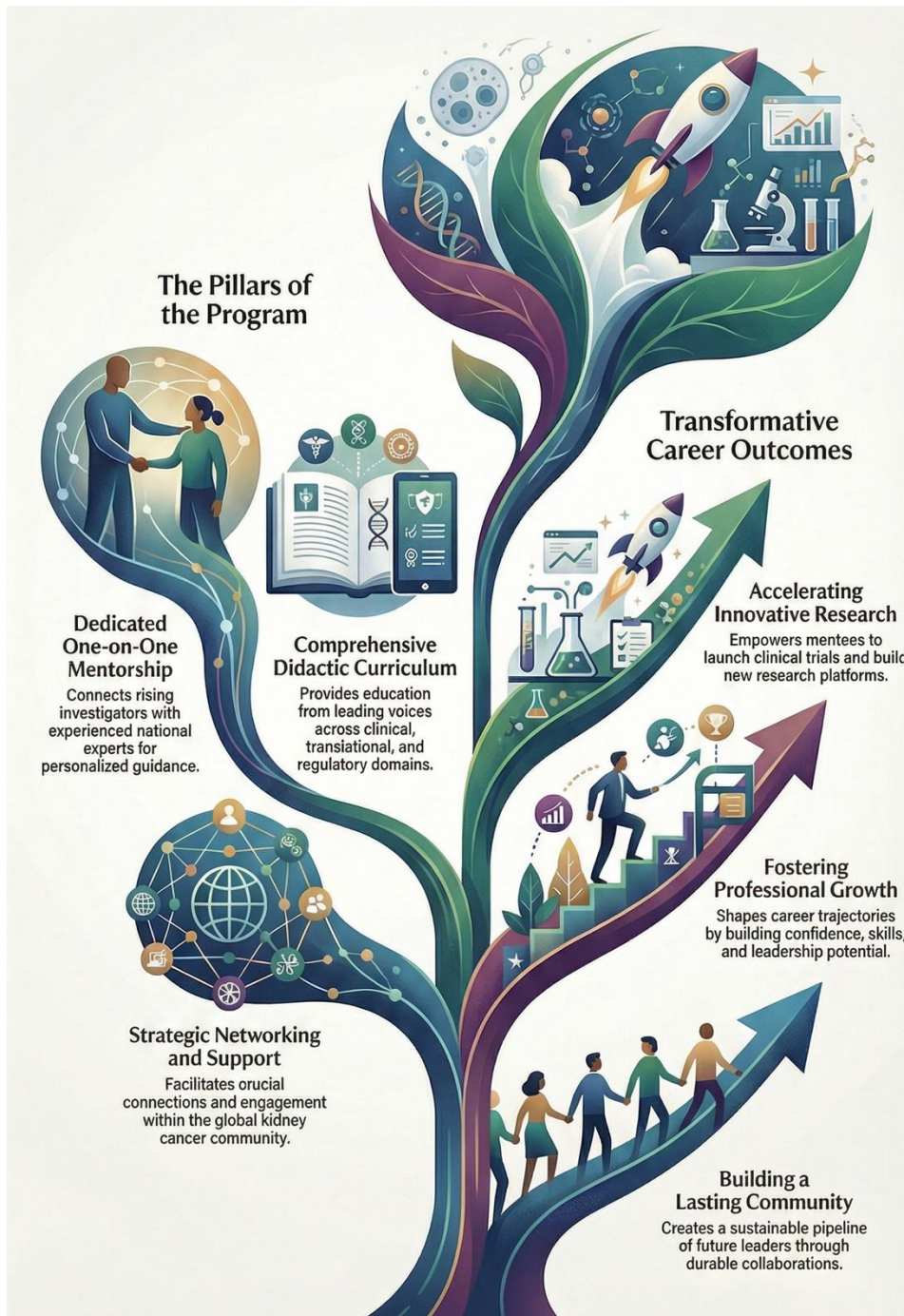




Mentorship Academy



2025 Annual Report

I. Executive Summary

The Kidney Cancer Association Mentorship Academy (KCAMA) completed its inaugural year from **November 2024 (IKCSNA24 in Louisville)** through **November 2025 (IKCSNA25 in Denver)**. The program was created to cultivate a sustainable pipeline of kidney cancer clinical trialists, translational scientists, and academic leaders through structured mentorship, didactic education, targeted research support, and facilitated engagement with national experts.

Survey results from 17 participants underscore KCAMA’s exceptional early impact:

- **100%** reported the program is an effective format for mentee career development.
- **100%** found mentor–mentee interactions meaningful or extremely meaningful.
- **>85%** rated the sessions as extremely or very useful for career development.
- Testimonials describe the program as “transformative,” “extremely well organized,” and “one of the most meaningful professional communities” respondents have been part of.

KCAMA’s inaugural cohort produced investigator-initiated trials, translational research platforms, grant submissions and early awards, multi-institution collaborations, and national presentations—clear indicators of the Academy’s value.



II. Introduction to the KCAMA Program

KCAMA was launched to address a critical gap in the kidney cancer ecosystem: the need for structured, high-quality development of rising investigators capable of shaping future clinical trials, translational studies, and multidisciplinary patient care. The program provides:

1. One-on-one mentorship from experienced RCC leaders.
2. A comprehensive didactic curriculum spanning clinical, translational, statistical, regulatory, and patient-centered domains.
3. Peer networking across institutions and disciplines.
4. Financial support to broaden exposure to major meetings, workshops, and institutional collaborations.
5. A structured yet flexible framework that adapts to mentee goals.

Survey respondents summarized the program's added value succinctly:

- "Gives early career investigators the support and insight needed to accelerate progress."
- "Connects young investigators across multiple institutions."

LIST OF 2025 KCAMA MENTORS

- Eric Singer – OSU
- Brian Rini – Vanderbilt
- Sarah Psutka – University of Washington
- Sumanta Pal – City of Hope
- Dan George – Duke University
- Eric Jonasch – MD Anderson
- Brad Leibovich – Mayo Clinic
- Walt Stadler – City of Hope
- Pavlos Msaouel – MD Anderson
- Jose Karam – MD Anderson
- Brian Shuch – UCLA
- Tian Zhang – UT Southwestern
- Nizar Tannir - MD Anderson
- Chad Tang – MD Anderson
- Raquibul Hannan – UTSW
- Jim Brugarolas – UTSW

Program Co-Chairs



Eric A. Singer, MD, MA,
MS, FACS, FASCO



Sumanta K. Pal, MD,
FASCO



Tian Zhang, MD,
MHS



Brian M. Shuch, MD

KCAMA also inaugurated the **Dr. Nizar Tannir Rare Kidney Cancer Scholar Program**, providing intensive development for investigators focused on rare RCC histologies. This program was generously supported by a private endowment established by Dr. Nizar Tannir.

III. In-Person Program Activities Summary (Louisville & Denver Meetings)

The KCAMA year was anchored by two in-person meetings held in conjunction with the International Kidney Cancer Symposium—North America (IKCSNA). These meetings, in **Louisville (November 2024)** and **Denver (November 2025)**, served as the bookends of the program and created the structural and cultural foundation for mentorship, scientific development, and community-building.

Program Launch in Louisville (Nov 2024)

The Louisville Kick-Off Meeting introduced the inaugural KCAMA cohort to mentors, program leadership, and the broader kidney cancer community. The two-day session created a shared understanding of expectations, provided early didactic instruction, and initiated the first round of scientific exchange between mentees and experts.

Mentees delivered introductory presentations outlining their career trajectories, preliminary ideas for investigator-initiated trials, and areas of scientific interest. Senior faculty led discussions on clinical research careers, lessons from trial successes and failures, regulatory considerations, and practical aspects of academic progression. We had a guest lecture from Dr. Richard Schilsky, MD, on the ASCO-sponsored TAPUR study. Additional sessions brought in perspectives from industry including Dharanija Rao, PhD, from Pfizer on clinical research from the industry perspective, and academic publishing partners with guest speakers from MDPI, reinforcing the multidisciplinary nature of modern oncologic research.

“I wished I had a program like this as a junior faculty. The guidance and support the mentors are able to give the mentees will likely have a transformative effect on their careers.” - Eric Jonasch, MD

Equally important, the Louisville meeting fostered early cohesion among mentees and mentors through structured discussion and informal networking. By the end of the meeting, each mentee had an initial development plan, clarity around year-long expectations, and an established connection with the national RCC research community. This meeting set the tone for a mentorship environment described by survey respondents as meaningful, accessible, and foundational to their scientific and professional growth.

Program Culmination in Denver (Nov 2025)

The Denver meeting served as the program’s culmination and transition point. One year after their introductory presentations in Louisville, mentees returned to deliver comprehensive summaries of their research, trial development, and academic progress. These final presentations showcased measurable achievements—clinical protocols refined or activated, translational platforms built, grant submissions completed, and multi-institution collaborations established.

Denver also provided a venue for mentees to participate in high-level scientific sessions, regulatory and trial operations discussions, and focused networking with national faculty and industry representatives. The integration of KCAMA activities within the broader IKCSNA meeting ensured that mentees were not only presenting their work but also embedding themselves in the dialogues that shape the kidney cancer research agenda.

A key component of the Denver session was the introduction of the **2026 KCAMA cohort**, allowing graduating mentees to share insights and serving as a natural handoff between program generations. This continuity strengthens the KCAMA community and reflects the program’s long-term vision for building a sustained pipeline of RCC investigators. Across both in-person meetings, mentees consistently highlighted the value of face-to-face mentorship, the opportunity to receive candid and practical guidance, and the ability to form lasting professional relationships. Survey feedback reinforced this impact, with 100% of respondents reporting that the meetings effectively fostered meaningful mentor-mentee interactions and provided transformative networking experiences.

Together, the Louisville and Denver meetings provided the structural framework for KCAMA’s inaugural year: orientation and goal-setting at the outset, and accountability, scientific maturation, and community integration at the conclusion.

“The KCAMA program has been transformative for me as an early-career investigator. It has been extremely valuable to develop a network of RCC research experts and establish collaborations for future work.” – Allison May, MD



IV. Activities Conducted Throughout the Year

1. Didactic Lecture Series (2025)

Gordon Freeman, PhD – Tumor immunology and immune checkpoints
Pavlos Msaouel, MD, PhD – Rare kidney cancers, molecular taxonomy, and trial design
Eric Jonasch, MD – RCC biology, therapeutic strategies, and translational frameworks
Marston Linehan, MD – Genetics of kidney cancer and hereditary RCC syndromes
Raquibul Hannan, MD, PhD – Radiation oncology, oligometastatic disease, and multimodal therapy
Walter Stadler, MD – Clinical trial methodology and therapeutic development
Devin Peipert, PhD – Outcomes research and patient-reported measures
John Copland, PhD – Preclinical modeling and translational platforms
Nolan Wages, PhD – Biostatistics, adaptive designs, and early-phase methodology
Dena Battle – Patient advocacy, quality-of-life priorities, and stakeholder integration

KCAMA partnered with AKCI to deliver a comprehensive didactic curriculum designed to strengthen mentees' foundational and practical skills in clinical trial development, translational science, statistics, genetics, radiation oncology, and patient-centered research. The lecture series featured leading experts in kidney cancer and related disciplines. The topics covered through these sessions reinforced the knowledge and applied skills required for mentees to progress their investigator-initiated trials, refine translational questions, and build sustainable academic programs. Survey respondents consistently rated the didactics as highly relevant, well-designed, and valuable for real-world career development.

2. Mentorship Structure

Each mentee was matched with senior RCC investigators and engaged in:

- Monthly one-on-one mentoring
- Annual goal setting
- Review of trial protocols, grants, manuscripts
- Multi-day site visits for clinical and translational immersion
- Personalized development plans

Survey respondents emphasized that the access to mentors was “complete,” “unbiased,” and “invaluable for career navigation.”

3. Use of KCAMA Scholarship Funds

Each mentee received up to **\$15,000** to support professional development. Funds were used for national meeting attendance, workshop participation, research collaboration travel, and mentorship visits. These details are fully integrated into the vignettes in Section V.

4. Integration With IKCS Meetings

Mentors and mentees participated in various activities at IKCSNA24 (Louisville, Nov 2024), IKCSEU25 (Amsterdam, May 2025), and IKCSNA25 (Denver, Nov 2025). They were involved to co-chair scientific sessions, presenting posters, guiding poster walks, participate at Think Tank meetings and Young Investigator sessions. They shared year-end progress, mentors convened to review outcomes, and KCAMA welcomed the 2026 cohort.

5. Mentorship Excellence Award

Mentorship is the foundational pillar of the KCAMA program. From its inception, program leadership recognized that sustainable advancement in kidney cancer research depends not only on developing new investigators but also on supporting and celebrating the senior faculty who invest deeply in nurturing the next generation.

To formalize this commitment, KCAMA established the **Mentorship Excellence Award** in 2025. The award was created to recognize mentors who exemplify:

- Exceptional availability, engagement, and consistency
- Constructive, actionable feedback on clinical and translational projects
- Advocacy for mentee visibility and career advancement
- A commitment to developing mentees as independent thinkers and future leaders
- A culture of integrity, professionalism, and patient-centered purpose

This award reflects KCAMA's belief that outstanding mentorship is both a skill and a service to the entire kidney cancer community. The goal is to reinforce the mentorship culture the program is designed to cultivate and to highlight individuals whose efforts produce measurable, lasting impact on mentee development.

2025 Inaugural Recipient: Dr. Nizar M. Tannir

In its first year, the KCAMA Mentorship Excellence Award was presented to **Dr. Nizar M. Tannir**, recognizing his decades-long commitment to advancing kidney cancer research and, more importantly, his extraordinary dedication to mentoring early-career investigators.



Dr. Tannir's mentorship has been widely described by mentees as:

- Insightful and deeply invested
- Practical and grounded in real-world clinical research experience
- Unfailingly supportive while setting high expectations
- Transformational in shaping career trajectories

His leadership was instrumental in launching KCAMA itself, shaping its scientific philosophy, and guiding both mentees and faculty toward a culture of generosity, rigor, and excellence. Naming Dr. Tannir as the inaugural recipient honors both his role in the program's creation and his long-standing reputation as one of the most influential mentors in the kidney cancer field.

V. Mentee Vignettes — 2025 Graduating Cohort



1. Nazli Dizman, MD



Mentors: Tian Zhang, MD, MHS; Daniel George, MD

Dr. Dizman activated a **Phase II clinical trial of ivonescimab** in advanced clear cell RCC previously treated with immunotherapy. The study includes two cohorts (post-ICI and post-ICI/VEGF-TKI). Endpoints span response rates, 24-week disease control, toxicity, PFS, duration of response, and OS, supported by exploratory analyses of tissue molecular profiling, circulating immune populations, and the stool microbiome. By November 2025, the trial had accrued 13 of 40 planned patients. She also served as **Translational Medicine Chair** for the Phase III **BIOFRONT** trial, designing an extensive biospecimen strategy integrating tumor tissue, blood, stool, diet indices, and microbiome analysis. KCAMA stipend use supported **attendance at the Vail Workshop**, presentation at **KCRS**, and travel for clinical trial operations and translational planning meetings—directly supporting her trial leadership responsibilities.

2. Adam Singer, MD, PhD

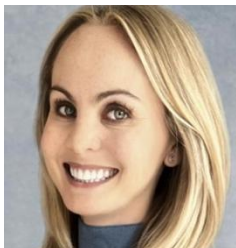


Mentors: Brian Shuch, MD; Jose Karam, MD

Dr. Singer developed an **investigator-initiated Phase I trial testing JAK pathway inhibition** to reverse T-cell exhaustion in RCC resistant to prior immunotherapy. The study utilizes a BOIN escalation design with ruxolitinib or pacritinib combined with immune checkpoint inhibition and VEGF-targeted therapy. The protocol underwent multiple rounds of refinement during his KCAMA year and is now ready for **submission to potential sponsoring partners**. Dr. Singer used his

KCAMA funds for **conference travel** and a **site visit to his mentor institution**, which enabled detailed protocol review, exposure to IIT infrastructure, and iterative optimization of trial feasibility and safety monitoring.

3. Allison May, MD



Mentors: UVA and external RCC translational faculty

Dr. May established a **new translational RCC research laboratory at UVA**. She secured a **CRI CLIP Award**, engaged in an NCI Cancer Systems Biology Consortium project, expanded her research team, and developed a biorepository. Her primary scientific work examines **sarcomatoid transformation and epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition (EMT)** in RCC using spatial transcriptomics and ex vivo slice models. Her lab is characterizing transition states between clear cell and sarcomatoid phenotypes, assessing cytokine environments, MHC expression, PD-L1 modulation, and immune infiltration patterns under EMT-inducing conditions. Dr. May used her KCAMA scholarship to attend **IKCSNA 2024, AUA 2025, ASCO 2025, IKCSNA 2025**, the **KCA animal model workshop, SHARP PI boot camp**, an **NIH grant writing workshop**, and completed a **research visit to MD Anderson** to refine her translational direction.

4. Minas Economides, MD



Mentors: Senior RCC faculty at NYU & external institutions

Dr. Economides advanced clinical trial leadership by **opening an IIT** originally developed for his KCAMA application. He also **presented and moderated at IKCS EU (May 2025)**, contributed to a scholarly review on belzutifan-induced hypoxia, and continued developing academic infrastructure in his role as fellowship Associate Program Director. His KCAMA funds supported a **mentorship visit to City of Hope**, attendance at **IKCS EU, ASCO 2025, and IKCSNA25**, which broadened his scientific network and informed his trial operations strategy.

5. Wesley Yip, MD



Mentors: Brian Rini, MD; Chad Tang, MD

Dr. Yip developed a suite of clinical protocols including:

- **Adjuvant pembrolizumab + CBM588** (near activation)
- **Neoadjuvant ivonescimab** (near activation)
- **Intratumoral microbiome feasibility study** (mid-development)
- A **T-cell exhaustion correlative protocol** evaluating immune markers

during adjuvant therapy. He submitted a **DOD grant**, a **K08**, and progressed toward an **R21** application. His work demonstrates integration of surgical oncology, immunotherapy, and microbiome science. His KCAMA scholarship funded attendance at **GU ASCO, AUA, Uromigos, SUO, IKCS, GU ASCO 2026**, and will support a **Vanderbilt mentorship visit** to observe medical oncology and urology workflows.



Mentors: Nizar Tannir, MD; Pavlos Msaouel, MD, PhD

Dr. Khanna focused on **translocation RCC (tRCC)**, identifying **CDH17** as a highly expressed surface target and demonstrating preclinical activity of CDH17-directed CAR constructs. He initiated **tRCC PDX development** and advanced a second program to launch a **phase I neoantigen peptide vaccine trial** with dedicated non-clear cell cohorts. His KCAMA stipend supported participation in **GU ASCO, AACR, KCRS, IKCS**, the **Broad Institute retreat**, the **Vail Workshop**, and the **KCA animal model workshop**, ensuring broad exposure across immunotherapy, genomics, and translational oncology. As the Rare Kidney Cancer Scholar Program lasts two years, Dr Khanna has completed the first year and entering his second and final year of the program.

VII. Introduction to the 2026 KCAMA Cohort

The KCAMA program welcomed its second cohort of mentees at IKCSNA25 in Denver. The 2026 class represents a diverse group of rising clinical and translational investigators whose research interests span early-phase clinical trials, immuno-oncology, epigenetics, biomarker development, and innovation in care delivery. Their participation ensures continued expansion of a national pipeline of future leaders in kidney cancer research.

Sahil D. Doshi, MD - Genitourinary Medical Oncology, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center



Dr. Doshi is a clinical investigator focused on improving patient access to and experience within kidney cancer clinical trials. His work integrates therapeutic trials with care-delivery research, including telemedicine models, remote toxicity monitoring, and assessment of quality-of-life measures across treatment modalities.

2026 objectives: refine IO-based trial concepts; evaluate subcutaneous vs IV immunotherapy care models; and develop operational strategies to broaden equitable RCC trial participation.

Pooneh Koochaki, MD - Department of Cancer Science (Chakraborty Lab), Cleveland Clinic



Dr. Koochaki is a physician-scientist with expertise in epigenetics, hypoxia-driven metabolic reprogramming, and preclinical target discovery relevant to aggressive kidney cancers. With publications in leading journals, her work bridges mechanistic modeling with translational opportunity. As the incoming **Dr. Nizar Tannir Rare Kidney Cancer Scholar**, she will extend her mechanistic toolkit to rare RCC.

2026 objectives: map preclinical dependencies in rare RCC; identify translational targets suitable for future IIT development; and gain structured training in clinical trial design, PK/PD, and regulatory science.

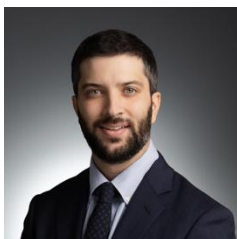
Kelly Fitzgerald, MD - Genitourinary Medical Oncology, University of California San Francisco



Dr. Fitzgerald is a clinical/translational investigator studying immunotherapy strategies and the tumor-immune interactions that shape response in metastatic RCC. She is developing **ZAMBONI**, a Phase II trial evaluating zanzalitinib in patients with RCC and bone metastases, incorporating correlative endpoints focused on the osseous tumor microenvironment.

2026 objectives: finalize and operationalize the ZAMBONI protocol; refine IO-based translational hypotheses; and build durable cross-institutional scientific collaborations.

Muneeb Alam, MD – Department of Urology, Yale School of Medicine



Dr. Alam is a urologic oncologist dedicated to biomarker-driven clinical trial design, with emphasis on minimal residual disease detection, risk stratification, and translationally informed postoperative surveillance strategies. His current work evaluates KIM-1 and additional biomarkers as predictors of recurrence.

2026 objectives: advance biomarker validation studies; define risk-adapted frameworks for RCC trials; and progress toward an investigator-initiated biomarker-anchored clinical trial.

VIII. Survey-Informed Program Impact

Survey highlights:

- **100%** found KCAMA effective for mentee career development.
- **100%** rated the application process clear and expectations well explained.
- **>85%** rated the career-development sessions as extremely useful.
- **85%** said the program was very or transformatively impactful for networking.
- All respondents consented to the use of their comments in sponsor reports.

Representative comments emphasize KCAMA's role as a structured but human mentorship environment, providing clarity around trial design, career decisions, and networking.

IX. Value Proposition for Sponsors



-  **Accelerates Clinical Trial Activation**
In its first year, mentees activated or fully developed multiple Phase I and II investigator-initiated trials.
-  **Strengthens Research Infrastructure**
Mentees established new translational research labs and designed extensive **biospecimen strategies** for major clinical trials.
-  **Expands National Investigator Capacity**
The program develops rising stars from diverse institutions nationwide, creating a **robust network of experts**.
-  **Supports Diversity and Inclusion**
KCAMA connects investigators across a wide range of institutions and backgrounds, **enriching the entire research community**.
-  **Builds Long-Term Scientific Leadership**
The program's core mission is to cultivate a **sustainable pipeline of academic leaders** who will shape the field for decades.

The return on investment is immediate (trial development, grant submissions) and long-term (leadership cultivation, scientific impact).

X. Future Vision (2026–2027)

Plans include:

- Expanded didactic topics (grant writing, protocol submission, cooperative group integration, translational technologies)
- Increased visibility of the application process
- Enhanced leadership training
- Formal alumni engagement at IKCS
- Continued development of rare RCC research pathways
- Longitudinal tracking of mentee outcomes

KCAMA is positioned to become the leading longitudinal training program for kidney cancer investigators worldwide. Thank you for your continued support!

Strong Alone.
Unstoppable Together.®

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