Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center | GIVING

The Kristen Ann Carr Fund Fellowships

2024 Report | Vanja Cabric, MD, Andrew Hanna, MD, and Olayode Babatunde, MD

To the Kristen Ann Carr Fund,

Once again, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for being the recipient of the 2024-2025 Kristen Ann Carr Fund Fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK). It has been an incredible privilege to train in pediatric hematology-oncology at MSK, working alongside leaders in pediatric cancer care. During this time, I have developed a keen interest in treating infants with solid tumors. My research aims to uncover novel immune pathways that could be targeted for immunotherapy in pediatric solid tumors. With the support of the Kristen Ann Carr Fund Fellowship, I am closer to my aspiration of becoming a physician-scientist, dedicated to advancing pediatric cancer research and improving outcomes for children fighting cancer. Thank you again for this opportunity; I am truly grateful for your support.

Sincerely,

Vanja Cabric, MD
Pediatric Hematology-Oncology Fellow

To the Kristen Ann Carr Fund,

I would like to express my sincere and humble gratitude for being selected as a recipient of the 2024-2025 Kristen Ann Carr Fund Fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. It has been over 30 years since Kristen passed away, and the continued efforts of the fund through 2024 are impressive. I understand that Kristen had a knack for bringing people together. It seems that this skill has lived on through this fund, as it is not a coincidence that many former surgical and medical fellow recipients of the fund have become leaders in the field. This, more than money, is the true legacy of the Kristen Ann Carr Fund, and therefore of Kristen herself - bringing people together towards a common goal. I am grateful for the opportunity to participate in that legacy and hope to live up to the standard set before me.

Sincerely,

Andrew Hanna, MD
Complex General Surgical Oncology Fellow

To the Kristen Ann Carr Fund,

I am deeply honored to receive an award from the Kristen Ann Carr Fund in support of my fellowship and research. This generous support has enabled me to advance my work in understanding and developing new targeted treatments for patients with sarcoma, with the goal of improving outcomes for patients facing this challenging disease. Your commitment to funding innovative cancer research is truly inspiring, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this important mission.

Sincerely,

Olayode Babatunde, MD
Hematology and Oncology Fellow

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Vanja Cabric, MD

Vanja Cabric, MD

Kristen Ann Carr Fund Medical Oncology Fellow

Personal Statement

Vanja Cabric, MD, is a recent graduate of the Pediatric Hematology/Oncology Fellowship training program through NewYork-Presbyterian/Weill Cornell Medical Center and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK). She has a clinical interest in the treatment of infants with solid tumors, and her clinical work will continue this year with the Rare Tumors Program at MSK. Dr. Cabric is committed to her research in early-life immune development and age-dependent differences in anti-tumor immune responses. Her overarching career goal is to become a physician-scientist, elucidating novel anti-tumor immune pathways that will guide the development of novel immunotherapies for the effective treatment of pediatric solid tumors.

Current Research

Dr. Cabric continues her mentorship under physician-scientist Chrysothemis Brown, MBBS, PhD, where her research focuses on understanding age-dependent differences in tumor immune responses, with a particular concentration on the developing infant immune system and mechanisms of immune tolerance. The early-life period represents an important developmental stage for establishing immune tolerance to both self and harmless non-self (or foreign) antigens, in order to protect against harmful inflammation. Dr. Cabric's work in the Brown Lab has focused on uncovering the critical cellular mechanisms underlying early-life immune tolerance, especially on how the immune system establishes tolerance to the foods that we eat. She is now applying these fundamental principles to studying how the immune system in early life suppresses effective tumor immune responses against pediatric solid tumors, with a specific goal of understanding the immune landscape of hepatoblastoma, the most common liver tumor of childhood.

Andrew Hanna, MD

Andrew Hanna, MD

Kristen Ann Carr Fund Surgical Fellow

Personal Statement

Andrew Hanna, MD, is currently a second-year Surgical Oncology Fellow at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK). He received his undergraduate degree in economics and neuroscience from Johns Hopkins University and his medical degree from the University of Maryland School of Medicine. He completed his general surgery residency training at the University of Pennsylvania, serving as an administrative chief resident. Dr. Hanna spent two years in the lab of Ronald DeMatteo, MD, studying gastrointestinal stromal tumor, the most common sarcoma. His focus was on integrating bioinformatic and next-generation sequencing data with more traditional laboratory methods to gain further insight into tumor heterogeneity and the tumor immune response.

Current Research

Dr. Hanna's research centers on utilizing genomics, next-generation sequencing, and computational biology to better understand sarcoma tumor heterogeneity and define sarcoma subtypes. We cannot adequately treat a tumor without knowing what it is. Currently, describing sarcomas involves a thorough histologic assessment under the microscope, with additional information gleaned from genomic analysis of the tumor. The current treatment with this paradigm produces a response rate of about 20% across all sarcomas. A better means of describing these heterogeneous group of tumors may be at the DNA or RNA level, which provides a window into tumor function and therefore a window into potential targets for treatment. Furthermore, a fuller understanding of tumor function and activity at the DNA or RNA level would potentially allow surgeons to better select patients who would benefit from aggressive surgical intervention regardless of underlying histology.

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Olayode Babatunde, MD

Olayode Babatunde, MD

Kristen Ann Carr Hematology and Oncology Fellow

Personal Statement

Olayode Babatunde, MD, is a Hematology and Oncology Fellow at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSK), driven by a passion for advancing the field of oncology through innovation and research. The rapid evolution of emerging technologies in cancer care inspires me to pursue a career where he can seamlessly blend meaningful patient care with a deep investigation into the underlying pathophysiology of malignancies. His clinical focus is on solid tumor malignancies, particularly sarcomas.

Current Research

Throughout his training, Dr. Babatunde has gained broad experience in oncologic research, encompassing areas such as epigenetics, radiobiology, biomarker characterization, and drug development. His current research interests are divided between two primary areas: (A) the development of targeted therapeutic strategies for sarcomas, including dedifferentiated liposarcoma (DDLPS), and (B) novel immunotherapy combinations for sarcomas, including leiomyosarcoma (LMS) and angiosarcoma.

He is currently leading a Phase 1b/2 clinical trial investigating the combination of mirdametinib and palbociclib in patients with progressing metastatic DDLPS. This work, supported by the Kristen Ann Carr Fund, the MSK T32 Investigational Cancer Therapeutics Training Program, and the MSK SPORE in Sarcoma, aims to address critical gaps in treatment by targeting the mechanisms of senescence and resistance. Additionally, he is in the process of developing an investigator-initiated trial with Regeneron to explore the potential of immunotherapy in cutaneous angiosarcoma.

On the translational research front, he is dedicated to understanding and overcoming resistance to therapy in sarcomas. My ongoing work delves into therapy-induced senescence, mechanisms of innate and acquired resistance, and the role of the tumor microenvironment in mediating therapeutic response. In parallel, he is leveraging transcriptomic data to identify potential biomarkers that could help predict response and guide treatment in LMS and other sarcomas.

As he completes his Hematology and Oncology fellowship, he is seeking a position as a clinical investigator at a leading academic institution. His goal is to establish and contribute to a robust academic program centered on clinical trials and translational research, with the ultimate aim of developing innovative therapies that improve outcomes for cancer patients.