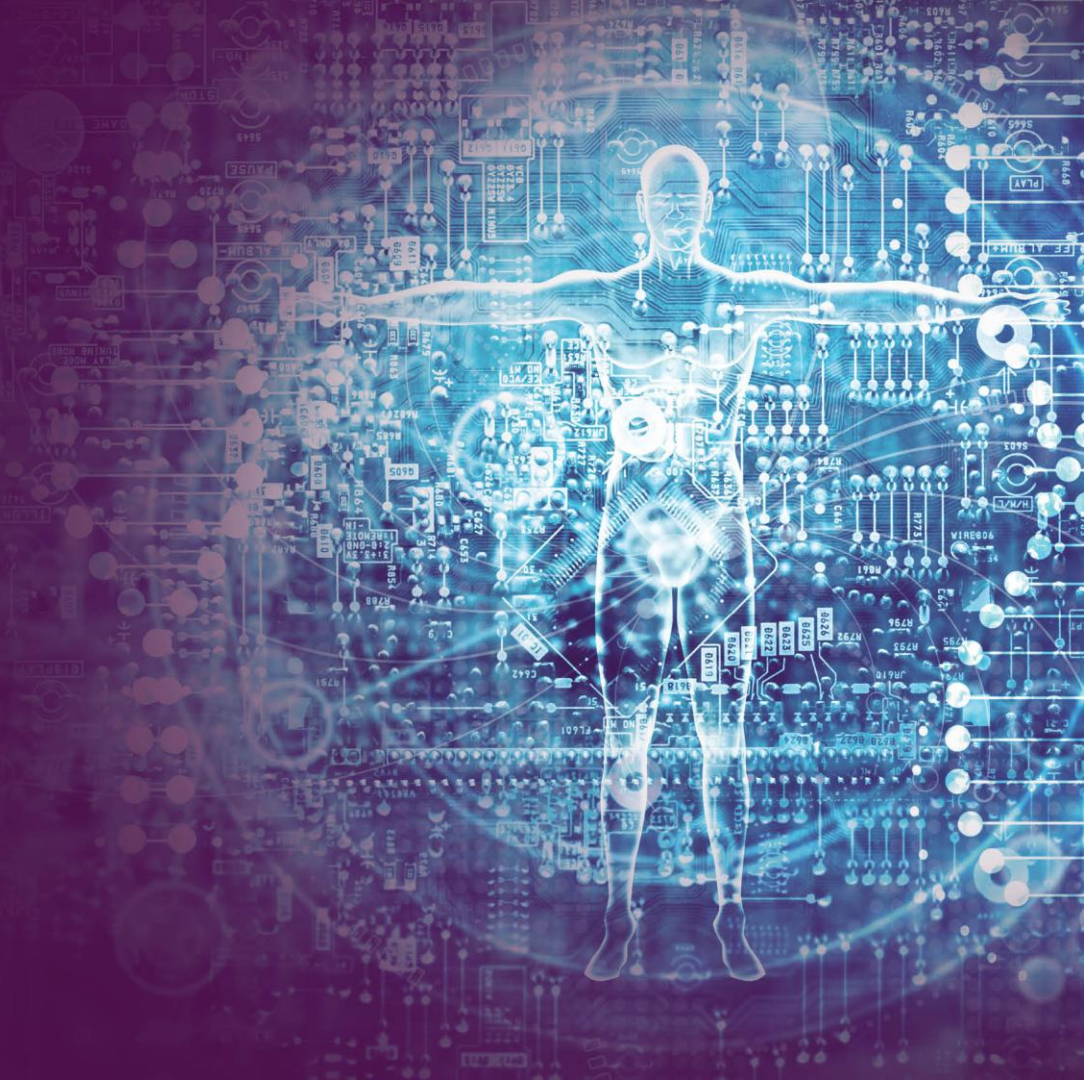
Meet Our Speakers



UPMC | HILLMAN CANCER CENTER

Prof. Joel Nelson, M.D.

Executive Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer, UPMC

President, UPMC International

President, UPMC Physician Services

Professor, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Prof. Joel Nelson, M.D., is executive vice president and chief clinical officer of UPMC, president of UPMC Physician Services, and president of UPMC International. In these roles, he supports clinical quality, service line development, and growth across UPMC while leading international services, with a focus on Italy, Ireland, and Croatia. A distinguished urologist and academic leader, Dr. Nelson previously served as chair of the Department of Urology at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and has authored more than 250 scientific publications.

Elizabeth Wild, MBA

President, UPMC Hillman Cancer Center

Elizabeth Wild, MBA, is president of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center, with more than 20 years of health care leadership experience in the United States and internationally. She has been instrumental in advancing UPMC Hillman's growth and expanding access to high-quality cancer care, including international initiatives in Italy, Ireland, and Croatia. Ms. Wild holds a bachelor's degree from the University of Notre Dame and an MBA from Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management.

Evyenia Sidereas

Deputy Chief of Mission

U.S. Embassy in Croatia

Evyenia Sidereas began her assignment as Deputy Chief of Mission at U.S. Embassy Zagreb in March 2026. A career member of the Senior Foreign Service, Ms. Sidereas joined the State Department in 1999. She most recently served as Chargé d'affaires ad interim and Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in Cairo. Previously, Ms. Sidereas served as the Chargé d'affaires ad interim at the U.S. Embassy in Doha and as Political Minister-Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Berlin. In Washington, she was the State Department Director for Arabian Peninsula Affairs and Gulf Director at the National Security Council. Additional assignments include Kosovo and Turkiye.

Marija Bubaš, M.D., Ph.D.

State Secretary

Ministry of Health

Marija Bubas, M.D., Ph.D., is State Secretary in the Croatian Ministry of Health and a specialist in occupational medicine with extensive experience in public health, education, and health policy. She is a senior research associate at the University of Zagreb School of Medicine and has held leadership and advisory roles with the World Health Organization, International Labour Organization, International Commission on Occupational Health, and European Association of Schools of Occupational Medicine. Dr. Bubas earned her medical degree and completed her doctoral studies at the University of Zagreb.

Prof. Eduard Vrdoljak, M.D., Ph.D.

Head of Oncology and Radiotherapy Clinic, University Hospital Center Split

Professor, University of Split School of Medicine

President, Croatian Oncology Society

Eduard Vrdoljak, M.D., Ph.D., is Professor and Head of the Oncology Centre at the Clinical Hospital in Split, Croatia, and serves as a visiting professor at the Medical School in Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the University of Skopje Faculty of Medicine. He also leads the Croatian Cooperative Group for Clinical Research in Oncology, the South-Eastern European Research Oncology Group, and the Croatian Society of Oncology. Professor Vrdoljak completed additional training at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center and has authored numerous peer-reviewed publications and oncology-related books. His distinguished career in oncology has been recognized with several national and international scientific awards.

Prof. Stjepko Pleština, M.D., Ph.D.

Head of Oncology Clinic, University Hospital Center Zagreb

Professor, University of Zagreb School of Medicine

President, Croatian Society for Medical Oncology

Stjepko Pleština, M.D., Ph.D., is Professor of Pathophysiology at the University of Zagreb School of Medicine and Head of the Department of Oncology at University Hospital Centre Zagreb. A specialist in internal medicine and medical oncology, his clinical expertise focuses on gastrointestinal and hepatobiliary cancers. He also serves as President of the Croatian Society for Medical Oncology and has led numerous oncology clinical trials. His research interests include molecular markers in solid tumors, precision oncology, and the integration of genomic profiling into clinical practice. Professor Pleština is also actively involved in undergraduate and postgraduate medical education and has authored or contributed to scientific publications and medical textbooks.

Mario Šekerija, M.D., Ph.D.

Department of Malignant Diseases,
Croatian Institute of Public Health

Associate Professor, University of Zagreb School of Medicine

Chief Editor, Croatian Medical Journal

Mario Šekerija, M.D., Ph.D., is an epidemiologist, Associate Professor at the University of Zagreb School of Medicine, and Head of the Department for Malignant Diseases at the Croatian Institute of Public Health, where he leads the Croatian National Cancer Registry. An internationally recognized researcher in cancer epidemiology, he contributes to major European and global studies of cancer incidence and survival and has collaborated on more than 150 articles published in international journals. He was appointed Editor-in-Chief of the Croatian Medical Journal in May 2026.

Prof. Dragan Primorac, M.D., Ph.D.

President of Management Board and Founder of St. Catherine Specialty Hospital

Professor, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and The Penn State University, USA

Professor, Universities of Split, Osijek, and Rijeka, Croatia

President, Croatian Society for Human Genetics

President, Croatian Society for Personalized Medicine

President, International Society for Applied Biological Sciences (ISABS)

Professor Dragan Primorac, M.D., Ph.D., is a pediatrician, geneticist, and internationally recognized scientist whose work spans molecular genetics, personalized medicine, and regenerative medicine. He holds academic appointments at leading universities in the United States and Europe and has authored or contributed to nearly 400 scientific papers and abstracts. His clinical and research interests include pharmacogenomics, whole-genome sequencing, AI, predictive genetic testing, and other advances in personalized medicine. Professor Primorac founded St. Catherine Specialty Hospital in Croatia and, in partnership with UPMC, helped bring UPMC Hillman Cancer Center to Croatia in 2025, advancing access to personalized approaches to cancer care.

Prof. Adrian Lee, Ph.D.

Director, Institute for Precision Medicine, a partnership between UPMC and the University of Pittsburgh

Professor of Pharmacology & Chemical Biology and Professor of Human Genetics, University of Pittsburgh

Adrian Lee, Ph.D., is Professor of Pharmacology & Chemical Biology and Human Genetics at the University of Pittsburgh and UPMC Hillman Cancer Center and serves as Pittsburgh Foundation Chair and Director of the Institute for Precision Medicine, a joint initiative of the University of Pittsburgh and UPMC. An internationally recognized breast cancer researcher, Dr. Lee has published more than 200 peer-reviewed articles. His research focuses on understanding the molecular basis of breast cancer, resistance to therapy, and metastasis, with particular emphasis on using precision medicine, genomic technologies, and computational approaches to identify new therapeutic targets and improve outcomes for patients with breast cancer.

Prof. John Byrd, M.D.

Director, UPMC Hillman Cancer Center

Associate Vice Chancellor for Cancer Affairs, University of Pittsburgh

Prof. John C. Byrd, M.D., is Associate Vice Chancellor for Cancer Affairs at the University of Pittsburgh and Director of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center. An internationally recognized physician-scientist, Dr. Byrd is a leader in leukemia and experimental therapeutics research, with more than 700 publications and extensive experience translating laboratory discoveries into new cancer treatments. His research focuses on chronic lymphocytic leukemia and drug development for hematologic malignancies, and he has contributed to the successful development of multiple therapies for leukemia. Throughout his career, Dr. Byrd has been dedicated to advancing cancer research, education, and innovative patient care.

Dag Zahirović, M.D.

Clinical Oncologist, Clinic for Tumors, University Hospital Center Rijeka

University of Rijeka School of Medicine

Dag Zahirović, M.D., is a clinical oncologist at Clinical Hospital Center Rijeka (KBC Rijeka) with more than 20 years of experience in oncology. He specializes in multidisciplinary cancer care, radiotherapy, targeted therapies, and systemic treatments, with a particular focus on urinary tract malignancies. Dr. Zahirović completed his medical education and specialization in radiotherapy and oncology at the University of Rijeka, with additional specialized training in Munich, Ljubljana, and Rome. He has participated in clinical trials, published research in international journals, and is a member of Croatian and international oncology societies.

Prof. Heath Skinner, M.D., Ph.D.

Chief Medical Officer, Radiation Oncology Network, UPMC Hillman Cancer Center

Professor and Claude Worthington Benedum Chair of Radiation Oncology, University of Pittsburgh

Prof. Heath Skinner, M.D., Ph.D., is chief medical officer of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center's radiation oncology network. His clinical expertise includes thoracic and head and neck cancers, stereotactic body radiotherapy, and palliative radiation oncology. His research focuses on identifying biomarkers of resistance to radiation therapy and translating these discoveries into new therapeutic approaches and clinical trials. Dr. Skinner's work integrates laboratory research, genomic analysis, and clinical investigation to better understand the biology of treatment resistance and advance more precise, effective approaches to cancer care.

Prof. PierCarlo Gentile, M.D.

Medical Director, UPMC Hillman Cancer Center San Pietro FBF, Italy

Scientific Director, UPMC Hillman Cancer Center Villa Maria, Italy

Associate Professor, University of Pittsburgh, School of Medicine

Adjunct Professor, Radiation Oncology Residency Program, Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Italy

Prof. PierCarlo Gentile, M.D., is a radiation oncologist with more than 25 years of experience in clinical care, academic medicine, and health care leadership. He serves as Medical Director of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center San Pietro FBF in Rome and is an Associate Professor at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine. Dr. Gentile specializes in advanced radiation therapy and the integration of innovative technologies into multidisciplinary cancer care. He is an active researcher and educator and a member of leading national and international radiation oncology societies, including AIRO, ESTRO, and ASTRO.

Prof. Ravi Patel, M.D., Ph.D.

Director of Radiopharmaceuticals,
UPMC Hillman Cancer Center

Assistant Professor, University of Pittsburgh, Department of Radiation Oncology

Prof. Ravi Patel, M.D., Ph.D., is a radiation oncologist and physician-scientist at UPMC Hillman Cancer Center specializing in breast, genitourinary, and skin cancers. His translational research focuses on developing innovative combinations of radiation therapy and immunotherapy, including targeted radiopharmaceutical therapies designed to enhance the effectiveness of cancer immunotherapy. Dr. Patel's work bridges laboratory research and clinical investigation, with the goal of translating scientific discoveries into new and more effective treatment approaches for patients with cancer.

Kristina Krpina, M.D., Ph.D.

Department for Respiratory Diseases, University Hospital Center Zagreb

Assistant Professor, University of Zagreb, School of Medicine

Kristina Krpina, M.D., Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor and pulmonologist at University Hospital Centre Zagreb's Clinic for Respiratory Diseases Jordanovac, specializing in thoracic oncology. Her clinical and research interests focus on lung cancer screening, personalized medicine, and lung cancer treatment, with her doctoral research examining biomarkers in lung cancer immunotherapy. Dr. Krpina serves as the national coordinator of pulmonologists for Croatia's National Lung Cancer Screening Program and holds leadership roles in Croatian and international lung cancer screening initiatives. She has authored or co-authored more than 30 scientific publications and is a member of several leading Croatian and international professional societies.

Prof. Sergio Rizzo, M.D., Ph.D.

Medical Oncologist, UPMC Hillman Cancer Center at IRCCS ISMETT, Italy

Prof. Sergio Rizzo, MD, PhD, is a medical oncologist specializing in the diagnosis and treatment of solid tumors, with particular expertise in thoracic, gastrointestinal, and hepato-pancreato-biliary cancers. He serves as a Staff Physician in the Medical Oncology Unit at the “Paolo Giaccone” University Hospital in Palermo, where he is actively involved in multidisciplinary cancer care. Dr. Rizzo has served as Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator in more than 30 multicenter clinical trials and has authored approximately 70 peer-reviewed publications. His clinical and research work focuses on advancing treatment strategies and improving outcomes for patients with solid tumors.

Ana Tečić Vuger, M.D., Ph.D.

Head of Breast Cancer Department, University Hospital for Tumors, Sisters of Charity University Hospital Center

Assistant Professor, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, School of Medicine

Ana Tečić Vuger, M.D., Ph.D., is a medical oncologist specializing in breast cancer and serves as Head of the Breast Cancer Department at the University Hospital for Tumors, Sestre milosrdnice University Hospital Center in Zagreb, where she also chairs the Breast Cancer Multidisciplinary Team. Her clinical and research interests include breast cancer treatment and triple-negative breast cancer. Dr. Tečić Vuger is actively involved with the European Society for Medical Oncology (ESMO) and serves as the European School of Oncology Ambassador for Croatia. She is also an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Medicine, Juraj Dobrila University of Pula.

Marko Bebek, M.D.

Medical Director, UPMC Hillman Cancer Center Croatia

Marko Bebek, M.D., is Medical Director of UPMC Hillman Cancer Center in Croatia and an oncology and radiotherapy specialist with a primary focus on genitourinary cancers. His clinical expertise includes advanced radiotherapy techniques such as stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT), MR-guided treatment, and adaptive radiotherapy. Dr. Bebek has trained at leading oncology centers across Europe and has participated in international clinical trials and collaborative research projects. He is committed to integrating innovative treatment approaches with multidisciplinary, patient-centered cancer care.

Josipa Flam, M.D., Ph.D.

Head of Department, University Hospital Center Osijek

Assistant Professor, University of J.J. Strossmayer Osijek School of Medicine

Josipa Flam, MD, PhD, is a consultant in radiotherapy and oncology and Head of the Department for the Treatment of Malignant Diseases of the Breast, Lungs, Skin Tumors, and Rare Tumors at University Hospital Center Osijek. She also serves as an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Medicine, J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek. Dr. Flam is actively involved in international clinical trials in breast and lung cancer and has contributed to national clinical guidelines for breast and gastrointestinal cancers. She is also a member of the Executive Board of the Croatian Oncological Society.

Diwakar Davar, MBBS, M.Sc.

Clinical Director, Melanoma and Skin Cancer Program, UPMC Hillman Cancer Center

Assistant Professor of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh

Vice-Chief of Academic Affairs in the Division of Hematology-Oncology and Department of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh

Diwakar Davar, MBBS, M.Sc., is Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh and Clinical Director of the Melanoma and Skin Cancer Program. A physician-scientist specializing in melanoma, his research focuses on translational cancer immunotherapy and the development of innovative clinical trials. His work has explored the role of the gut microbiome in response and resistance to immunotherapy, including strategies to enhance the effectiveness of immune checkpoint inhibitors. Dr. Davar's research aims to translate advances in tumor immunology and the tumor microenvironment into new therapeutic approaches for patients with cancer.

Prof. Paul J. Kelly, M.D.

Medical Director, UPMC Oncology Network Ireland

Clinical Professor, University College Cork

Prof. Paul J. Kelly, a consultant radiation oncologist, is Medical Director of the UPMC oncology network in Ireland and clinical professor at University College Cork. His clinical and research interests include stereotactic radiotherapy, prostate cancer, and the advancement of radiation oncology through clinical trials. Professor Kelly has played a leading role in introducing innovative radiotherapy techniques in Ireland and serves as a national lead investigator for multiple international clinical trials. He also co-chairs the Genitourinary Disease-specific Subgroup of Cancer Trials Ireland.