SASS/2025
Strategic Advances in Sarcoma Science
Natcher Conference Center – NCI

Dec 9-11, 2025

"Strategic Advances in Sarcoma Science" (SASS) is an annual sarcoma conference at the NIH campus (Bethesda, MD) on Dec 9-11, 2025. SASS2025 is co-sponsored by the Center for Cancer Research, NCI.

SASS2025 has 5 main sessions on sarcoma science and 9 breakouts on translational/clinical challenges.

SASS2025 aims for a fun and interactive workshop-like experience. Differentiating features of the conference include emphasis on mechanistic sarcoma science, deliverables, and continuity (some SASS breakouts have formed working groups). We are so grateful to our SASS2025 sponsors for making this possible!

SASS2025 MAIN SCIENCE SESSIONS
Plasticity & Differentiation
Models
Immune opportunities
Resistance & Persistence
Epigenetics & Transcription

The MAIN SCIENCE SESSIONS are 60 to 90 minutes long. **Presentation durations are 10-12 minutes for regular presentations vs. 5 minutes for power pitch presentations (italicized in Agenda, see below)**. Moderators can use up to 5 minutes before or after the speakers – to introduce the session, suggest topics for discussion, or otherwise provide perspective. Moderators decide whether discussions will follow each talk or be a group discussion after all speakers finish. Please adhere strictly to the expected talk durations so discussion time is maximized.

SASS2025 BREAKOUT GROUPS
Day 1 breakouts: T-cell working group; Epigenetics working group; DNA Damage Response; 'Omics
Day 2 breakouts: Osteosarcoma; WDLPS & DDLPS; GISTT working group; RMS; PNST

SASS2025 Organizers:
Jonathan Fletcher (DF/HCC); Sam Singer (MSKCC); Brigitte Widemann (NCI)

SASS2025 Program Committee:
SARC Discovery/Translation committee (www.tinyurl.com/SARC-DTC)

December 8

18:30-21:30 SASS-y Dinner

December 9 morning: SASS-y conference

(allow 30 minutes to pass through security clearance and bag screening, when arriving at the NCI)

8:30-9:00 Breakfast

9:00 – 10:00 SASS-y #1
Introduction and Icebreaker game

10:00–10:15 Coffee Break

10:15 – 12:15 SASS-y #2
Career Panel: interactive round-table sessions (rotate across 4 tables)

- Translating mechanistic discoveries to therapeutic strategies – Brigitte Widemann (NCI)
- Project design (the realistic budget) – Brian Ladle (Johns Hopkins)
- Scientific communication: Presenting mechanistic data clearly – Troy McEachron (NCI)
- Building a robust research program: Lab set-up and personnel – Anand Patel (St. Jude)
- Industry: Preclinical & Clinical Pathways – William Shakespeare (Von Pfeffel) and Fernanda Arnaldez (AstraZeneca)

12:15 – 12:50 SASS-y & SASS LUNCH

December 9 afternoon: SASS conference

1:00pm SASS Conference Intro
(Main session emphasis is mechanistic sarcoma science but make talks accessible to a diverse audience.

1:10 –2:30 Science session #1: Plasticity & Differentiation
Moderators: Liz Demicco (U Toronto) & Anand Patel (St. Jude)
1a. Sam Singer (MSKCC) – Discrete phases of genome evolution underlie liposarcoma dedifferentiation, genomic instability, and disease progression
1b. Anand Patel – Drivers and regulators of malignant state diversity in rhabdomyosarcoma
1c. Haifeng Zhang (UBC) – Metabolic plasticity and its role in treatment resistance in sarcomas
1d. Saby Mathavarajah (MGB/Harvard) – Hiding in plain sight: Polyploid giant cancer cells drive tx resistance in RMS
1e. Erica Pimenta (DFCI/Harvard) – *Key metabolic regulators are disrupted in dedifferentiated liposarcoma*
Discussion ~20-30 min

2:30–3:40 Breakouts #1

3:40–4:25 Coffee Break + Poster Session 1

4:30 –5:30 Science session #2: Models
Moderator: Lily Guenther (St. Jude)
2a. Mark Hatley (St. Jude) – Leveraging human iPSCs to model human sarcoma initiation
2b. Fabio Vanoli (MSKCC) – Oncogenic role of MYOD1 L122R mutation in spindle cell rhabdomyosarcoma
2c. James Morrow (DFCI/Harvard) – Investigating the developmental origins of osteosarcoma in primary human cells
Discussion ~20 min

6:30–8:30pm SASS Dinner: Pisco y Nazca, 2 Bethesda Metro Center

December 10

(allow 30 minutes to pass through security clearance and bag screening, when arriving at the NCI)

8:15-9:00 Breakfast (30 min for security)

9:00 –10:30 Science Session #3: Immune Opportunities
Moderators: Seth Pollack (Northwestern) & Ping Chi (MSKCC)
3a. Benjamin Nacev (U Pittsburgh) – Transposable element expression, ATRX loss of function, and immune-directed therapies
3b. Troy McEachron (NCI) – Deconstructing the metastatic osteosarcoma microenvironment identifies impediments to adoptive cell therapies
3c. David Milewski (NCI) – Engineered T cell therapy for sarcoma
3d. Brian Ladle (Johns Hopkins) – Engaging immune cell activation in osteosarcoma via the STING pathway
Discussion ~30 min

10:30–11:15 Coffee Break + Poster Session 2

11:15–12:30 Breakouts #2

12:30–1:15 Lunch

1:15–2:15 Breakout #1 Summaries

2:15 –2:45 Sarcoma P31
Sebastian Bauer, Brigitte Widemann, Jonathan Fletcher

2:45–3:30 Trust no one: Challenges in diagnostic pathology and big data
Liz Demicco (U Toronto), Cristina Antonescu (MSKCC)

3:30–4:15 Coffee Break + Poster Session 3

4:15–5:30 Science Session #4: Resistance & Persistence
Moderators: Chrstine Pratilas (Johns Hopkins) & Sebastian Bauer (West German Cancer Center)
4a. Kathryn Lemberg (Johns Hopkins) – Acquired resistance to MEK inhibition alters de novo purine synthesis and creates therapeutic vulnerabilities in NF1 MPNST
4b. Jovana Pavisic (MSKCC) – Characterizing the effects of conventional chemotherapy on tumor subpopulations: Insights into therapy resistance in Osteosarcoma
4c. Sebastian Bauer – Mechanisms of persistence or pre-resistance in treatment-naive GIST
4d. Ariadna Brito-Accurso (MGB/Harvard) – DNA damage response hyper-dependence intersections in leiomyosarcoma: Synergies and resistance mechanisms
Discussion ~20-30 min

Dinner on your own

December 11

(allow 30 minutes to pass through security clearance and bag screening, when arriving at the NCI)

8:15-9:00 Breakfast

9:00–10:30 Science session #5: Epigenetics & Transcription
Moderators: Benjamin Nacev (U Pittsburgh) & Kevin Jones (Huntsman)
5a. Kevin Jones – Testing chromatin remodeling hypotheses with recombinant complex biochemistry
5b. Adam Durbin (St. Jude) – Dysregulated AKT reprograms osteosarcoma to drive selective reliance on EP300
5c. Qierra Brockman (U Colorado) – Circulating Epigenetic Biomarkers of Sarcoma Treatment Response and Evasion
5d. Elissa Wong (MSKCC) – Disruption of TAD hierarchy promotes LTR co-option in cancer
5e. Maya Groff (NCI) – *Landscape of antigen presentation in sarcoma*
5f. Favour Akabogu (U Mass) – *HAND1 interacts with the canonical BRM/BRG1-associated factor (cBAF) complex to regulate GIST cell proliferation and survival*
Discussion ~25 min

10:30–11:15 Coffee Break + Poster Session 4 (pick up evaluation forms)

11:15–12:15 Day 2 Breakout Summaries

12:15–12:30 Conclusions & Next Steps
feedback is crucial (please drop off evaluation forms before leaving)

SASS2025 Breakout Groups

The SASS breakout groups meld biologic and clinical considerations. Additional meetings are held before/after SASS to accomplish the breakout deliverables.

Day 1 breakouts (science themes):

T-cell working group
Organizers: Seth Pollack, Jacqueline Oliva Ramírez, David Milewski

Epigenetics working group
Organizers: Ben Nacev, Ping Chi, Kevin Jones, Matthew Hemming

Targeting DNA damage response
Organizers: Lori Rink, Christine Heske, Jonathan Fletcher, Lily Guenther

'Omics advances
Organizers: Jason Chan, Josephine Dermawan, Marc Ladanyi, Jovana Pavisic

Day 2 breakouts (sarcoma subtypes):

Osteosarcoma
Organizers: Richard Gorlick, Lily Guenther, Troy McEachron

WDLS & DDLS
Organizers: Sam Singer, George Demetri, Sandra D'Angelo, Minsi Zhang

GIST working group
Organizers: Sebastian Bauer, Suzanne George, Ron DeMatteo

RMS
Organizers: Mark Hatley, Patience Odeniyide, Cristina Antonescu, Jack Shern

PNST
Organizers: Brigitte Widemann, Rebecca Dodd, Angela Hirbe

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NIH, Bethesda MD



The SASS2025 organizers express their deep appreciation to our sponsors for their enthusiasm and support – enabling the SASS and SASS-y conferences.

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