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The Wistar Institute Announces the Appointment of Xiaoyu (Ariel) Zhou, Ph.D., to Vaccine & Immunotherapy Center

PHILADELPHIA — (APRIL 30, 2025) <u>The Wistar Institute</u>, a world leader in cancer, immunology, and infectious disease research, announces the appointment of Xiaoyu (Ariel) Zhou, Ph.D., as assistant professor in the <u>Vaccine & Immunotherapy Center</u>. Zhou studies intercellular communication between immune cells, with a focus on understanding and reprogramming cell-to-cell communications to develop new and better cancer treatments. Her work has also involved re-engineering CAR T cells, a powerful immunotherapy, to fight cancer more effectively.

"Wistar has a longstanding commitment to immunotherapy research, with an exceptional track record of making scientific discoveries that translate into lifesaving cancer treatments," <u>said Dr. David B.</u> <u>Weiner, Ph.D.</u>, executive vice president of The Wistar Institute, director of the Vaccine & Immunotherapy Center and the W.W. Smith Charitable Trust Distinguished Professor in Cancer Research. "Dr. Zhou's pioneering work in intercellular communication aligns perfectly with our mission. Her research holds great promise for enhancing the precision and power of immunotherapy across cancer and a range of diseases. We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Zhou to Wistar and look forward to supporting and collaborating with her on her important work."

Immune cells are in constant communication with one another, warning other cells when pathogens or malignant cells are spotted, and issuing instructions to fight back. When this communication breaks down, cancer has an opportunity to move in. Some cancers take advantage of this vulnerability and disrupt immune signaling to trick immune cells into shutting down.

Zhou's current work includes developing new technology which acts as a "smart bridge" between immune cells, making disease-fighting signals stronger, while blocking disruptive signals that shut down the immune response. Zhou is also building novel CRISPR technology that can control multiple genes at once, making it easier to fine-tune how immune cells respond to threats. The goal is to improve how immune cells work together, making cancer therapies more effective.

Looking ahead, Zhou hopes to expand this technology beyond cancer and look for opportunities to apply the approach to infectious diseases.

"I'm thrilled to join The Wistar Institute, a place that truly values innovation and supports young scientists," she said. "Wistar has a strong focus on cancer immunology in a collaborative environment



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and offers the freedom to pursue bold and high-risk ideas that fit perfectly with my scientific mission as I build my own lab. I'm very excited for what's ahead."

Zhou earned her B.S. in Biology at China Agricultural University and her Ph.D. in Pathogenic Organisms at Fudan University, Shanghai Medical College. Before joining Wistar, she was a fellow at Yale University.

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The Wistar Institute is an international leader in biomedical research with special expertise in cancer research and vaccine development. Founded in 1892 as the first independent nonprofit biomedical research institute in the United States, Wistar has held the prestigious Cancer Center designation from the National Cancer Institute since 1972. The Institute works actively to ensure that research advances move from the laboratory to the clinic as quickly as possible. <u>wistar.org</u>.

