



PRESS RELEASE

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The Wistar Institute Appoints Katherine Aird, Ph.D., to Ellen and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center

PHILADELPHIA — (Sept. 4, 2025) — The Wistar Institute, an international biomedical research leader in cancer, immunology and infectious diseases, announces the appointment of **Katherine Aird, Ph.D.**, as co-leader and professor in the Molecular and Cellular Oncogenesis Program of the Ellen and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center.

Aird's research is in cancer metabolism and cell cycle disruption, which influence cancer cell growth and division. She focuses on how cancer cells communicate through metabolites and how this consumption of metabolites (metabolism) influences the ways cells proliferate and divide. Aird studies this process in especially aggressive cancers like melanoma and ovarian cancer to understand the hallmarks of how metabolism and crosstalk can drive cancer progression and resistance. And conversely how to therapeutically target these changes to reverse metabolism and ultimately shrink or destroy tumors.

"Katherine brings powerful expertise in tumor metabolism to the deep well of cancer biology knowledge and biomedical research excellence that is our Ellen and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center," said **Dario Altieri, M.D.**, president and CEO of The Wistar Institute, director of the Ellen and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center and Robert and Penny Fox Distinguished Professor.

"She returns full circle to Wistar, where she trained as a postdoctoral fellow. Now, she focuses on the next frontier of cancer cell communication together with creating a new Wistar initiative around tumor metabolism. Through her leadership, Wistar continues to strengthen its multidisciplinary science and tackle cancer through multiple lenses."

The study of metabolism — how cancer cells rewire nutrient uptake to support unchecked cell growth — is strong at Wistar with many scientists examining it from different research vantage points.



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“There is an umbrella of cancer metabolism knowledge at Wistar,” said Aird. “We have PIs specialized in metabolism from a cancer cell-intrinsic niche, focused on the tumor microenvironment; some study the microbiome — an important and completely different aspect of tumor metabolism; and some focus on where immunology and metabolism intersect. Many are metabolism-adjacent and “touching” metabolism through their research in autophagy (cellular recycling) or how changes in lipids drives cancer growth or resistance to therapies. We have many experts here with cancer biology, immunology, genetics, and virology knowledge working on this massive puzzle that is cancer metabolism. It is an incredibly exciting time to be a part of it at Wistar.”

Dr. Aird received her B.A. in biology from Johns Hopkins University followed by a Ph.D. from Duke University. In 2010, she joined the lab of Dr. Rugang Zhang at Fox Chase Cancer Center as a postdoctoral fellow and moved with him to The Wistar Institute in 2012. In 2015, she received an NCI K99/R00 Pathway to Independence Award, and in 2016 she started her independent lab at Penn State College of Medicine as an assistant professor. She moved to the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and UPMC Hillman Cancer Center in 2020 as an associate professor before joining The Wistar Institute as a professor and co-leader of the Molecular and Cellular Oncogenesis Program.

ABOUT THE WISTAR INSTITUTE

The Wistar Institute is the nation’s first independent nonprofit institution devoted exclusively to foundational biomedical research and training. Since 1972, the Institute has held National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated Cancer Center status. Through a culture and commitment to biomedical collaboration and innovation, Wistar science leads to breakthrough early-stage discoveries and life science sector start-ups. Wistar scientists are dedicated to solving some of the world’s most challenging problems in the field of cancer and immunology, advancing human health through early-stage discovery and training the next generation of biomedical researchers. [wistar.org](https://www.wistar.org).