



PRESS RELEASE

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The Wistar Institute Names Internationally Recognized Cancer Researcher Ronny Drapkin as President & CEO

Appointment follows major Wistar growth in faculty, research programs and scientific centers

PHILADELPHIA — (TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2026) — [The Wistar Institute's](#) Board of Trustees has appointed **Ronny Drapkin, M.D., Ph.D.**, a physician-scientist and leading ovarian cancer researcher at the University of Pennsylvania [Perelman School of Medicine](#), to be the Institute's next president and CEO, effective November 30, 2026. Dr. Drapkin succeeds Dario Altieri, M.D., who is stepping down after a decade of transformative leadership.

As Wistar president & CEO, Dr. Drapkin will lead the Institute's early-stage discovery research in cancer, immunology and infectious disease; strengthen and expand its workforce education and training programs; and broaden support for Wistar's scientific mission and future growth by working closely with donors, trustees, corporate and academic partners, and policymakers.

"After an extensive national search, we are thrilled to welcome Ronny as our new president and CEO," said **Rick Horowitz**, chair of Wistar's Board of Trustees. "Ronny has everything we are looking for in our next president and CEO. His outstanding contributions to cancer research and extensive experience in translational medicine, along with an impressive track record of organizational leadership, make him ideal for the role. We are confident Ronny will build on what the Institute is now achieving and accelerate our mission to change lives across the globe through high-risk, high-reward discovery and translational science."



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Dr. Drapkin's appointment comes at a milestone moment for Wistar, which has expanded to 43 principal investigators, including six hired this year. He will guide Wistar's critical contributions to the life science ecosystem regionally, nationally and globally. Wistar's departing CEO, Dr. Dario Altieri, led Wistar through a period of unprecedented growth in which the Institute's annual budget quadrupled, its endowment tripled, and its scientific footprint expanded with the addition of two new research centers.

Along with that growth in footprint, Wistar's historically high scientific standing also rose to unprecedented heights. During Dr. Altieri's tenure, Wistar's Ellen and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center—the only NCI-designated basic research cancer center in Pennsylvania—earned the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) highest possible renewal rating of "Exceptional" three consecutive times. In 2025, SCImago Institutions Rankings, an independent global assessment, placed Wistar in the top three percent for overall performance, top one percent for innovation, and top six percent for research among the world's leading academic and research-related institutions.

As biomedical research becomes increasingly interdisciplinary, data-driven and translational, Dr. Drapkin's experience spanning laboratory science, clinical medicine, team science, and institutional leadership uniquely positions him to build on that momentum in propelling Wistar's next phase of growth.

As the Franklin Payne Professor of Pathology in Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Drapkin leads an active lab known for cutting-edge research focused on high-grade ovarian carcinoma, the deadliest form of ovarian cancer. His laboratory played a leading role in establishing the fallopian tube as the principal site of origin for these cancers, a discovery that fundamentally changed understanding of how ovarian cancer develops and has helped drive new approaches to prevention, including opportunistic removal of the fallopian tubes in average-risk women and risk-reducing strategies for women with inherited *BRCA1/2* mutations. Building on this work, Dr. Drapkin also leads an international effort to build a comprehensive atlas of ovarian precancer, bringing together investigators around the world to define the earliest molecular and cellular changes that precede cancer and nominate new biomarkers for early detection and targets for prevention and therapy.



At Penn Medicine, Dr. Drapkin directs the Ovarian Cancer Research Center, serves as director of the Gynecologic Cancer Research program at the Bassett Center for BRCA, and co-directs the Ovarian Cancer Translational Center of Excellence at the Abramson Cancer Center. His work focuses on interdisciplinary research that unites scientists, physicians, and other experts in local, regional and international collaborations—the same team-based approach that drives discovery at Wistar. His other organizational leadership roles include deputy dean of the Department of Defense Ovarian Cancer Academy; director of the BioTrust Collection, a repository for gynecologic oncology research; and co-director of the Johns Hopkins University - University of Pennsylvania Specialized Program of Research Excellence in Ovarian Cancer.

“I am honored to assume this leadership role at an institution I have so long admired and help it further expand its contributions to life-saving medical science,” said **Dr. Drapkin**. “Wistar’s scientific engine has never been a more powerful driver of biomedical innovation and regional economic growth than it is right now. Few basic research centers have achieved such an extraordinary record of scientific contribution while maintaining the agility, focus, and commitment to collaboration that characterize Wistar. Its impressive expansion in research programs and facilities, together with its commitment to fundamental discovery and translational impact, reflect a clear commitment to excellence and a willingness to embrace ambitious goals. I am especially excited by the opportunity to build on that foundation and create new opportunities for exceptional scientists to pursue bold research questions, make fundamental discoveries, forge new collaborations and, where possible, translate those discoveries into advances that improve human health. I am grateful for the years I spent at Penn and hope to continue many of the fruitful collaborations between Penn and Wistar.”

Dr. Drapkin trained as an M.D.-Ph.D. physician-scientist at Rutgers University, where he earned his medical degree and Ph.D. in biochemistry and molecular biology. He completed residency training in pathology at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School, followed by postdoctoral training at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. He subsequently joined the Harvard faculty as the first recruit to the joint Brigham and Women’s Hospital-Dana-Farber Center for Molecular Oncologic Pathology. In 2015, he was recruited to the University of Pennsylvania, where he built and leads a multidisciplinary ovarian cancer research program spanning basic discovery, translational science,



early detection, and cancer prevention.

Dr. Drapkin is no stranger to The Wistar Institute: he arrives with firsthand knowledge of its science and collaborative culture. Since 2016, he has been an affiliate of Wistar's Ellen and Ronald Caplan Cancer Center and his collaborations with Wistar faculty have produced multiple publications and jointly funded research projects.

"Dr. Drapkin has been an outstanding scientist, collaborator, and colleague at Penn Medicine, and he is the ideal person to lead The Wistar Institute into its next chapter," said Jonathan A. Epstein, M.D., Dean of the Perelman School of Medicine and Executive Vice President of the University of Pennsylvania for the Health System. "His appointment presents a tremendous opportunity to further strengthen the longstanding relationship between Penn and Wistar, building on our shared commitment to advancing scientific discovery and translating research into meaningful improvements in human health. I look forward to working closely with Ronny and the Wistar team to deepen our scientific and programmatic collaborations and pursue new opportunities together."

"For Wistar, Dr. Drapkin's appointment reflects a commitment to leadership that builds on the Institute's strengths while advancing its powerful vision for the future," said **Sue Dillon, Ph.D.**, vice chair of Wistar's Board of Trustees and leader of the executive search committee. "We are confident that Dr. Drapkin will enable the Institute to extend its legacy of long-term impact on biomedical discovery and human health."

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.