



Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer

555 East Wells St., Suite 1100
Milwaukee, WI 53202-3823
Phone: (414) 271-2456
Fax: (414) 276-3349
www.sitcancer.org

Media Contact:

Adam Wise, Communications Manager

Email: awise@sitcancer.org

Phone: (414) 271-2456

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Diversity Panel Discusses Asian Experience in Cancer Research Hosted by Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer and Others

MILWAUKEE – The Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer (SITC), in collaboration with the Chinese American Hematologist and Oncologist Network (CAHON) and the Indo-American Cancer Association (IACA), is pleased to release an important diversity panel discussion of society leaders sharing their experience as Asians working in the cancer research field.

“[Barriers to Asians and Pacific Islanders in Science and Medicine Diversity Panel](#),” is an hour-long group discussion, hosted by the SITC Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, featuring society leaders who open up to share personal and professional reflections as Asian and Pacific Islanders working as researchers and oncologists in the United States and Canada. Moderated by SITC Vice President and Task Force Co-chair Leisha Emens, MD, PhD; Task Force member Avery D. Posey, PhD; and CAHON Immediate Past President Lei Zheng, MD, PhD; the recorded webinar features discussion from the following Diversity Panel members:

- Zihai Li, MD, PhD – *Ohio State University*
- Pamela Ohashi, PhD – *Princess Margaret Cancer Centre*
- Padmanee Sharma, MD, PhD – *The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center*
- Weijing Sun, MD, FACP – *University of Kansas Medical Center*

“This diversity panel features a timely and intimate discussion of the interactions my fellow Asian colleagues have experienced in the laboratory and the clinic, stories that are unfortunately all too common,” said SITC President Patrick Hwu, MD. “While Asian-Americans have considerable representation in our field as a whole, reported data show us the extreme uphill climb most have to achieve leadership roles within the profession. Today’s discussion shines a light on some of those barriers that exist. I admire all of the panel participants for sharing personal stories, and I hope the experiences offered serve as a learning opportunity for leaders in institutions across our country.”

According to an [October 2020 report in *The Cancer Letter*](#) on workforce disparity, in 2018 approximately 26 percent of oncologists in the U.S. were Asian and Pacific Islanders, while only 11 percent sat as cancer center deputy or associate directors, and only 7 percent served as cancer center directors. The SITC-CAHON-IACA diversity panel featured discussion on a range of topics, including the importance of mentorship within the Asian-American community, experiences of seeking promotions within the field and the action SITC and other organizations can take to address barriers for minority groups in medicine and research. The panel discussion, which was recorded on Thursday, May 20, was also done so, in part, to honor Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, which concludes on Monday, May 31.

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“We know the stories shared during our discussion are not limited to the participants on the panel, but also impact the broader community of Asian-Americans and other under-represented minorities. It is imperative for organizations like SITC to take the lead on improving awareness of, and identifying solutions for, professional barriers within our field for under-represented minorities,” said Dr. Emens. “I remain in awe of the courage shown by all of the panel participants, as their honesty and vulnerability will not only benefit the current biomedical community, but also generations of scientists and clinicians to come.”

The SITC-CAHON-IACA diversity panel discussion is available for on-demand viewing via the [SITC YouTube channel](#).

About SITC

Established in 1984, the Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer (SITC) is a nonprofit organization of medical professionals dedicated to improving cancer patient outcomes by advancing the development, science and application of cancer immunotherapy and tumor immunology. SITC is comprised of influential basic and translational scientists, practitioners, health care professionals, government leaders and industry professionals around the globe. Through educational initiatives that foster scientific exchange and collaboration among leaders in the field, SITC aims to one day make the word “cure” a reality for cancer patients everywhere. Learn more about SITC, our educational offerings and other resources at sitcancer.org and follow us on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#).

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