

# Featured Guests

8:40 am



## Steven M. Paul, MD

*Venture Partner, Third Rock Ventures; Founder & Board Chair, Seaport Therapeutics; Former CEO, CSO & President of R&D, Karuna Therapeutics*

Steven M. Paul is the Founder and Chair of Seaport Therapeutics, a Venture Partner at Third Rock Ventures, and the Chairman of Rapport Therapeutics. He's the former President and CEO of Karuna Therapeutics (now Bristol Myers Squibb), and co-founder of Sage and Voyager Therapeutics. He was the Founding Director of the Appel Alzheimer's Disease Research Institute at Weill Cornell and is a current professor at Washington University School of Medicine. In his 17 years at Eli Lilly, he held key leadership roles and published over 550 papers. Dr. Paul is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and a member of the National Academy of Medicine. He is also the chairman of the board of the Foundation for the National Institutes of Health.



## Jim Audia, PhD

*Founding Scientist, EVP Drug Discovery & Early Development, FLARE Therapeutics*

Jim Audia is a chemist by training and began his career at Eli Lilly after postdoctoral training with Sam Danishefsky at Yale. Initially focused on psychiatric and neurodegenerative research, he led Lilly's Alzheimer's collaboration with Athena Neurosciences and developed numerous drug candidates. After retiring from Lilly in 2010, Jim was CSO at Constellation Pharmaceuticals, contributing to its acquisition by Morphosys. He then joined Northwestern University and the Chicago Biomedical Consortium as Executive Director before returning to industry roles, including Senior Advisor at Karuna Therapeutics and EVP of Drug Discovery & Early Development at Flare Therapeutics. Dr. Audia holds over 120 US patents and serves on various scientific advisory boards.

Introduction by:

## Jim Sullivan, PhD

*CEO, Vanqua Bio; Venture Partner, Orbimed*



## Remarks

9:10 am



**John Conrad**

*President & CEO, Illinois Biotechnology Innovation Organization (iBio)*

As President and CEO of iBIO, John's mission is to promote, connect and engage the members of the Illinois Life Sciences community to drive discovery, transform lives through groundbreaking research and grow the Illinois economy.

## Keynote

9:15 am



**Ted Love, MD**

*Chairman, Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO);  
Former President & CEO, Global Blood Therapeutics*

Ted Love is the former President and CEO of Global Blood Therapeutics (GBT), where he led the company's growth and the introduction of the first disease-modifying treatment for sickle cell disease. Under his leadership, GBT was acquired by Pfizer for \$5.8 billion in 2022. He serves on the boards of Gilead Sciences, Structure Therapeutics, and Royalty Pharma plc, and chairs the Biotechnology Innovation Organization (BIO). He is a founding board member of Life Science Cares Bay Area. For two years he served as Executive Vice President, Research and Development and Technical Operations, at Onyx Pharmaceuticals, Inc., where he played an instrumental role in initiating and completing several of Onyx's first Phase 3 clinical trials. Prior to Onyx, he served as President, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of Nuvelo, Inc., where he led the growth of the company to a market capitalization of \$1 billion. Dr. Love has held senior roles at Theravance and Genentech. He holds a BA in molecular biology from Haverford College and an MD from Yale Medical School. He completed a residency in internal medicine and a fellowship in cardiology at the Massachusetts General Hospital. and has a background in internal medicine and cardiology.

**Introduction by:**

**Paul Burton, JD, MBA**

*Managing Partner, 2Flo Ventures*



# Distinguished Speaker

9:45 am (virtual)



## George Church, PhD

*Robert Winthrop Professor of Genetics, Harvard Medical School;  
co-founder of 50+ companies*

George Church is a Professor of Genetics at Harvard Medical School and Director of PersonalGenomes.org, which provides the world's only open-access information on human Genomic, Environmental & Trait data (GET). His 1984 Harvard PhD included the first methods for direct genome sequencing, molecular multiplexing and barcoding. These led to the first genome sequence (pathogen, *Helicobacter pylori*) in 1994. His innovations are foundational to modern DNA sequencing and have led to numerous biotech startups in diagnostics and synthetic biology including Editas, Gen9/enEvolv/Zymergen/Warpdrive/Ginko, Veritas, Kome.PierianDx, Alacris, Nebula, AbViro/Juno, and Egenesis. Dr. Church has advanced privacy, biosafety, and biosecurity policies and has received numerous honors, including election to NAS and NAE. He was director of an IARPA BRAIN Project and 3 NIH Centers for Excellence in Genomic Science. Dr. Church co-authored 650 papers, 156 patent publications and a book, *Regenesis*.

Introduction by:

## Dimitra Georganopoulou, PhD

*General Partner, Qral Ventures*



# Panel 1: Biotech capital formation and ecosystem development

10:45 am

Moderator

**Julia Monfrini Peev**

*Managing Partner, PACE Healthcare Capital*



Julia Monfrini Peev is the Founder and Managing Partner of PACE Healthcare Capital, a venture capital firm investing in digital health and healthcare technologies based in Chicago, IL. As a seasoned institutional VC/PE investor, Julia has deployed \$1B of capital in successful and transformative healthcare businesses, with a demonstrated track record.



**Martin D. Burke, MD, PhD**

*May and Ving Lee Professor for Chemical Innovation, and  
Professor of Chemistry*

Martin D. Burke is the scientific founder of four biotechnology companies with six drug candidates that have entered clinical trials to date. He is the founding Director of the Molecule Maker Lab at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology and a founding member of the Molecule Maker Lab Institute at the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology. He is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Dr. Burke is now the May and Ving Lee Professor for Chemical Innovation in the Dept. of Chemistry at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.



**Michal Preminger, PhD, MBA**

*Regional Head, Johnson & Johnson Innovation, East North America*

Michal Preminger is Head of Johnson & Johnson Innovation LLC, East North America, managing co-investments in pharmaceuticals, consumer health, and medical devices. Previously, she was Executive Director at Harvard's Office of Technology Development, overseeing technology commercialization and industry collaborations. Dr. Preminger has held senior roles in biotech, co-founded a startup, and served on multiple advisory boards. She holds an MSc and PhD from Weizmann Institute, an MBA from INSEAD, and a BA in Medicine from Hebrew University.

## Panel 1: Biotech capital formation and ecosystem development

10:45 am



**Stephen Squinto, PhD**

*CIO, J.P. Morgan Life Sciences Private Capital*

Stephen Squinto is the Chief Investment Officer for the newly formed J.P. Morgan Life Sciences Private Capital organization. He has contributed to multiple drug approvals in the US, EU, and other major global markets. In November 2014, Dr. Squinto retired as the Executive VP and Chief Global Operations Office at Alexion Pharmaceuticals, where he guided the discovery, development and commercial launches of Soliris and Stensiq. Prior to co-founding Alexion, Dr. Squinto helped build the drug discovery program at Regeneron Pharmaceuticals.



**Dana Watt, PhD**

*Partner, Breakout Ventures*

Dana Watt is a Partner at Breakout Ventures, where she drives the firm's seed investment strategy and supports company founders as they achieve commercialization milestones. Dr. Watt co-founded a molecular diagnostics spinout company during her postdoctoral fellowship at Washington University in St. Louis's entrepreneurship center, where she institutionalized support for SBIR/STTR-funded spinouts. Before joining Breakout in 2021, Dr. Watt was a Senior Investment Associate for the strategic healthcare venture fund Ascension Ventures and is a Kauffman Fellow.



**Tim Walbert**

*Former Chairman, President & CEO, Horizon Therapeutics;  
Sr. Advisor, Amgen*

Tim Walbert is a senior advisor at Amgen. He was Chairman, President, and CEO of Horizon Therapeutics until its \$28.3 billion acquisition by Amgen in October 2023. Previously, he led IDM Pharma, which was acquired by Takeda, and NeoPharm. At Abbott (now AbbVie), he helped launch HUMIRA and led global cardiovascular strategy. Tim has served on multiple biotech boards, including Mirum Pharma and Century Therapeutics, and is involved with several advisory boards and business clubs. He holds a BA in business from Muhlenberg College.

## Fireside Chat: Startup to growth and acquisition: a founder's perspective

2:50 pm



**Shobha Parthasarathi, PhD**

*Founder and Principal, Intovis*

Shobha Parthasarathi is the Founder and Principal of Intovis. She was a venture partner for Harrington Discovery Institute Ventures, which is a unique international initiative created to translate scientific discoveries from academia to clinical use. She also sits on the Advisory Board for Novo Nordisk's Bio Innovation Hub. Before founding Intovis, she was an Advisor and Vice President of External Innovation and New Ventures at Xontogeny. She was Vice President, Strategic Alliances and Business Development at Harrington Discovery Institute, and a Senior Director of Business Development at the North Carolina Biotechnology Center. Dr. Parthasarathi began her research career as a scientist in drug discovery at Takeda Oncology (Millennium Pharmaceuticals) in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



**Erandi de Silva, PhD**

*Partner, Drive Capital*

Erandi de Silva is an investment partner at Drive Capital. Prior to joining Drive, she co-founded Forge Biologics, a VC-backed CDMO headquartered in Columbus, OH, which was successfully acquired in 2023. She has over 15 years of experience in discovery research, translational therapeutic development, and partnering. She holds a PhD in Molecular Biology from Princeton University and a BS (Honors) in Biological Sciences from Stanford University. She has a strong commitment and track record in building and managing a diverse and innovative workforce. Dr. de Silva was honored as one of the Fiercest Women in Life Sciences by Fierce Pharma in 2022.

# Panel 2: Connecting the dots: aligning academic discoveries with investors and advisors

3:20 pm

Moderator

**Ritu Shah**

*Managing Director, Portal Innovations*



Ritu Shah has worked in pharmaceuticals and biotech for 25+ years, specifically around rare diseases and oncology. She spent the first part of her career in big pharma consulting which included R&D strategy roles at BMS, Amgen, Takeda, Astellas, and Abbott. Ritu then focused on portfolio and program management from R&D to Manufacturing to Commercial and Launch with Baxter, Baxalta, and Shire. Ritu has spent the last 7 years in biotech with a focus on gene therapy and rare disease at AveXis, Levo Therapeutics, and most recently, Chief Operating Officer at Pyxis Oncology. She is an experienced operator focused on portfolio and program management, operations, M&A, and strategy. Ritu has leveraged this experience to launch Ex<sup>3</sup> at Portal Innovations which accelerates companies from seed to the next round of funding through IPO to reach patients as soon as possible.



**Matthew McMahon, PhD**

*Director, Small business Education and Entrepreneurial Development, National Institutes of Health*

Matthew McMahon leads the Small business Education and Entrepreneurial Development (SEED) Office at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). SEED helps academic innovators validate the potential health impacts of their discoveries through a national network of proof-of-concept centers and provides a host of professional advisory services to small business innovators funded by NIH's \$1.3 billion/year SBIR and STTR programs. He previously served as the first director of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute's Office of Translational Alliances and Coordination, and he created and led the National Eye Institute's Office of Translational Research. He was the principal scientist for the bionic eye company Second Sight Medical Products and a staff member on both the United States Senate and House of Representatives committees responsible for science, technology, and innovation policy.

## Panel 2: Connecting the dots: aligning academic discoveries with investors and advisors

3:20 pm



**Rima Chakrabarti, MD**

*Venture Partner, KdT Ventures*

Rima Chakrabarti is a Venture Partner at KdT Ventures, an early-stage biotech venture capital firm, and CEO of Sentinel Biotherapeutics, a company focused on treating cancer with a modular immunotherapy delivery platform. She is also a co-founder of the RBL, a biotechnology company incubator in Houston, TX. Previously, she was a General Partner at KdT Ventures, where she led investments spanning surgical robotics, biomaterials, and engineered cell therapy. Dr. Chakrabarti is a trained neurologist and physician-scientist; her research focused on bioassay development using synthetic biology and molecular engineering.



**Anya Schiess, MBA**

*Co-Managing Partner, J.P. Morgan Life Sciences Private Capital*

Anya Schiess is Co-Managing Partner of Life Science Private Capital at J.P. Morgan, focusing on investments in life sciences and healthcare. She joined in 2022, leveraging J.P. Morgan's resources. Previously, Anya founded Healthy Ventures and was a venture capitalist at Thomas, McNerney & Partners. With a background in healthcare operations at Cardinal Health and Medtronic, she has launched numerous therapies. Anya holds a BA from Princeton and an MBA from Wharton.



**Mira Chaurushiya, PhD**

*Managing Director, Westlake Village BioPartners*

Mira Chaurushiya is a Managing Director at Westlake Village BioPartners with extensive experience in biological sciences and venture capital. After a postdoctoral fellowship in physiological chemistry at Genentech, she joined 5AM Ventures, investing in companies like Precision Nanosystems (acquired by Danaher) and Ideaya Biosciences (IDYA). She earned her PhD from UC San Diego and the Salk Institute and serves on the board of Biotech Connection Bay Area.



## Panel 2: Connecting the dots: aligning academic discoveries with investors and advisors

3:20 pm



### Christopher O'Donnell, PhD

*Executive Director, WRDM; Partner, Pfizer Ventures*

Christopher O'Donnell is a Partner at Pfizer Ventures and Vice President of Worldwide Business Development at Pfizer. He oversees strategic equity investments, managing a portfolio including Adapsyn Bioscience, Nimbus, Pyxis Oncology, Strata Oncology and many others along with venture funds like Avant Bio, Mission BioCapital and Phoenix Venture Partners funds. With over 20 years of scientific leadership, Chris has a proven track record in advancing clinical candidates, building teams, and pioneering innovations in small molecule and antibody-drug conjugate development. He built and led the Applied Synthesis Technologies group within Pfizer R&D to help accelerate the delivery of Pfizer's small molecule portfolio. Prior to that, Chris built and led Pfizer's Antibody Drug Conjugate Oncology Medicinal Chemistry group which delivered new linker, payload and conjugation methods resulting in over 10 conjugates entering clinical development.

Chris received his BS in Chemistry from the University of Illinois-Urbana/Champaign and his PhD in Chemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and joined Pfizer after completing post-doctoral studies at the University of California – Irvine.



### Karen Heidelberger, MBA

*Partner & CPO, Deerfield Management*

Karen Heidelberger is a Partner and Chief Partnerships Officer at Deerfield Management, where she has been since 2002. She manages relationships with investors, partners, and academic institutions, and played a key role in conceptualizing and implementing the Cure initiative. Previously, she was a Trader at Deerfield and held roles at Merrill Lynch in Sales and Trading and Mergers and Acquisitions. With 22 years in healthcare and 28 years in finance, she is also active in Deerfield's Break into the Boardroom and Women in Science programs and serves on the Board of NewYorkBIO. Karen holds degrees from Cornell, Harvard Business School, and Columbia University.

## Panel 3: AI in the life sciences: promise and pitfalls

4:45 pm

Moderator

**Saif Rathore, MD, PhD**

*Senior Advisor, McKinsey & Company*



Saif is a physician scientist with over 25 years of experience in strategy and operations, including the use of advanced analytics to accelerate research, discovery, and development in health care and the life sciences, working with companies across pharma, biotech, and medical tech. During his career, Dr. Rathore has served as SVP of Cellarity (a Flagship Pioneering company); the inaugural Global Head of Data and Analytics innovation at Cigna-Evernorth and Medical Director of Cigna Ventures; a partner at the Boston Consulting Group; and faculty in the Section of Cardiovascular Medicine at the Yale School of Medicine. Dr. Rathore received his MD and PhD (epidemiology) from Yale University and completed internal medicine at Massachusetts General Hospital. Saif has over 130 peer-reviewed publications and co-authored multiple professional guidelines and statements.



**Matej Macak, PhD**

*Partner, QuantumBlack, McKinsey & Company*

Matej Macak is a Partner at QuantumBlack / McKinsey & Company where he leads AI implementation projects focused on acceleration of R&D across life sciences and chemicals industries. At McKinsey and QuantumBlack, Dr. Macak advised 10+ Fortune 500 companies across Life Sciences and Chemicals on AI, digital. He led AI-based transformations covering R&D acceleration across value chain including target ID, drug discovery, and clinical development. Within his work he launched 5+ AI-based companies and centers of excellences across early-stage (e.g., startup, charity) and mature (e.g., Big Pharma) companies. Within McKinsey, he launched 5+ product-lines focused on R&D acceleration including CGT, small molecule and large molecule discovery, target ID.

## Panel 3: AI in the life sciences: promise and pitfalls

4:45 pm



**Milind Kamkolkar, MS**

*Venture Partner, RA Capital*

Milind Kamkolkar is a Venture Partner and leader of AI at RA Capital. He co-founded Paradigm in 2022 backed by Arch and General Catalyst. He raised 203.5M USD for their Series A, and focused on creating equitable access to clinical trials as a treatment option for any patient, anywhere. Before that, Milind was the CDO of Cellarity, a Flagship Pioneering biotechnology company that, using AI, is rewriting the rules of drug creation. At Sanofi, Milind was the pharmaceutical industry's first enterprise Chief Data Officer. As VP of AI & Behavioral Science at Novartis, Milind launched the AI & Data Science role in Digital Medicine. He was on the Board of Directors for Castor and Turbine, two techbio companies specializing in improving clinical trials and drug discovery simulation. Milind is a Former Special Advisor to the UN Global Sustainable Development Goals.



**Renee Yao**

*Ecosystem Business Development, Healthcare Lifesciences,  
NVIDIA*

Renee Yao leads ecosystem business development in healthcare life sciences at NVIDIA, where she focuses on scaling partners and startups. While managing a diverse portfolio, she also oversees over 3,000 healthcare startups in segments such as digital health, medical instruments, medical imaging, genomics, and drug discovery. Previously, Renee worked in product management for NVIDIA's AI systems, shaping bundle solutions and reference architectures for self-driving cars, telecommunications, and big data analytics industries. Outside of NVIDIA, Renee has founded six startups in areas including healthcare insurance, fashion, AI toys, and more.