ABOUT THE SYMPOSIUM AND DR. COMIS

The ECOG-ACRIN Cancer Research Group (ECOG-ACRIN) hosts the **Robert L. Comis, MD Translational Science Symposium** at its semiannual Group Meetings. This plenary symposium is open to all attendees. The overall goal of the event is to seed ideas for ECOG-ACRIN's various scientific committees to explore within and across its scientific programs. Each symposium offers a focused examination of a particular field of scientific opportunity.

Robert L. Comis, MD was an innovative researcher who recognized the potential for translational research to advance cancer prevention, detection, and treatment. Some of the most important national late-stage clinical trials were conducted under his leadership of the Group (1995-2017). He spearheaded scores of scientific discoveries that changed clinical practice across multiple types of cancer. ECOG-ACRIN is pleased to honor him through this event.

Dr. Comis' interest in oncology began early in his career at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) when he was sent to Uganda to provide chemotherapy to children suffering from Burkitt's lymphoma. After a fellowship at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, he embarked on a career focused on lung cancer and developmental therapeutics. He built centers of excellence in the research and treatment of cancer, first in Syracuse then at Fox Chase Cancer Center and Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia.

Dr. Comis envisioned the merger that resulted in the ECOG-ACRIN Cancer Research Group in 2012. He led the effort to coalesce the new group into what it is today: a scientific community of researchers in cancer biology, immunology, therapeutics, molecular and imaging diagnostics, and comparative effectiveness and patient-reported outcomes research, as well as bioinformatics and biostatistical expertise.

A giant in the field, he was a tireless advocate for patient access to trials and a champion for underserved populations. As a mentor, he helped launch many careers by fostering scientific inquiry among early-career oncologists. Many of his trainees are now leaders in the field, and will carry on his legacy.

ROBERT L. COMIS, MD TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM

How Do We Know What We Know? Approaches Using AI and Other Electronic Methods in Clinical Trials

Wednesday, October 22, 2025
3:00–5:00 pm
Philadelphia Marriott Downtown
Grand Ballroom Salon E, 5th Floor

AGENDA

3:00-3:15 pm	Welcome	Peter J. O'Dwyer, MD *ECOG-ACRIN,* *University of Pennsylvania*
	Exploring Alternative Approaches to Phase II/III Therapeutic Questions	Mitchell D. Schnall, MD, PhD *ECOG-ACRIN,* *University of Pennsylvania*

Segment 1

3:15-3:30 pm	Use of AI and Machine Learning in Clinical Trials	Jon A. Steingrimsson, PhD *Brown University*

Segment 2

3:30-3:45 pm	External Controls from Real-World Data in Therapeutic Trials	Rebecca A. Hubbard, PhD *Brown University*

Segment 3

3:45-4:00 pm	Regulatory Considerations On Use of AI and Other Modeling Approaches in Clinical Trials	Paul J. Catalano, ScD *Harvard University,* *Dana-Farber Cancer Institute*

Segment 4:

4:00-4:15 pm	Imaging and AI for Tissue/Metabolic Phenotyping Analysis	Walter R. Witschey, PhD *University of Pennsylvania*

Segment 5: Panel Discussion – David A. Mankoff, MD, PhD Moderator

4:15-5:00 pm **Panel:** Mitchell Schnall, MD, PhD, Jon Steingrimsson, PhD, Rebecca Hubbard, PhD, Paul Catalano, ScD, Walter Witschey, PhD, Jordan Berlin, MD, Mary Lou Smith, JD, MBA

SPEAKERS

Mary Lou Smith, JD, MBA
Research Advocacy Network
Ms. Smith is a co-founder of the Research Advocacy Network (RAN), a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming cancer research by elevating the patient voice. RAN brings together advocates, researchers, and clinicians to ensure studies reflect patient priorities and improve healthcare outcomes. Ms. Smith is chair of the ECOG-ACRIN Cancer Research Advocates Committee and she also serves on the Executive Committee, NCORP Community Advisory Committee, and Breast Cancer Committee. She is a member of two Specialized Programs of Research Excellence (SPOREs), the Mayo Clinic Breast Cancer SPORE and the Epigenetics SPORE. She is a three-time breast cancer survivor and an ovarian cancer survivor.

Jon A. Steingrimsson, PhD
Brown University
Dr. Steingrimsson is an associate professor of biostatistics at Brown University and an associate group statistician for ECOG-ACRIN. His statistical methodological research focuses on design and analysis of clinical trials, generalizability and transportability of study results, and machine learning for health. He is heavily involved in several ECOG-ACRIN committees and is an associate editor for *Biostatistics*, *Gastroenterology*, and the *Journal of the American College of Radiology*.

Walter R. Witschey, PhD
University of Pennsylvania
Dr. Witschey is an associate professor of radiology, associate vice chair of research IT, and director of the Advanced Cardiovascular Imaging Lab at the University of Pennsylvania. His core research focus is cardiac magnetic resonance imaging, imaging technologies, and artificial intelligence. His lab uses a multidisciplinary and translational approach, integrating techniques from electrical engineering, computer science, biology and bioengineering. His translational research interests are in myocardial ischemia and coronary artery disease, reperfusion injury, non-ischemic heart disease, congenital heart disease, and metabolic imaging of the heart.

SPEAKERS

Jordan D. Berlin, MD
Vanderbilt University/Ingram Cancer Center
Dr. Berlin is the Cornelius Abernathy Craig Professor of Medicine and director of the Division of Hematology and Oncology, Department of Medicine, at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. He is a gastrointestinal (GI) oncologist with a special interest in drug development, looking for new treatments for patients with all solid tumors with a special interest in GI malignancies. He focuses on early phase trials and the translation of novel laboratory findings into clinical research. Dr. Berlin is associate director for clinical research at Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center (VICC) and leads phase I research. He is also the principal investigator on the VICC UM1 to conduct early phase trials within the National Cancer Institute's Early Phase Clinical Trials Network and helps to co-lead the VICC GI Specialized Program of Research Excellence. At ECOG-ACRIN, he chairs the Gastrointestinal Cancer Committee.

Paul J. Catalano, ScD
Harvard University/Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Dr. Catalano is associate chair of the Department of Data Science at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and senior lecturer on biostatistics at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. He is also associate group statistician for the Boston office of the ECOG-ACRIN Biostatistics and Data Management Center. Dr. Catalano has been the faculty lead statistician for the GI Committee in ECOG-ACRIN for over 30 years. He is also the director of the Biostatistics Core Facility of the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center, where he leads a team of over 30 statisticians and collaborates primarily in radiation oncology, psychosocial oncology, outcomes research, and cancer biology. His methodological research interests lie in the areas of multiple outcomes modeling, methods for hierarchical clustered data, and competing risks.

SPEAKERS

Rebecca A. Hubbard, PhD
Brown University
Dr. Hubbard is the Carl Kawaja and Wendy Holcombe Professor of Public Health and a professor of biostatistics and data science at Brown University. Her research focuses on the development and application of methods to improve analyses using real-world data sources, including electronic health records (EHRs) and medical claims data. The data science era demands novel analytic methods to transform the wealth of data created as a byproduct of digital interactions into valid and generalizable knowledge. Dr. Hubbard's research emphasizes statistical methods designed to meet this challenge by addressing the messiness and complexity of real-world data, including informative observation schemes, phenotyping error, and error and missingness in confounders. Her methods have been applied to support the advancement of a broad range of research areas through use of EHR and claims data, including health services research, cancer epidemiology, aging and dementia, and pharmacoepidemiology.

David A. Mankoff, MD, PhD
University of Pennsylvania/Abramson Cancer Center
Dr. Mankoff is the Matthew J. Wilson Professor and vice chair for research in the Radiology Department at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine. He also serves as the associate director for education and training for Penn's Abramson Cancer Center. Dr. Mankoff's research focuses on molecular imaging of cancer, primarily on breast cancer, and emphasizes therapeutic monitoring and identifying factors mediating therapeutic resistance and translation of new methods to clinical trials. He also focuses on quantitative imaging methods related to molecular cancer imaging. Key research achievements include defining applications of FDG PET to breast cancer staging and response evaluation, translating novel tracers to early human trials, studying the in vivo biology of cancer metabolism, and imaging estrogen receptor expression in breast cancer using PET. At ECOG-ACRIN, he co-chairs the Scientific Planning Committee and is the former chair of the Experimental Imaging Sciences Working Group.

SPEAKERS

Peter J. O'Dwyer, MD
ECOG-ACRIN Cancer Research Group/University of Pennsylvania
Dr. O'Dwyer is the group co-chair of the ECOG-ACRIN Cancer Research Group. A medical oncologist with expertise in gastrointestinal and pancreatic cancers, Dr. O'Dwyer is a physician at Penn Medicine and a professor of medicine at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the CEO and chair of the PrECOG, LLC Board of Managers, president of the ECOG-ACRIN Medical Research Foundation, and president of the ECOG Research and Education Foundation. Dr. O'Dwyer's research focuses on novel therapy development, primarily in pancreatic and colorectal cancers. He previously led the Developmental Therapeutics Programs at Fox Chase Cancer Center and the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. O'Dwyer has more than 350 scientific papers in medical literature and participates in numerous national and international organizations. He co-chaired the landmark NCI-MATCH precision medicine cancer trial.

Mitchell D. Schnall, MD, PhD
ECOG-ACRIN Cancer Research Group/University of Pennsylvania
Dr. Schnall is the group co-chair of the ECOG-ACRIN Cancer Research Group. He is the senior vice president for data and technology solutions for the University of Pennsylvania Health System. Previously, he served two terms as chair of the Department of Radiology at the Perelman School of Medicine, where he is the Eugene P. Pendergrass Professor of Radiology. He is a physician at Penn Medicine within its Abdominal Imaging Services program. Dr. Schnall was one of the architects of the merger that formed ECOG-ACRIN in 2012. He is an international leader in translational biomedical and imaging research, working throughout his career across the interface between basic imaging science and clinical medicine to ensure effective integration of radiology research with other medical disciplines. His work has led to fundamental changes in the imaging approaches to breast and prostate cancer, and he continues to have a significant influence on emerging imaging technologies, including those in optical imaging.