

James R. Newland, MD Excellence in Teaching Award

Maher Abdalla

I am honored to submit my self-nomination for the **Teaching Excellence Award**. Since joining the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) in 2012, I have dedicated my career to advancing education in immunology, infectious disease, and redox biology through innovative teaching, curriculum development, and sustained mentorship of students and trainees.

I currently serve as the course director for *PMI955: Advanced Immunology*, *PMI509: Introduction to Immunology for Pharmacy Students*, and, since 2024, *PMI922: Redox Biology in Human Disease*. In these roles, I coordinate multi-faculty teaching, oversee course design and assessments, and deliver lectures that integrate foundational principles with cutting-edge research. I also continue to contribute as a lecturer and facilitator in other College of Medicine courses, including the M1 Tuberculosis small group.

My teaching philosophy centers on creating accessible, engaging, and modern learning opportunities. For example, I developed and continue to teach an aseptic techniques lecture and laboratory demonstration for cytotechnology students, which I further expanded into a widely used **e-learning module** on aseptic techniques and biological safety cabinets. This module provides a flexible, high-quality learning resource that benefits students across multiple programs. In 2018, I also served as course director and sole instructor for *Introduction to Immunology (BIOL 3240)* at the University of Nebraska–Omaha, where I designed the full syllabus and delivered all lectures.

Beyond the classroom, I have been honored with invitations to deliver seminars at regional, national, and international levels, including the Redox Biology Center Symposium (UNL), the SfrBM Regional Redox Symposium, the College of Saint Mary, and the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System. These opportunities reflect recognition of my expertise and my ability to effectively communicate complex topics to diverse audiences.

Mentorship is a central part of my contributions. I have chaired and served on committees for numerous master's and doctoral students across the IPID, Cancer Biology, and BMB programs. Several of my trainees have successfully advanced to medical school, postdoctoral research, or professional positions in academia and industry. I am particularly proud of mentoring undergraduate and medical students, such as Melissa Bavitz, who co-authored a peer-reviewed publication in *Infection and Immunity* under my guidance before entering medical school.

Through these teaching, curriculum development, and mentoring efforts, I strive to equip students not only with knowledge but also with the critical thinking, independence, and resilience required for long-term success. My work reflects a commitment to high-quality education, innovation, and the professional growth of students across multiple levels of training.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be considered for the Teaching Excellence Award and for the chance to contribute to UNMC's mission of preparing the next generation of scientists and health professionals. Thank you for reviewing my nomination.

Sincerely,

Dr. Maher Abdalla Assistant Professor
Department of Pathology, Microbiology, and Immunology University of Nebraska Medical Center

Invited Presentations at Local, State, Regional, National and International Meetings

1. **Abdalla MY.** Role of heme-oxygenase-1 in microbial pathogenesis. Work-in- Progress seminar, Beadle Center, UNL, USA- 10/2013.
2. **Abdalla MY.** Peroxidase-mediate nitration of the *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* quinolone signal compound (PQS): biochemistry and possible role in cystic fibrosis lung injury. Redox Biology Center Symposium, UNL, USA- 11/ 2015.
3. **Abdalla MY.** Oxidative stress and antioxidant therapy: from infection to cancer. International Society of Antioxidant in Nutrition and Health (ISANH), Amman, Jordan. May 2-3, 2018. (International level).
4. **Abdalla MY.** Heme Oxygenase-1 and Its Metabolites Contributes to Survival of *Mycobacterium abscessus* in Human Macrophages. SfrBM Regional Redox Symposium Larry W. and Terry D. Oberley Symposium. Redox Mechanisms in Cell Proliferation, Differentiation, and Death. June 8-9, 2018. Michael F. Sorrell Center - Omaha, NE, USA.
5. **Abdalla MY.** Targeting heme-oxygenase-1 in Pancreatic Cancer. Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, UNMC 12/2019.
6. **Abdalla MY.** Oxidative stress in Cancer Diseases. Marie Curie Program Seminar Series, College of Sant Mary, Omaha. Nov. 17th, 2022.
7. **Abdalla MY.** Oxygen, Cancer, and a New Target for Treatment. American Cancer Society's "Meet a Researcher". UNMC. October 2, 2025
8. **Abdalla MY.** Enhancing Chemotherapy Efficacy: Targeting the Heme Degradation Pathway in Pancreatic Cancer, VA Research Seminar, VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, Omaha. NE 68105, February 7th, 2025.
9. **Abdalla MY.** Targeting the Heme Degradation Pathway in Pancreatic Cancer, Immunology Interest Group, Department of Pathology, Microbiology, and Immunology, Omaha. NE 68105, April 8th, 2025.
10. **Abdalla MY.** New Microbiome-Based Therapeutic Approaches for Pancreatic Cancer, UNMC College of Medicine Basic Science Retreat, May 29, 2026.

Teaching Activities

1. Advanced Immunobiology for graduate students (PMI 955). Course director since October, 2020- now.
2. Immunology/ UNMC College of Pharmacy (PMI 509). Coarse director since 2020-now.
3. Introduction to Immunology (BIOL 3240), University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO), Spring 2018, Course coordinator.
4. Principles of Immunology (PMI 950a) 2017.
5. Aseptic Techniques in tissue culture. 3 hours lecture and lab training for Cytotechnology Education, College of Allied Health Professions, UNMC. 2019-now.
6. PMI 992 Advanced Topics in IPID. Topic Microenvironments/Niches. Instructor. 2019.
7. PMI 922 Redox Biology in Human disease. Course director. 2025.
8. Small group facilitator in Interprofessional Education, University of Nebraska Medical Center. August 2025.

Graduate students mentored (UNMC)

2017-2020 Joel Frandsen. Flavonoid and Cannabidiol Neural Glyoxalase Pathway Enhancement Against Aging and Alzheimer's Disease. UNMC, USA. Role: Research committee member.

2020-present Zachary W Scott, In vivo efficacy of a Twin Gallium Protoporphyrin and Gallium Nitrate therapy against *Klebsiella pneumoniae*. Role: Research committee member.

2020-2024 Ramia J Salloom. Heme Oxygenase-1 inhibition as a radiosensitizer for prostate cancer Therapy. Role: Chair.

2021-2022 Clara Sophia Mundry, Characterizing Pancreatic Cancer Th17 Cells and Evaluating Opportunities to Stimulate Th17 Cells to Improve Anti-Tumor Effects. Role: comprehensive exam committee member.

2021-2025 Reegan Sturgeon, Neutrophil tumor cell interaction in PDAC progression, therapy resistance, and metastasis. Role: Research committee member.

2023-present Raina Barnes, title TBD. Role: Research committee member.

2023-2024 Mehnaz Tabassum, The Role of TSC2 Gene in Lymphoma Pathogenesis. Role: Chair.

2023-2025 Dania Sahtout. Metabolomics studies in prostate cancer. Role: Chair.

2024-present Mohammed Hassan. The role of microbiome in pancreatic cancer progression and resistance to chemotherapy. Role: Chair.

2024-present Isaac Adediji, Impact of prenatal oxycodone exposure on placental function and fetal brain development and the modulatory role of melatonin supplementation. Role: Research committee member.

2024-present Erin Drengler, Targeting myeloid derived suppressor cells in chronic B-cell malignancies. Role: Research committee member.

2024-2025 Sydney Skupa. Gut microbiome and Chronic lymphocytic leukemia. Role: Research committee member.

2025-present Elizabeth Quaw. The role of HO-1 in pancreatic cancer macrophages. Role: Chair.

2026 Samy Sharif, College of Medicine Medical Student Summer Research Program, May-August, 2026.

Published audiovisual.

e-module: "Aseptic Techniques" for cytotechnology students (Cyto713-813). Diagnostic Cytology Program, Department of Medical Sciences, College of Allied Health Professions, UNMC. This e-module covers the basics of aseptic techniques and procedures relating to biological safety cabinets as shown in the link:

<https://www.unmc.edu/elearning/egallery/advanced-practicum-course-aseptic-techniques/>

Scott Koepsell

I nominate Scott Koepsell for James R. Newland, MD Excellence in Teaching Award.

Below are the reasons:

1. He demonstrates outstanding commitment to teaching on multiple levels – he teaches to medical students, critical care fellows, anesthesia fellows, hem onc fellows and pathology residents
2. His teaching is sustained over multiple years
3. He developed and sustained teaching curriculum for anesthesia and critical care fellows and for many years (prior 2019) was in charge of residents education in transfusion medicine
4. He utilized innovative methods in education and together with Shelly Williams created visualized 3-D clotting cascade video with help of Davis center.
5. He teaches not only locally, but nationally as well. He was invited speaker on several Grand Rounds presentations all over US.

I strongly believe he exemplifies the educational mission of our department.

Dinesh Pradhan

Dr. Pradhan has been an especially prolific member in the teaching arena of our department as is evidenced by his numerous contributions at the locoregional level and also nationally and internationally. I cannot think any other more deserving nominee for this award. He is also very humble and approachable making him quite popular among our trainees and so it is no surprise that he was recognized with the Harold M. Maurer Outstanding Resident Educator award recently this past June.

Listed below are some of his accomplishments.

Teaching Summary

Local:

- Dept. of PMI: In addition to teaching residents, fellows and rotating medical students at day-to-day sign-out in the Department of Pathology, Dr Pradhan has received great reviews from his students for teaching at Interesting Case Conferences, Morning Didactic conferences, and Unknown conferences. He also serves as faculty advisor for the journal club for pathology residents.
- Dept. of Dermatology: He also regularly teaches residents and fellows in the Department of Dermatology at day-to-day sign-out as well as at didactic conferences (Dermatology resident didactic lecture series).
- Medical Students: In addition to teaching medical students at day-to-day sign-out, he has been a great mentor to several medical students, guiding them through the research projects, abstracts, presentations at national meetings and journal articles (1-2 each). He has also been teaching Dermpath lectures (Dermpath Lab) for the M1 MSK-INT and M2 MOS teaching schedules and serving as facilitator for Clinical Trial discussions.
- He also teaches in the Biology of Disease course for the Allied Health Professionals. Occasionally, he also teaches residents and fellows of other departments including head and neck surgery, and Orthopaedic Surgery. As director of the Tissue Sciences Facility, he also hosts educational tours for the Genetics, Cell Biology and Anatomy (GCBA) students every term and has received unanimously positive feedback from students as per Dr McCumber's email "Student feedback last year was unanimously positive, and the cohort found the tour incredibly interesting and a valuable experience for their understanding of histology."

Regional

- Advances in Anatomic Pathology Meeting: Dr Pradhan has been an active member of the committee organizing this important meeting for practicing pathologists, fellows, residents, and students in the region. His talk at the 2025 meeting received excellent evaluations from participants.

National:

- International Society of Dermatopathology: Self-Assessment Course Part 1: Dr Pradhan was an invited speaker at the 28th Joint Meeting, March 2025, Orlando, FL, USA.
- United States and Canadian Academy of Pathology (USCAP) Companion Meeting of the Association of Indian Pathologists in North America: Dr. Pradhan was the Course Director and Chair of this meeting at the USCAP 114th Annual meeting in Boston, MA, March 2025.
- USCAP Dermatopathology Platform Session: Dr. Pradhan was the Platform Session Chair of this session at the 113th Annual meeting in Baltimore, MD, March, 2024

International:

- International Association for Integrated Oncology, Conference on Oncopathology and Molecular Pathology, Chennai, India, May 2024: Dr Pradhan was an invited speaker for 2 sessions “Melanocytic Dermatopathology: Practical Approach and Pitfalls” and “Skin Lymphoma: Diagnostic Challenges and Mimics.”
- XLIV Symposium of the International Society of Dermatopathology, Cape Town, South Africa: Dr Pradhan was an invited speaker for Self-Assessment Course, October 20-22, 2025.
- Asian Society of Dermatopathology (ASD), Taipei: Dr Pradhan was an invited speaker for ASD Monthly Webinar (June 2026) Education Program.
- British Society for Dermatopathology (BSD), London: Dr Pradhan was an invited speaker for BSD tutorial program in Aug, 2026.

Forthcoming:

- MD Anderson Dermatopathology Course, “Dermatopathology Uncovered: Diagnostic Pearls from MD Anderson Cancer Center,” February 19–20, 2027: Dr Pradhan is an invited speaker at this course.

Mentoring:

Dr Pradhan has mentored several UNMC residents and medical students, as well as residents from different national institutions (UPMC, OSU, Loyola) to outstanding achievements:

- More than 35 publications in peer-reviewed journals
- More than 35 abstracts including numerous platforms [Award for the 3rd place in 26th Duel in Dermatopathology Resident Abstract Competition (Dr. Pauline Xu), ASDP 62nd Annual Meeting. Nov 2025]
- Mentored Research Grant Awards (Dr. Rebecca Manzo and Dr. Pauline Xu in 2025)
- Mentoring candidates for competitive Dermatopathology fellowships and mentoring practicing dermatopathologists.

Shelly Williams

I would like to nominate Dr. Shelly Williams for the Excellence in Teaching Award for her work as Block Director for the BDI (Blood, Defenses, and Invaders) core for the medical students.

The BDI block was one of the most consistently admonished cores, with students complaining about lack on continuity and information presented at the Fellow level rather than the First Year Medical Student level.

Upon taking over the BDI core, Dr. Williams single handedly sat through every lecture, reviewed all content, and worked with every lecturer to revise the content to the appropriate level. In addition, she organize the content into a manner that flowed with key concepts re-enforcing other key concepts.

An unsung hero concept of her work was to badger every lecturer to come up with ADA compliant lectures this year. As well as the lecture format, Dr. Williams has had to review and edit all exam questions to meet College of Medicine objectives.

These countless have resulted in a better reviewed course and test exam average in the upper 80%'s. Students are now exposed to key concepts in a methodical manner, and most importantly, she has asserted the role that Pathology has in teaching these key concepts.