

ALUMNI STORIES



Michelle A.T. Hildebrandt, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Lymphoma/Myeloma
Adjunct Associate Professor, Epidemiology,
Human Genetics & Environmental Sciences
MD Anderson Cancer Center
Houston, TX

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MD Anderson
Cancer Center

Making Cancer History®

From the farm to the research lab

Growing up in a rural area of Minnesota, Michelle was always around farm animals, which had a significant influence on her decision to become a veterinarian. She spent time during high school riding with a local veterinarian as he went from farm-to-farm caring for the animals.

During her undergraduate studies, she had a change of heart. She realized that, as a veterinarian, most of her time would be spent doing routine procedures in the clinic. Her interest in genetics and determining the “why” grew strong, leading her to shift gears and pursue a career in genetic research. She gave up her hard-earned slot in veterinary school for a PhD doing pharmacogenetics research and then joined MD Anderson as a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Epidemiology. Her desire was to better understand genetic variation among populations, identifying genetics that further the ability to predict and refine the risk of cancer treatments and prevention of future disease.

Fast forward to today and Michelle’s love of animals continues, but her work focuses on the human population. Her career statistics best tell her story. Michelle is currently funded by NCI, CPRIT, and internal/external funding sources. She has also published 127 peer-reviewed original research articles and has five active epidemiology studies. Her passion for her chosen field remains strong, and she’s making significant contributions to her profession. In addition to research, Michelle directs the Cancer Epidemiology course at the UT Health School of Public Health and delivers lectures for a variety of courses.

Michelle is proud of all the research she has led and/or participated in, yet she is most proud of the work in which she is currently involved that focuses on trying to understand the genetic factors on late effects of pharmacological and treatment oncological interventions within the adolescent and young adult populations. Although it takes a long time to build populations and get the appropriate research infrastructure developed, she is beginning to see patterns emerge. The accumulation of her 15 years in cancer research has built slowly upon itself year after year, and she is beginning to see things come together.

With so many accomplishments in this first leg of her research career, how does Michelle define career success? Her response was immediate. She wants to continue to do solid research that is meaningful as well as train and mentor people, so the next generation propagates the research community. It’s not about the number of papers and grants and studies she accomplishes as it is being involved in research that is important and relevant. And through greater knowledge of genetics, the understanding of what people can expect regarding future disease, the most effective disease treatment, and preventive measures will grow, making a significant difference for future populations.

MD Anderson program(s) in which I trained

Research Fellowship, Cancer Prevention Research Training Program, Epidemiology, 2007-2009

Academic area of specialization

- Molecular Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics
- Epidemiology

Current Employer

The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center

Current City

Houston, TX

Current Position

- Associate Professor, Department of Lymphoma/Myeloma, Division of Cancer Medicine
- Adjunct Associate Professor, Department of Epidemiology, Human Genetics & Environmental Science

Website

[MD Anderson Faculty Profile - Michelle Hildebrandt](#)

Honors and awards

- Ronald E. McNair Research Scholar, University of Wisconsin-River Falls, River Falls, WI, 2000-2001
- Summer Student Training Program, The Jackson Laboratory, Mentors: Drs. Larry Mobraaten and Carlisle Landel, 2000
- Mayo Graduate School Travel Award, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, 2005
- Top Abstract, American Society of Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics Annual Meeting, 2005
- Cancer Prevention Research Training Program Fellowship, NCI/MD Anderson Cancer Center, 2007-2009
- Sigma Xi Scientific Research Society, 2007

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- Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Award for Postgraduate Population/Patient-Oriented Research and Winner of Poster Presentation Competition, MD Anderson Cancer Center Trainee Research Day, 2008
- American Association for Cancer Research Scholar-in-Training Award, funded by Susan G. Komen for the Cure, AACR - Frontiers in Cancer Prevention Research Meeting, 2009
- Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals, Inc. Award for Postgraduate Population/Patient-Oriented Research, MD Anderson Cancer Center Trainee Research Day, 2009
- MD Anderson Trainee Excellence Award, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 2009
- Trainee of the Quarter Award, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 2009
- Highly Rated Poster Presentation, AACR Annual Meeting, 2012
- Leading Mentor in Cancer Prevention Award - Honorable Mention, MD Anderson Division of Cancer Prevention and Population Sciences, 2012
- Travel Award, 5th Consortium Meeting (Madrid, Spain), International Consortium of Bladder Cancer, 2012
- Travel Award, Annual Sister Institution Meeting (Oslo, Norway), MD Anderson Cancer Center Global Academic Programs, 2012
- AAMC Early Career Women Faculty Professional Development Seminar Travel Award, MD Anderson Cancer Center Women Faculty Program, 2015
- Faculty Excellence in Research Award, MD Anderson Cancer Center Cancer Survivorship Research Symposium, 2015
- Robert M. Chamberlain Distinguished Mentor Award Nominee, MD Anderson Postdoctoral Association, 2016
- Leading Mentor in Cancer Prevention Award, MD Anderson Division of Cancer Prevention and Population Sciences, 2017
- Robert M. Chamberlain Distinguished Mentor Award Nominee, MD Anderson Postdoctoral Association, 2017
- The Strode Family Chair of Research & The Nebraska's Hope for A Better Tomorrow Chair of Research, The Brain Aneurysm Foundation, 2017
- Andrew Sabin Family Fellow, MD Anderson Cancer Center, 2021-present

Works of interest

[Click here for a complete listing of Michelle's published works](#)

Graduate school(s) from which I received a degree(s)

Mayo Clinic College of Medicine
PhD, Molecular Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics – 2007

Undergraduate school(s) from which I received a degree(s)

University of Wisconsin-River Falls
BS, Biology – 2001

High school from which I graduated

Triton High School, Dodge Center, MN – 1997

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