



Kelly Paulson

M.D., Ph.D.

Kelly Paulson, M.D., Ph.D., is a medical oncologist and researcher with a passion for advancing immunotherapy in the fight against skin cancer and other solid tumors. Her love for immunotherapy, science and patient care makes her the ideal choice to lead the Center for Immunology (CIO) at the Paul G. Allen Research Center at Swedish Cancer Institute.

Dr. Paulson's research career began at 16, when she cold-called the CEO of Seattle-area biotech firm Rosetta Inpharmatics—at his home—and asked for an internship. He invited her in for an interview the next day and gave her the job on the spot, inspiring a passion for technology, computers, science and medicine that persists today.

In medical school at the University of Washington she pursued both a Ph.D. and M.D and paired her love of science with a budding desire to help patients. This combination led her to focus her studies on a rare skin cancer, Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC). Through MCC, Dr. Paulson became aware of the immune system's critical importance to early detection and treatment of cancer.

Dr. Paulson continued her career as a medical oncologist and researcher at the University of Washington and Fred Hutch, where her research grew to involve other solid tumors (especially skin cancers such as melanoma) and leukemias. She also underwent specialty training and pursued development of cellular immunotherapies. The interplay between the immune system and cancer has been the subject of most of her 38 research publications.

Dr. Paulson joined Swedish in 2019, in large part due to its robust research program that offers patients access to clinical trials not available elsewhere. "There's nothing more frustrating than telling a patient that you might have a trial for them in a few months," she says. "Swedish is set up to bring clinical trials to patients quickly."

Now Dr. Paulson is eager to build upon exciting recent advances in immunotherapy to pioneer first-in-man treatments for other forms of cancer at the CIO.

Dr. Paulson is just as busy outside the hospital as she is inside it. She and her husband, Ben, have two young children and enjoy downhill skiing, hiking and rowing—a sport at which she excelled at Stanford University.

Interim Lead
Center for Immuno-oncology
Paul G. Allen Research Center

With Swedish since: 2019

Education:

- University of Washington Medical Science Training Program (M.D. and Ph.D.)
- University of Washington Affiliated Hospitals (residency, internal medicine)
- Fred Hutch (fellowship, medical oncology and hematology)

Past positions:

- Clinical assistant professor, Washington State University (current, adjunct)
- Attending physician, Seattle Cancer Care Alliance
- Research associate, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center

