

Highlights from AACR and Congratulations Dr. Kerlavage

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Highlights from AACR: ODS Perspective

The [2024 American Association for Cancer Research \(AACR\) conference](#) was held from April 5-10. This conference convenes the global cancer research community, showcasing cutting-edge advancements and collaborative initiatives, offering an exciting look at the future of cancer research and supporting emerging technologies. The primary themes of the meeting were Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning (AI/ML) and Equity, with NIH/NCI sessions focusing on the goals of the NCI, research funding, policy guidance, and resources for accessing and sharing data.

The conference began with remarks from AACR and NCI leadership followed by plenary talks discussing the major themes of the meeting. Throughout the conference, multiple presentations highlighted the increasing importance of AI/ML in cancer research, particularly in managing large datasets and data democratization efforts. These discussions covered the ways investigators are harnessing the power of AI/ML, enabling them to better utilize extensive datasets with new algorithms and innovative methods and applications, speeding the development of novel therapies. Investigators are not alone in pushing towards an AI/ML computing future, NIH/NCI are supporting data sharing efforts to expand access to datasets and developing systems which combine data with advanced computing in the same space so that secondary users can more easily utilize them.

This technological revolution is complemented by initiatives supporting data accessibility and sharing, underscoring the importance of data management and sharing policies. Multiple sessions were hosted by NIH/NCI to provide information on resources and relevant policies and guidelines. Some highlights included:

- Fireside chat with NCI director, Dr. Kim Rathmell, discussing her goals for the institute and answering questions
- Symposia covering Cancer Research Data Commons (CRDC) and Childhood Cancer Data Initiative (CCDI) resources
- Multiple Meet the Experts sessions and open table meetings hosted at the NCI booth

Through these events, the institute opened dialogue with the whole community to better understand their needs while also relaying the most important information on resources and policies.

Further, AACR offered a look ahead at new fields of study and research advancements, often by early career investigators, that are sure to have a great impact on cancer care. One emerging field was cancer neuroscience, which garnered its first full session. Cancer neuroscience bridges basic neuroscience to cancer biology by applying techniques and methods traditionally reserved to investigate brain anatomy and physiology to cancers of the brain. Thus, investigators are now asking questions about brain tumors in a brain-specific manner, fundamentally changing how brain cancers are viewed. Founding members of this emerging discipline discussed their groundbreaking research and the future of training in this area considering new NIH/NCI funding support.

The conference painted a dynamic picture of interdisciplinary collaboration, technological innovation, and data accessibility as essential drivers in advancing cancer research. During the meeting, ODS members attended inspiring talks, engaged with researchers from all over the world to discuss matters ranging from policy implementation to improving equity in data access and utility, and participated in hands-on workshops. Overall, the conference provided a platform emphasizing the importance of collaboration and technological advancements in advancing cancer research and care.

Congratulations to Dr. Tony Kerlavage

The NCI Office of Data Sharing would like to extend congratulations to Dr. Tony Kerlavage who is retiring as director of the Center for Bioinformatics and Information Technology (CBIIT) at the end of May 2024! Over the last 7 years leading the center, including overseeing the founding of our office in 2018, he has fostered a culture of collaboration, emphasizing engagement across the entirety of the NCI, driving CBIIT to better support the scientific mission of the NCI and better meet the needs of our stakeholders. As director, he led through a people first approach, reserving time in his busy schedule to act as a mentor to the CBIIT workforce at all levels, meeting with office directors and new fellows alike. This philosophy helped make everyone around him better at their job and allowed us to collectively achieve the many successes of his tenure. We wish Dr. Kerlavage good luck and good health in his retirement and hope the time off with family and friends will bring levity and joy as he embarks on this new phase of his life!



We would also like to welcome the new acting CBIIT director, Dr. Jill Barnholtz-Sloan. We look forward to working with her to continue supporting the NCI's data sharing efforts.

[Read his reflection on his tenure.](#)

We'd love to hear from you! Contact the ODS team at: nciofficeofdatasharing@mail.nih.gov

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