

# ALEXANDER FERRENA

Ph.D. Candidate in Cancer Bioinformatics  
at Albert Einstein College of Medicine

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## EDUCATION

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August 2019 –  
Expected Graduation,  
May 2024

**Ph.D. Candidate, Albert Einstein College of Medicine (AECOM)**

Ph.D. in Clinical Investigation, Institute for Clinical and Translational Research  
Thesis: *Molecular and Clinical Implications of Skp2 inhibition in Osteosarcoma*

September 2017 –  
May 2019

**M.A. Biotechnology, Columbia University**

Department of Biological Sciences, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
Thesis: *The Impact of Aging on Lung Adenocarcinoma*.

September 2012 –  
May 2016

**B.A. Biology, New York University**

College of Arts and Sciences

## EXPERIENCE

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August 2022 –  
March 2023

**Singulomics Corporation, Bioinformatics Consultant**

Developed an efficient, modular analysis pipeline for spatial transcriptomics data.

June 2020 –  
Present

**Ph.D. Candidate, Albert Einstein College of Medicine**

**Lab of Dr. Deyou Zheng (Genetics Dept.) and Dr. Bang Hoang, Orthopedics**

Designed and applied analysis workflows of single-cell transcriptomics data for cancer and embryonic development. Developed a pipeline package for scRNA-seq integration and replicate-aware cross-condition comparison (to be published soon).

May 2018 –  
June 2020

**Computational Biology Research Assistant, Memorial Sloan Kettering**

**Lab of Dr. Tuomas Tammela, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center**

Analyzed high-throughput sequencing data such as scRNA-seq, CITE-seq, and others in close coordination with a lab of wet-lab geneticists.

June 2016 –  
September 2017

**Bioinformatics Internship, New York University (NYU)**

**Lab of Dr. David Gresham, NYU Center for Genomics and Systems Biology**

Studied metabolic response of yeast to environment via bulk RNAseq data analysis.

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

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**Programming:** Advanced, daily use of **R** for genomic data analysis and scalable package development, including libraries like Seurat, EdgeR, and InferCNV. Daily use of **Unix shell (bash)**. Experience with **Python** for genomics applications including use of Scanpy, scVelo and Cellrank.

**Data analysis:** high experience with multivariate statistics and machine learning for big data.

**Cloud Computing:** Extensive use of High-Performance Clusters via the SLURM and Sun Grid schedulers, and experience with AWS.

## FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND AWARDS

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- May 2020                      **Fellowship Award, PhD program in Clinical Investigation (PCI)**  
Applied for and was accepted to this highly competitive fellowship and training program offered to PhD students at Einstein with research proposals focused on biostatistics and clinical research. This program offers advanced, formal biostatistics training with a highly clinical and translational focus.
- September 2019                      **Student Spotlight, Columbia Graduate School of Arts and Sciences**  
Received distinction for academic and research performance
- May 2015                      **Poster Presentation distinction, NYU Undergraduate Research Conference**  
Awarded best in group for poster presentation titled *Identification and Characterization of Orthodenticle-Dependent Enhancers*.

## LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

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- January 2021 – Present                      **Founder and President, Einstein Montefiore Omics Club**  
Founded this student organization to facilitate networking, collaboration, and education around -omics technologies. Organized the *Intro to Omics Workshop* series attended by over 150 people to teach bioinformatics data analysis. Led a session on single cell transcriptomics at this workshop.
- September 2019 – Present                      **Vice-President, Einstein Biotech Club**  
Served on the executive board of this club promoting student engagement and education with biotechnology. Led and organized many networking events.
- November 2019 – May 2023                      **Elected Councilor, Einstein Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Council**  
Elected to serve on this committee for diversity enhancement by the student body of at Albert Einstein College of Medicine.
- September 2017 – May 2019                      **President, Columbia Biotechnology Association (GRO-Biotech CU)**  
Served as President of this industry networking group. Helped organize the 2019 Graduate Research Organizations Conference at Columbia with >300 attendees.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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- February 2024                      **Intro to Omics Workshop**, Einstein Montefiore Omics Club  
Led a workshop session on scRNA-seq analysis and cell annotation.
- September 2017 – December 2017                      **Teaching Assistant, Intro to Genomic Information and Technology**  
Worked as a teaching assistant for this genomic data science course taught by Dr. Dimitris Anastassiou at Columbia.

## INTERESTS AND HOBBIES

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- August 2018 – Present                      **My Aquarium**, Founder and Chief Executive Fish-Fanatic  
A fun and relaxing pastime is to watch the fish and plants in my tropical aquarium.

## CONFERENCES

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- October 2023      **Musculoskeletal Tumor Society (MSTS), Podium presentation**  
Gave a talk at this orthopedic oncology-focused meeting titled “Single-cell transcriptomics of osteosarcoma murine models with SKP2 modulation predicts potent synergistic therapies”.
- April 2023      **American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), Poster presentation**  
Designed and presented a poster at this massive cancer-focused conference titled “SKP2 knockout induces macrophage infiltration in p53/Rb1 null transgenic mouse models of osteosarcoma and drives gene expression correlated with improved survival in patients”.
- December 2022      **Musculoskeletal Tumor Society (MSTS), Podium presentation**  
Gave a talk at this orthopedic oncology-focused meeting titled “SKP2 knockout in Rb1/p53 deficient transgenic mouse models of osteosarcoma improves survival via induction of macrophage infiltration”.
- September 2022      **International Society for Limb Salvage (ISOLS), Podium presentation**  
Gave a talk at this orthopedic oncology-focused meeting titled “Knockout of SKP2 in pre-clinical transgenic mouse models of OS induces macrophage infiltration and improves survival”.
- May 2015      **NYU Undergraduate Research Conference, Poster presentation**  
Designed and presented a poster titled “Identification and Characterization of *Orthodenticle*-Dependent Enhancers.” Won an award for best poster in the session.

## PUBLICATIONS

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- February 2024  
(In preparation)      ***Comprehensive single cell transcriptomics analysis of murine osteosarcoma uncovers Skp2 function in metastasis, genomic instability and immune activation and reveals additional target pathways.*** In preparation.  
**Ferrena A, Zhang R, Wang J, Zheng XY, Zhao H, Schwartz E, Loeb D, Goker B, Borjihan H, Chae S, Yang R, Geller D, Zheng D, Hoang B.**
- February 2024      ***Targeted inhibition of SCF<sup>SKP2</sup> confers anti-tumor activities resulting in a survival benefit in osteosarcoma.*** *Oncogene*, February 2024.  
Wang J \*, **Ferrena A \* (co-first author)**, Singh S, Zhang R, Viscarret V, Al-Harden W, Aldahamsheh O, Borjihan H, Singla A, Yaguare S, Tingling J, Zi X, Yungtai L, Gorlick R, Schwartz L, Zhao H, Yang R, Geller D, Zheng D, Hoang B.
- October 2023      ***SKP2 knockout in Rb1/p53 deficient mouse models of osteosarcoma induces immune infiltration and drives a transcriptional program with a favorable prognosis.*** *Molecular Cancer Therapeutics*, October 2023.  
**Ferrena A, Wang J, Zhang R, Karadal-Ferrena B, Al-Hardan W, Singh W, Borjihan H, Schwartz E, Zhao H, Oktay M, Yang R, Geller D, Hoang B, and Zheng D.**

## PUBLICATIONS (CONTINUED)

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- May 2023  
(Preprint) *Six3 and Six6 jointly regulate the identities and developmental trajectories of multipotent retinal progenitor cells in the mouse retina.*  
Preprint posted to *bioRxiv* May 2023.  
**Ferrena A**, Zhang X, Shrestha R, Zheng D, Liu W.
- March 2023 *Single cell transcriptomics uncovers a non-autonomous Tbx1-dependent genetic program controlling cardiac neural crest cell deployment and progression.*  
*Nature Communications*, 2023 March.  
De Bono C, Liu Y, **Ferrena A**, Valentine A, Zheng D, Morrow B.
- October 2022 *Systematic comparison of pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma models identifies a conserved highly plastic basal cell state.* *Cancer Research*, 2022 October.  
Pitter K, Grbovic-Huezo O, Joost S, Singhal A, Blum M, Wu K, Holm M, **Ferrena A**, Bhutkar A, Hudson A, Lecomte N, de Stanchina E, Chaligne R, Iacobuzio-Donahue C, Pe'er D, and Tammela T.
- February 2021 *The interaction of SKP2 with p27 enhances the progression and stemness of osteosarcoma.* *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 2021 April.  
Wang J, Aldahamsheh O, **Ferrena A**, Borji Han H, Singla A, Yaguare S, Singh S, Viscarret V, Tingling J, Zi X, Lo Y, Gorlick R, Zheng D, Schwartz EL, Zhao H, Yang R, Geller DS, Hoang B.

## PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

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### **Dr. Deyou Zheng (Ph.D.)**, Primary PhD Thesis Advisor

- **Position:** Professor, Departments of Genetics, Neuroscience, and Neurology
- **Location:** Albert Einstein College of Medicine
- **Contact:** <https://www.einsteinmed.edu/faculty/10976/deyou-zheng/>
- **Relationship:** Deyou has been my primary advisor during my PhD. He is an expert in genetics, genomics, and bioinformatics. Deyou has a long track record of leading genomics and transcriptomics studies in a variety of contexts including cancer and embryonic development, and has mentored many students through the PhD program at Einstein.

### **Dr. Bang Hoang (M.D.)**, Secondary PhD Thesis Advisor

- **Position:** Professor, Department of Orthopedic Surgery
- **Location:** Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Montefiore Medical Center
- **Contact:** <https://www.einsteinmed.edu/faculty/14186/bang-hoang/>
- **Relationship:** Bang is my Ph.D. co-mentor. He is an orthopedic surgeon and expert in patient care for osteosarcoma and other sarcomas along with directing a research lab. He serves as the Chair of the Research Committee for the Musculoskeletal Tumor Society.