Molecular Genetic Pathology Fellowship Program Director
Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis
Department of Pathology & Immunology
660 S. Euclid Avenue, Campus Box 8118
St. Louis, MO 63110

December 18, 2025

Dear Program Director,

I am pleased to offer my strongest recommendation for Lisa Chen, M.D., for the Molecular Genetic Pathology (MGP) Fellowship at Washington University in St. Louis. I am Kazuki Tanaka, M.D., Ph.D., Director of the Molecular Diagnostics Service at Massachusetts General Hospital and Associate Professor of Pathology at Harvard Medical School. I supervised Dr. Chen during two molecular pathology rotations in her AP/CP residency at Mass General and served as her faculty mentor for a resident-led assay verification and quality project. In every setting, she performed at the level of an incoming fellow.

Dr. Chen's greatest strength is her ability to translate complex molecular data into clear, clinically meaningful interpretations. She consistently arrived to sign-out having independently reviewed the clinical question, specimen adequacy, and relevant literature, and she proposed testing strategies that were both diagnostically high-yield and mindful of tissue stewardship. She is meticulous about pre-analytic variables and quality metrics, yet she never loses sight of the patient-facing impact of our work.

A representative example involved a metastatic, poorly differentiated carcinoma with limited tissue and an equivocal immunoprofile. When an initial targeted DNA panel did not explain the clinical picture, Dr. Chen recognized the discordance and recommended reflex RNA fusion testing. The fusion assay identified an actionable kinase rearrangement, and she drafted a concise interpretive addendum outlining therapeutic relevance, assay limitations, and appropriate clinical caveats. The oncology team later communicated that the result directly influenced treatment selection. Her judgment in that case—balancing analytic caution with decisive clinical advocacy—was exceptional.

Dr. Chen also impressed me with her laboratory and translational skill set. She led a verification study for a new low-input amplicon-based NGS workflow, including specimen selection, acceptance criteria, reproducibility testing, and summary reporting. When early runs showed inconsistent coverage in a defined region, she systematically traced the issue to a library preparation step, proposed a process modification, and confirmed improvement on repeat testing. Her final validation summary was rigorous, readable, and immediately useful to the laboratory; elements of her framework were incorporated into our SOPs.

Just as importantly, Dr. Chen is an outstanding communicator and educator. She presented complex cases at our molecular tumor board with a disciplined structure that made discussions efficient and clinically focused, and she gave a resident conference on variant interpretation that balanced evidence-based rigor with practical reporting. Across faculty, technologists, and trainees, she is collegial, calm under pressure, and unusually reliable with high-stakes, time-sensitive work.

Dr. Chen's prior training at Johns Hopkins and her current Surgical Pathology Fellowship at Memorial Sloan Kettering further strengthen her candidacy for MGP. She has excellent morphologic correlation skills and an intuitive understanding of how tumor heterogeneity and specimen handling shape molecular results—exactly the perspective needed for modern integrated diagnostics. I am confident she will thrive in a demanding academic fellowship and grow into an exceptional molecular pathologist.

In summary, Dr. Chen is among the top trainees I have worked with over the past decade. I recommend her to you without reservation for your MGP Fellowship. Please feel free to contact me if I can be helpful.

Respectfully,

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