

2026 Vanderbilt Digestive Diseases Research Center (VDDRC) Retreat

Gastrointestinal Infections and Injury

Wednesday, April 8, 2026

9:00 am – 3:30 pm

Langford Auditorium

Richard M. Peek, Jr., MD

Mina Cobb Wallace Professor of Medicine and Pathology, Microbiology, & Immunology
Director, Vanderbilt Digestive Diseases Research Center

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| 9:00 – 9:25 am | <p><i>Microbial and metabolic signatures in children with very early onset inflammatory bowel disease</i>
Janet Markle, PhD
Assistant Professor of Pathology, Microbiology, and Immunology
Vanderbilt Institute of Infection, Immunology, and Inflammation</p> |
| 9:25 – 9:50 am | <p><i>Clostridioides difficile employs an anticipatory iron storage strategy during nutrient stress</i>
Eric P. Skaar, PhD, MPH
Director, Vanderbilt Institute for Infection, Immunology and Inflammation (VI4)
Director, Division of Molecular Pathogenesis
Ernest W. Goodpasture Chair in Pathology
Vice Chair for Research, Department of Pathology, Microbiology, and Immunology
University Distinguished Professor of Pathology, Microbiology, and Immunology</p> |
| 9:50 – 10:15 am | <p><i>Population genetic insights into lactic acid bacteria and microbe-microbe interactions</i>
Megan Behringer, PhD
Assistant Professor of Biological Sciences and Pathology, Microbiology, and Immunology
Steven and Bunny Faune Dean's Faculty Fellow in Biological Sciences</p> |
| 10:15 – 10:40 am | Break |
| 10:40 – 11:40 am | <p><i>The unusual and multifaceted abilities of H. pylori flagella</i>
Karen Ottemann, PhD
Professor of Microbiology & Environmental Toxicology
University of California, Santa Cruz</p> |
| 11:40 - 1:15 am | <i>Lunch/Posters</i> |
| 1:15 – 1:40 pm | <p><i>Dual roles of T cell cytokines in H. pylori-induced gastric disease: Mediators of protection and pathology</i>
Holly Algood, PhD
Associate Professor of Medicine
Division of Infectious Diseases</p> |
| 1:40 – 2:05 pm | <p><i>Investigating the structural basis of tuft cell chemosensing</i>
Matt J. Tyska, PhD
Cornelius Vanderbilt Chair in Cell & Developmental Biology
Director of Graduate Studies for Cell and Developmental Biology
Professor of Cell and Developmental Biology</p> |
| 2:05 – 2:30 pm | <p><i>Intermicrovillar adhesion limits bacterial attachment to the small intestine</i>
Leslie Meenderink, MD, PhD
Assistant Professor of Medicine
Division of Infectious Diseases</p> |
| 2:30 - 3:30 pm | <p><i>Investigating the role of monocytes in formation of intestinal granulomas and control of bacterial infection</i>
Igor E. Brodsky, PhD
Robert R. Marshak Professor and Chair of Pathobiology
University of Pennsylvania</p> |