The Bruce and Cynthia Sherman Charitable Foundation Announces the 2025 Sherman Prizes

Honorees have uncovered genetic drivers of IBD, identified environmental risks and innovated treatment approaches for some of the most vulnerable patient populations

BOCA RATON, Florida, September 16, 2025 – The Bruce and Cynthia Sherman Charitable Foundation today announced the recipients of the 2025 Sherman Prizes, recognizing excellence in Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, also known as inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD). Now in its tenth year, the Sherman Prize honors and rewards pioneers and visionaries who have made outstanding contributions to advancing the treatment and care of people living with IBD.

2025 Sherman Prize Honorees

- **Michael Kappelman, MD, MPH**, Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Division of Pediatric Gastroenterology; Adjunct Professor of Epidemiology, University of North Carolina School of Medicine at Chapel Hill, NC
- **Scott B. Snapper, MD, PhD**, Chief, Division of Gastroenterology, Hepatology, and Nutrition; and Wolpow Family Chair and Director, Center for Inflammatory Bowel Disease, Boston Children's Hospital; Physician, Crohn's and Colitis Center, Division of Gastroenterology, Brigham and Women's Hospital; Egan Family Foundation Professor of Pediatrics in the Field of Transitional Medicine and Professor of Medicine, Harvard Medical School; Boston, MA

2025 Sherman Emerging Leader Prize Honoree

- **Oriana Damas, MD**, Associate Professor of Medicine; Director of Translational Studies, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine; Interim Director for the Crohn's and Colitis Center, University of Miami Health System; Miami, FL

"Making progress against IBD demands an innovator's mindset and unwavering pursuit of solutions – qualities exemplified by Drs. Kappelman, Snapper, and Damas," said Bruce and Cynthia Sherman, Founders of the Sherman Prize. "Through their groundbreaking work, they have advanced IBD science, made pivotal breakthroughs in treatment and deepened our understanding of these diseases."

Prize recipients will be honored at the Advances in IBD (AIBD) conference in Orlando, Florida on December 9, 2025, where their short tribute films will be premiered. The films may be viewed at www.ShermanPrize.org following the conference.

“One way to inspire progress, and encourage more researchers to study IBD, is by recognizing and honoring excellence,” said Dr. Corey Siegel, 2025 Selection Committee Chair and 2023 Sherman Prize Recipient. “These outstanding leaders are at the forefront of IBD research and care, and I, and my fellow committee members, look forward to celebrating their remarkable contributions to the field at AIBD.”

About the 2025 Prize Recipients

Dr. Michael Kappelman is awarded a $100,000 Sherman Prize for his groundbreaking work to optimize care and treatment for children with IBD and define the burden of these diseases.

Dr. Kappelman has dedicated his career to answering some of the most pressing questions in IBD: How can we advance standardized care? What treatments are most effective? What is the true burden of disease? He is an expert in probing real-world data and bringing collaborators together to pioneer solutions for children with IBD.

As the first to document widespread inter-center variation in pediatric IBD treatments, Dr. Kappelman joined others to standardize the use of best practices through ImproveCareNow, a pediatric IBD Quality Improvement Network comprised of more than 100 care centers across the country – all working to increase the number of children in remission.

A key area of Dr. Kappelman’s research is addressing a critical knowledge gap – how medicines approved for adults can be used to optimize children’s health. Dr. Kappelman helped to establish anti-TNF therapy as standard of care in pediatric Crohn’s disease. Then, in the landmark COMBINE trial, the largest randomized trial ever conducted in pediatric IBD, he showed that adding methotrexate to certain anti-TNF therapy improved outcomes over monotherapy.

Now Dr. Kappelman is studying the efficacy and safety of newer biologics and advanced therapies that are currently used off-label in pediatric patients. His COMPARE-Pediatric IBD study aims to compare these medicines against each other in the most rigorous way possible.

Committed to advancing the understanding of IBD, Dr. Kappelman was a co-Principal Investigator for the most comprehensive assessment to date of pediatric and adult IBD. This CDC-funded epidemiology study revealed important information about the diversity of IBD and determinants of health inequity, with many implications for research and patient care.

Dr. Scott Snapper is awarded a $100,000 Sherman Prize for uncovering rare drivers of IBD to pioneer novel treatments, transforming care for children and the wider IBD community.

Dr. Snapper unravels the mysteries of Very Early Onset IBD (VEOIBD), a rare form of IBD that presents in children younger than age six and is often characterized by severe disease. Applying his expertise in immunology, microbiology, genetics, and gastroenterology, Dr. Snapper converts the discovery of rare genetic variants associated with disease into lifesaving treatments.

He was the first to demonstrate that gene therapy was effective for preventing colitis in murine models of Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome (WAS), an x-linked immune deficiency – which served as the basis for successful gene therapy in humans with WAS. With colleagues, he was also the first to identify IL10 receptor deficiency as a cause of IBD that could be cured with stem cell transplant.

To further this research, Dr. Snapper conceived and launched the VEOIBD Consortium with colleagues in Canada and Germany. They have identified 15 root causes for IBD, some of which have an opportunity for cure with stem cell transplants. Their research has also led to three novel investigational therapies, including one based on Dr. Snapper's discovery that IL10 deficiency is associated with an overproduction of IL 1, an inflammation driver. This finding offers hope for a wider IBD population who overproduce IL1; Dr. Snapper is now working to develop the first treatment for these patients who experience fibrosis, a severe complication of Crohn's disease.

His team is also exploring another unique approach – the expansion of regulatory T-cells that lower inflammation. They have demonstrated that low doses of IL2 expand these T-cells in people with moderate-to-severe ulcerative colitis, leading to disease improvements. Dr. Snapper is studying this pathway in Crohn's disease and has identified biomarkers to predict IL2 therapy response - another first - potentially making a new precision medicine approach possible.

Dr. Oriana Damas is awarded a $25,000 Sherman Emerging Leader Prize for helping define IBD in Hispanic immigrants and exploring genetic and environmental risk factors, including diet.

Seizing opportunities to advance research is central to Dr. Damas' mission to improve care and outcomes for underserved patients with IBD, particularly the Hispanic community.

As a GI fellow, she became one of the first scientists to initially describe the phenotype of Hispanic patients and discovered that those born in the U.S. tend to develop the disease at a

younger age compared to those born in Latin America. Further exploration of genetic and environmental factors revealed that Hispanic and non-Hispanic white patients have a similar genetic risk burden for developing IBD, but environment plays a much larger role in age of diagnosis across all groups.

Building on these insights, Dr. Damas explored how genetic variation affects drug response and discovered that Hispanic IBD patients carry genetic variants in TPMT and NUDT15, which increase their risk for leukopenia (low white blood cell count). These findings underscore the importance of genetic testing for Hispanic patients before initiating immunomodulator therapies that lower white blood cell counts.

Dr. Damas also explored the interaction between genes and diet in Hispanic patients with ulcerative colitis and found that those who ate a more traditional diet, including starchy vegetables and tropical fruits, experienced better outcomes. These findings led her to seek funding from the NIH to initiate a first-of-its-kind culturally tailored diet clinical trial for Hispanic patients with ulcerative colitis, which she has now broadened to include all IBD patients. In the study, she will examine the intestinal microbiome and genetic variance for fat metabolism to help determine if there are predictive factors for diet response, with the goal of developing personalized anti-inflammatory diets for different IBD patient communities.

About the Sherman Prize

The Sherman Prize was established in 2016 by the Bruce and Cynthia Sherman Charitable Foundation to provide national recognition and financial prizes to exceptionally talented, dedicated individuals working tirelessly to improve outcomes for people with Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, and advance research that could lead to prevention, remission, and cures.

The $100,000 Sherman Prize is awarded to IBD clinicians, surgeons, researchers, and/or academics, recognizing exceptional and pioneering contributions that transform the care of people with IBD. A $25,000 Sherman Emerging Leader Prize is awarded to IBD clinicians, surgeons, researchers, academics, or physician assistants, who, while early in their careers, have contributed to an advancement and show great promise for significant future contributions.

Selection decisions are made by the Board of Directors, following an extensive review and evaluation by the Prize Selection Committee, which is comprised of five of the nation's preeminent IBD specialists. Visit ShermanPrize.org to view the Honor Roll of Sherman Prize recipients, watch their inspiring tribute films, and sign up to receive notification of the 2026 nomination cycle.

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