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DiPIA 2026

Shaping the future of SPR together

Meet the speakers

Aina Urbina Teixidor,

University of Dundee, UK

Aina Urbina Teixidor is a Postdoctoral Research Scientist in the Ciulli Lab at the Centre for Targeted Protein Degradation (CeTPD) at the University of Dundee. After completing her PhD in Organic Chemistry at the University of Barcelona, she joined the Ciulli Lab in 2021 as a Medicinal Chemist within an industrial collaboration with Almirall, contributing to the discovery of degraders for skin diseases. Since 2025, she has been part of the LITE (LRRK2 Investigative Therapeutics Exchange) Team, funded by the Michael J. Fox Foundation, where she leads high throughput chemistry efforts in PROTAC discovery and SPR based characterization of ternary complexes to advance new therapeutic strategies for Parkinson's disease.

Ana Maria Moro,

Butantan Institute, Brazil

Ana Maria Moro is a scientist at the Butantan Institute, a governmental institution where she heads the Biopharmaceutical Laboratory, which focuses on human monoclonal antibody projects, including the discovery and generation of stable cell lines. Antibody characterization is performed using various methods, with a primary focus on protein interactions and kinetics, where SPR plays a key role at several stages of development.

Andrea Gohlke,

AstraZeneca, UK

Dr. Andrea Gohlke is an Associate Principal Scientist at AstraZeneca whose work focuses on biophysical characterization and early-stage oncology drug discovery. She leads multidisciplinary teams advancing target validation and hit-to-lead efforts using methods such as SPR, ITC, and NMR, and has managed portfolio and new modality workflows. Andrea has built internal and external collaborations, and contributed to multiple peer reviewed publications across medicinal chemistry and biophysics. She served on the Biophysical Society's Publication Committee and holds the Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM) credential.

Anna Bonhoure,

Novalix, France

Anna Bonhoure is a SPR team manager at Novalix with over 9 years of experience in the biophysical characterization of biomolecular interactions. She joined Novalix in 2022. Since then, she has been managing a large variety of projects by SPR (fragment screening, competition assays, characterization of PROTACs, etc.). Before her current position, she worked in different service provision companies, in the production of custom antibodies and membrane proteins. She earned an engineering degree from ESBS (École Supérieure de Biotechnologie de Strasbourg) and a PhD under the supervision of Dr Gilles TRAVÉ (IGBMC), with research focusing on the interactome of the HPV E6 oncoprotein.

Anna Hickey,

MD Anderson Cancer Center, USA

Anna Hickey is an Associate Scientist in the Therapeutics Discovery Division at MD Anderson Cancer Center, where she drives biophysical assay development to support small-molecule drug discovery initiatives targeting oncology and neurodegenerative diseases. She was instrumental in establishing the division's surface plasmon resonance (SPR) platform, building it from the ground up to enable comprehensive kinetic and affinity characterization across the drug discovery pipeline, from hit identification through lead optimization. With expertise in SPR, complemented by broad experience in biochemical and cell-based assays, Anna brings an integrated experimental approach to cross-functional project teams tackling challenging therapeutic targets.

Ayana Nagatani,

Chugai Pharmaceutical, Japan

Ayana Nagatani is a Researcher in the Analytical Development Department, Bioassay Team, at Chugai Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd., based in Tokyo, Japan. She is engaged in the development and characterization of bioassays for biologics, with a focus on SPR assays, as well as cell-based and cell-free assays, to support quality control and functional evaluation. Her experience includes designing phase-appropriate assay strategies and developing bioassays that reflect in vivo modes of action for complex antibody formats.

Edward DiNunzio,

MSD (Merck Sharp & Dohme), USA

Edward DiNunzio is an Associate Principal Scientist in Quantitative Biosciences, Early Discovery at MSD, with over 15 years of experience in screening and hit finding, hit-to-lead progression, and assay development across a range of biochemical and biophysical screening platforms. He specializes in the biophysical characterization of protein-ligand interactions using SPR, MST, and thermal shift assays and has led the development of automated data capture and analysis workflows, as well as Python-based tools for robust data processing and visualization of large biophysical datasets in support of triaging hits from affinity screening platforms, including mRNA display, DEL, and Affinity Selection - Mass Spectrometry (AS/MS).

Herwin Daub,

Proteros Biostructures GmbH, Germany

Dr. Herwin Daub is a Functional Group Leader for Surface Plasmon Resonance (SPR) in the Department "Assays, Biophysics and Screening" at Proteros Biostructures GmbH, a leading contract research organization specializing in structure-based drug discovery. He holds a Ph.D. in Chemistry from the Technical University of Munich (TUM). Prior to joining Proteros, he spent nearly seven years at Dynamic Biosensors, progressing from Application Scientist to Senior Scientist, where he gained deep expertise in label-free biophysical technologies. His work focuses on biophysical characterization of ligand–target interactions, with publications on topics including the kinetic characterization of TNF-α trimer–monomer transitions and their relevance for scavenger antibodies and hybrid formats, sirtuin inhibitor binding kinetics, and cryo-EM structural studies of DNA mismatch repair complexes.

Jay Duffner,

Frontier Medicines, USA

Jay leads teams focused on the discovery and development of covalent small-molecule therapeutics against challenging and previously undruggable disease targets. With extensive expertise in drug discovery, chemical biology, biophysics, and biomolecular interactions, Jay has played key roles in advancing programs from target identification through lead optimization and candidate selection. Prior to Frontier Medicines, he held scientific leadership positions at Faze Medicines, Janssen, Momenta Pharmaceuticals, and the Broad Institute, contributing to oncology, immunology, and translational research initiatives. Throughout his career, he has combined innovative biological and biophysical approaches with strategic drug discovery leadership to accelerate the development of novel medicines.

Jingjing Yang,

Viva Biotech, China

Jingjing Yang is the Director of the Biology Department at Viva Biotech, where he has led the company's SPR platform since 2012. With more than 14 years of hands-on expertise in protein interaction analysis, assay development, and screening technologies, he oversees a team of 25 scientists and guides SPR-based collaboration with global partners. Jingjing is recognized for his deep technical knowledge, his contributions to integrated drug discovery projects, and his commitment to advancing high-quality SPR capabilities across the organization.

Johannes Beder,

Novo Nordisk, Denmark

Johannes Beder is a QC chemist at Novo Nordisk, holding a Master's degree in Biotechnology from the Technical University of Denmark (DTU). He supports daily operations in a GMP QC laboratory, providing results for batch release, stability testing, and clinical studies. Over the past two years, Johannes has been responsible for SPR methods, focusing on analytical method optimization and transfer of methods to the Biacore™ 1 platform.

Katrin Schaefer,

Evotec, Germany

Katrin Schaefer is a Senior Research Scientist in the Biophysics Department at Evotec, where she contributes to early drug discovery as a project and team leader. Her work centers on biophysical binding assays and screenings of various molecular interactions, with a strong emphasis on SPR, as well as DSF and MST. These activities include fragment screening, hit-to-lead programs, characterization of small-molecule binding to protein and oligonucleotide targets, and protein binding assays.

Katrin graduated from the University of Hamburg, where she used SPR and ligand-observed NMR to characterize inhibitors for a specific glycosyltransferase. She subsequently joined Linda Baum's group at UCLA to study the role of protein glycosylation in regulating immune responses before returning to biophysics-focused research at Evotec.

Kerry Buchholz,

Genentech, USA

Dr. Kerry Buchholz is a Scientist in the Department of Infectious Diseases and Host-Pathogen Interactions at Genentech. She has more than 9 years of industry experience focused on discovering and validating novel antibiotic leads for multi-drug resistant Gram-negative bacteria. Her research bridges microbiology and biophysics, with a particular emphasis on using Surface Plasmon Resonance (SPR) to characterize the mechanisms of action of novel antibacterial molecules and understand their interactions with bacterial membranes. In addition, she collaborates with multidisciplinary teams to leverage AI and ML models to identify and advance therapeutics for gram-negative pathogens. Dr. Buchholz holds a Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley, where she investigated host cell responses to the pathogen Chlamydia trachomatis, and completed her postdoctoral training at Stanford University studying the persistent stage of the parasite Toxoplasma gondii.

Larisa Doughty,

The University of Melbourne, Australia

Dr Larissa Doughty is a protein chemist and Research Fellow at the University of Melbourne. With more than 30 years' experience across academia and industry, she specializes in the analysis of biomolecular interactions, with a particular focus on small molecule–protein binding. Dr Doughty began her career at CSIRO, where she worked with Australia's first SPR instrumentation, and has since held roles at the National Serology Reference Laboratory and Evogenix, leading recombinant protein production and interaction studies. She later returned to CSIRO and then to St Vincent's Institute of Medical Research, where she managed the ACRF Protein Interaction Facility and supported drug discovery programs.

Her current work centres on applying SPR to challenging systems, complemented by techniques including microscale thermophoresis. She completed her PhD at the University of Melbourne, investigating the structural and biophysical properties of cell surface receptors. Dr Doughty has contributed to numerous publications in structural biology and drug discovery and is an experienced speaker on integrating biophysical methods for ligand screening and characterization.

Luca Varani,

Institute for Research in Biomedicine (IRB), Bellinzona, Switzerland

Luca Varani is Head of the Structural Biology group at the Institute for Research in Biomedicine (IRB) in Bellinzona, Switzerland, a role held since 2007. His research focuses on understanding the molecular mechanisms by which antibodies neutralize pathogens, combining molecular biology, biophysics, and computational approaches to guide antibody engineering.

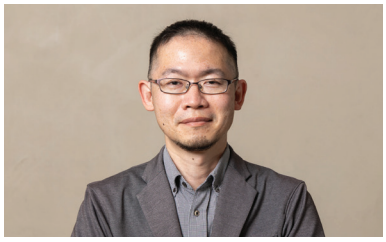
His work addresses rare and neglected diseases, including Dengue, Zika, prion diseases, leukemias, and SARS-CoV-2, and includes the design of bispecific antibodies and highly cited studies on CAR affinity modulation and prion neurodegeneration. He has contributed to major collaborative efforts on antibody responses to viral infections and serves as a reviewer for leading journals such as 'Nature and Cell'.

He is also an evaluator for European Commission programs, a consultant in antibody biotech and pharma QC, and founder of Choose Life Biotech (2022), a start-up focused on nanobody engineering.

Malin Jönsson,

Karolinska Institute, Sweden

Malin Jönsson is a researcher in affinity protein engineering at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm. Their work focuses on advancing the clinical evaluation of peptide-based protein degraders that target extracellular disease-associated proteins for selective degradation. Her background includes engineering conditional affinity proteins using non-immunoglobulin scaffolds and in vitro selection systems, with a particular emphasis on understanding and tuning binding interactions for targeted toxin delivery. She has also been involved in tuning inherent target interactions, with a focus on developing conditional affinity chromatography ligands that enable mild elution strategies through engineered calcium-regulated binding.



Masaru Muraoka,

Chugai Pharmaceutical, Japan

Masaru Muraoka, Ph.D. is a research scientist in the Protein Analysis group at Chugai Pharmaceutical, with over a decade of experience in antibody characterization and interaction analysis.

After working in antibody formulation and process development within CMC, he transitioned to discovery research, where he currently leads protein interaction analysis activities. His work centers on SPR-based kinetic and binding characterization, complemented by developability assessments and cell-based interaction assays to support antibody lead optimization.

He is particularly interested in integrating interaction data with biophysical and functional readouts to better predict developability risks and therapeutic performance in early-stage biologics research.

Matthias Geyer,

University of Bonn (Medical Faculty), Germany

Matthias Geyer is the Director of the Institute of Structural Biology at the Medical Faculty of the University of Bonn. His research focuses on the regulation and inhibition of transcriptional kinases and the human inflammasome to treat chronic diseases.

Matthias's lab uses a wide variety of biochemical methods to determine protein-protein interactions, as well as interactions with lipids, nucleic acids, and small molecular ligands. In addition to crystallographic and microscopic approaches, he uses SPR spectroscopy for compound-binding identification and site-directed optimization. Matthias is a scientific co-founder of IFM Therapeutics Inc. working on NLRP3 antagonists.

Nicklas Skjoldager,

Novo Nordisk, Denmark

Nicklas Skjoldager is a Senior Research Scientist in early drug product development within CMC Bioanalysis at Novo Nordisk. With five years of experience in investigating binding properties of drug candidates, his work focuses on analytical techniques such as SPR and BLI. Nicklas develops and validates SPR assays for clinical development (Phase 1–3), with emphasis on specific binding potency, as well as characterizing binding interactions of peptide and protein therapeutics for early drug product development.

Nicklas Skjoldager received his PhD in structural protein chemistry from Technical University of Denmark (DTU) and a master's degree in chemistry and molecular biology from Roskilde University, Denmark. Before joining Novo Nordisk, he worked at Novozymes within assay development and characterization to support enzyme candidate screening.

Pedro Sousa,

iBET (Instituto de Biologia Experimental e Tecnológica), Portugal

Pedro Sousa is a Principal Scientist at iBET (Instituto de Biologia Experimental e Tecnológica). He holds a PhD in Biochemistry from the Instituto de Tecnologia Química e Biológica (ITQB), NOVA University of Lisbon, where he studied the characterization of prokaryotic aerobic respiratory chain supercomplexes.

For the past 12 years, he has coordinated the Molecular Interactions Platform within the Merck Healthcare KGaA satellite laboratory hosted at iBET. His work focuses on the characterization of molecular interactions using advanced biophysical techniques, particularly Surface Plasmon Resonance and Differential Scanning Fluorimetry, supporting early drug discovery. Current interests include the development of SPR assays to study ternary complex formation, as well as the characterization of small molecules and fragment libraries.

Petra Mlcochova,

T-Therapeutics, UK

Project Leader and Senior Scientist II at T-Therapeutics with a strong experience in immunology, virology and molecular biology.

At T-Therapeutics we are passionate about research and innovations in T cell engineering and therapeutic development driving next-generation immunotherapies from concept to clinic.

Phil Addis,

Sygnature Discovery, UK

Dr Philip Addis is an Associate Director and Head of UK Biophysics at Sygnature Discovery, a global pre-clinical drug discovery CRO, leading a team of over 25 biophysicists across two sites in the UK. He is a highly experienced biophysicist and group leader, specializing in biophysical binding and MoA assays across numerous technologies, to support a wide range of drug discovery projects targeting multiple therapeutic areas and target classes. Philip has over 15 years of biophysics experience in academia, biotech, and CROs, and has led and overseen projects for small, medium, and large molecules at all stages of the discovery pipeline.

Robert Hoey,

Bristol Myers Squibb, USA

Robert is a Senior Principal Scientist in the Binder Discovery and Engineering Department of Discovery Biotherapeutics at Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS). In this role, he leads a portfolio of highly integrated teams spanning biophysical characterization, protein engineering and lead optimization, peptide discovery, early-stage biologics developability, and a matrix team focused on off-target interactions. His biophysics group specializes in the characterization of multi-specific molecules, employing a comprehensive suite of biophysical techniques to support programs from early-stage research through IND filings. A central focus of Robert's work is the seamless integration of biophysics across all facets of his teams' activities, bringing a unifying, multidisciplinary perspective to the biologics discovery process.

Robert's scientific foundation was established during his graduate studies in molecular biophysics, where he investigated the binding and folding thermodynamics of combinatorial protein engineering. Prior to joining BMS, he built a diverse career in the biopharmaceutical industry, holding scientific positions at Rakuten Medical and Takeda in roles encompassing biologics discovery, protein engineering, biophysics, and high-throughput candidate screening.

Sabine Flicker,

Medical University of Vienna
(Institute of Pathophysiology and Allergy Research), Austria

Sabine Flicker is a researcher at the Institute of Pathophysiology and Allergy Research of the Medical University of Vienna. She studied Biology/Genetics at the University of Vienna and obtained both her PhD and habilitation at the Medical University of Vienna. The highly competitive Hertha Firnberg Fellowship enabled Sabine Flicker to pursue her scientific career in a targeted way. Several additional grants supported her independent academic research and ultimately to secure her Associate Professorship in 2015. Since starting her PhD, her work has focused on allergen–antibody interactions, with a particular emphasis on their immunological characterization. She recently discovered her research interest in allergen-specific nanobodies and has since published her team's latest findings and insights in high-impact international journals. The aim of her research is to develop antibody/nanobody-based treatment and preventive approaches for allergic diseases. She is also strongly committed to mentoring enthusiastic students.

Sebastian Friebe,

Roche Diagnostics, Germany

Sebastian Friebe is a scientist at Roche Diagnostics, part of the Functional Assays team. He is working in Research & Development of the "Antibody & Protein Technologies" Subchapter and is specialized in Biosensor-techniques, mainly Surface Plasmon Resonance-Spectroscopy (SPR). In addition, he is proficient in additional interaction analysis techniques e.g. SwitchSENSE®-Technology and iTC. He has extensive experience in antibody and protein binding characterization, epitope coverage identification, enzymatic activity monitoring, and analysis of small molecule and DNA/protein–protein interactions.

Stephen Rettie,

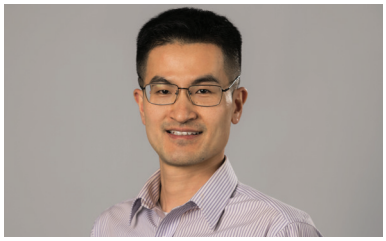
Vilya, USA

Stephen Rettie is a scientist at Vilya, focusing on the computational design of cyclic peptides for hit identification and hit-to-lead programs. Stephen received his PhD at the University of Washington, where he was advised by Gaurav Bhardwaj at the Institute for Protein Design. Stephen's graduate research centered on novel modifications to state-of-the-art deep learning tools, incorporating a cyclic offset to enable their use for cyclic peptide prediction and design. Experimental validation of these tools by crystallography and SPR resulted in AfCycDesign, for cyclic peptide structure prediction, and the RFpeptides protocol, for end-to-end cyclic peptide binder design. Stephen leverages his experience in both wet and dry labs to lead cyclic peptide drug design efforts.

Stéphanie Katz,

Novartis (Oncology Drug Discovery department), Switzerland

Stéphanie Katz holds a degree in biotechnology engineering and completed her master's thesis in 2009. She has since built over a decade of experience in drug discovery across multiple organisations. In 2019, she joined the Oncology Drug Discovery department at Novartis, where she specializes in biochemistry and biophysics. Throughout her career, she has developed strong expertise in a range of analytical techniques, including surface plasmon resonance (SPR), TR-FRET, fluorescence polarisation (FP), and isothermal titration calorimetry (ITC). She works closely with cross-functional teams to advance projects from target characterisation through to hit identification and mechanism-of-action studies.



Zhou Dai,

Abbvie, USA

Zhou Dai is a Principal Research Scientist II at AbbVie, where he leads the Biomolecular Interaction Group and focuses on advancing biotherapeutic and genetic medicine technologies to support the development of innovative therapies. Previously, Zhou held scientific leadership roles at Bristol Myers Squibb, including Principal Scientist, Senior Research Investigator, and Research Investigator, contributing to drug discovery and therapeutic development programs. His expertise spans biologics, translational research, and next-generation therapeutic platforms aimed at addressing unmet patient needs.

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