

MSU Postdoctoral Excellence in Research Award (PERA) Awardees, 2019

Dr. Ana Sofia Mendes Leal earned her PharmD from the University of Coimbra in Portugal in 2007. During that time, she volunteered in a pharmacognosy laboratory of where she studied the effects of wild strawberry leaf extract in oxidation. After working as a general pharmacist for six months, she pursued her PhD in Medicinal Chemistry at the University of Coimbra in Portugal, obtaining her degree in 2013. During this time, she synthesized more than 100 new compounds derived from ursolic and oleanolic acids, and while a Visiting Research Scholar at Mount Sinai Hospital evaluated these compounds for anti-tumor activity in pancreatic cancer cells. Currently, Dr. Leal works in the lab of Dr. Karen Liby in the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology at MSU. Her work focuses on the use of small molecules, such as rexinoids, to manipulate the tumor microenvironment of breast, pancreatic and lung cancers.

Dr. Leal has authored 15 publications, including 9 during her time at MSU. She recently received a travel award to attend and present at the AACR-Targeting RAS-Driven Cancers meeting, and has received a Sponsored Research grant from Incyte Corporation to evaluate new drugs in mouse models of pancreatic cancer. An accomplished scholar, Dr. Leal looks forward to one day having her own research laboratory.

Her PI, Dr. Karen Liby, writes that “Dr. Leal is a productive, intelligent, creative, and committed Research Associate who has already made significant contributions to the field of cancer research”. We are proud to award Dr. Ana Sofia Mendes Leal with the 2018-2019 Postdoctoral Excellent in Research Award. Congratulations!

Dr. Nathan M. Good received his bachelor’s degrees in biology and zoology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2003. He obtained his Ph.D. in microbiology from the University of Washington in 2014. Dr. Good currently works as a postdoctoral research associate in the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at Michigan State University, where he investigates lanthanide biochemistry and methylotrophy. Lanthanide metals are critical components of many modern technologies, and they have recently been discovered to be “New Life Metals” for methylotrophic bacteria. Understanding how these metals are utilized in biology provides insight for the development of green technologies to address global economic challenges such as accumulation of electronic waste and food shortages.

Dr. Good has authored 9 publications, 4 during his time at MSU, one of which was featured as a Spotlight article in the Journal of Bacteriology. He received an MSU Postdoctoral Association Travel Award in 2017, as well as a travel award to attend the Wind River Conference in Prokaryotic Biology. Additionally, Dr. Good has proven himself as an effective mentor of undergraduate students, with 6 of his mentees having been accepted to competitive graduate programs upon leaving the lab.

His PI, Dr. N. Cecilia Martinez-Gomez, writes that “Nate’s creativity and rigorous science, coupled with a strong commitment to service and education, makes him outstanding”. We are proud to award Dr. Nathan M. Good with the 2018-2019 Postdoctoral Excellent in Research Award. Congratulations!



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