

CSI 2026 John D. Reynolds Award

Congratulations / Félicitations



Heather Melichar, PhD

Associate Professor, Goodman Cancer Institute, Department of Microbiology & Immunology, McGill University

John D. Reynolds Award 2026 Recipient

Dr. Heather Melichar is an Associate Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at McGill University and a faculty member at the Goodman Cancer Institute. She completed her doctoral training at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, where she studied the molecular mechanisms guiding $\alpha\beta$ versus $\gamma\delta$ T cell fate decisions, and her postdoctoral studies at the University of California, Berkeley, where she developed platforms to examine both murine and human T cell development in situ. She established her independent research group at the Université de Montréal in 2014 before moving to McGill University in 2023. Her current research program focuses on the cellular mechanisms that regulate T cell development and function, with the goal of understanding fundamental principles of the immune system to improve cancer immunotherapies.

At the institutional level, Dr. Melichar currently serves as co-coordinator of the Interdepartmental Honours Immunology program and co-Director of the Graduate Program in Microbiology & Immunology at McGill, where she leads initiatives to strengthen mentorship practices and promote safe, equitable, and inclusive research environments. Her dedication to trainee development has been recognized with the Faculty Mentor Award from the Microbiology & Immunology Students' Association.

Within the Montreal community, Dr. Melichar has been a longstanding member of the Montreal Immunology Meetings network, serving as Treasurer and now Chair. In this role, she oversees a committee of Faculty members from the greater Montreal area that organizes a free annual symposium, scientific happy hours throughout the year, and career development and travel award opportunities for trainees, helping to connect fundamental, translational, and clinical immunologists across the region.

Nationally, Dr. Melichar has been deeply engaged with the Canadian Society for Immunology. She attended her first CSI meeting months after her move to Canada in 2014 and has been a consistent and visible contributor to the Society's meetings, serving annually as a trainee poster judge, chairing multiple scientific workshops, and participating in trainee-led networking events. As an elected Council Member (2019–2023), she served as Trainee Engagement Committee liaison and helped formally establish the Society's standing Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. She co-led the development of a childcare bursary program to support young parents attending the annual meeting and contributed to the implementation of dedicated equity, diversity, and inclusion programming. She currently serves as Secretary of the Society (2025-present).

Dr. Melichar is also a member of the Gender Equity Committee of the International Union of Immunological Societies, extending her commitment to inclusive excellence in immunology at the international level.