

Direna Alonso Curbelo obtained her Bachelor's degree in **Pharmacy** from the Complutense University of Madrid. She then joined the laboratory of Dr. María Soengas, at the **Spanish National Cancer Center (CNIO)** where she obtained her PhD in 2013. Her graduate research focused on understanding how oncogenic and lineage-specific transcriptional programs rewire endolysosomal trafficking in melanoma, and its relevance in metastatic progression and drug response. During her PhD, she also performed short-stays at the Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI, in Amsterdam) and the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC, in New York), where she expanded her training in functional genetic screens and tumor microenvironment biology, respectively. In the fall of 2013, Direna moved to New York (USA) to join the lab of Dr. Scott Lowe, at **Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC)** as a postdoctoral fellow. Her postdoc work combined innovative mouse models, functional genomics tools and single-cell approaches to dissect cellular plasticity mechanisms underlying tumor initiation and cancer immune evasion.

Her research to date been recognized by several distinctions such as the AACR (American Association of Cancer Research) Scholar-in-Training Award (2016), the Benjamin F. Trump Award for Scientific Research Excellence (2019), and the prestigious Blavatnik Regional Award for Young Scientists (2021). In addition to her scientific production, Direna has been interested in bringing science closer to society and tackling gender equality issues in Academia, participating in several cancer awareness campaigns, and science outreach and diversity initiatives in the USA and Spain.

At the end of 2021, she returned to Spain to start her own lab at the **IRB Barcelona**, where she is currently building a multidisciplinary team to study the interplay between cancer-driving genetic mutations and inflammatory cues, with the goal of identifying more effective means to restrain neoplastic lineages and restore anti-tumor immunity in pancreatic cancers and other inflammation-driven malignancies.