



MATTHEW DANKNER, Class of 2023

Education: BSc (Anatomy and Cell Biology), McGill University

Supervisor(s): Peter Siegel

Dpt: Experimental Medicine

Work location: Rosalind and Morris Goodman Cancer Institute

Project: Understanding the molecular mechanisms of brain metastasis

Selected Award(s): Vanier Scholarship, CIHR Canada Graduate Scholarship – Doctoral (CGS-D), AACR Scholar-In-Training Award

Research Description:

I am a cancer researcher focused on understanding why cancer spreads to the brain and how we can improve the care of patients with brain metastases. In my PhD, our team has made important strides in improving our understanding of brain metastases and have identified several clinically relevant applications of our findings that we are now studying with clinical trials in human patients.

Why did you decide to pursue both MDCM and PhD degrees? What are your career aspirations?

My overarching career goal is to become a clinician-scientist who is responsible for patient care while leading initiatives to bring new treatment options to patients through basic, translational, and clinical cancer research. For this reason, the MD/PhD program is a perfect fit for my interests and goals.

Why did you choose to study at McGill University?

McGill is a world leading research university with state-of-the-art facilities and scientists in the area of cancer research. Also, I grew up in Montreal and being near my family and friends as a big bonus!

What aspect of the MD-PhD program do you enjoy the most or are looking forward to?

I've been very fortunate to have had amazing mentors in the senior students in the program when I began my MD/PhD journey. Now, I genuinely enjoy seeing this come full circle in me being able to mentor the junior students in the program.

What advice do you have for incoming MDCM-PhD students?

- 1) Don't be shy to reach out to the senior students and Faculty for advice.
- 2) Work hard but at a pace that is sustainable for you over the long term and won't lead to a quick burnout.
- 3) Make the most of the social experience of medical school and make friends with your classmates- mostly because it is just a lot of fun, but also because they will be your senior resident bosses when you go back to medicine after PhD.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like to play sports and spend time with my family and friends.