



Rima Al-awar, PhD

Head, Therapeutic Innovation and Drug  
Discovery

Drugging protein-protein interactions: discovery  
and optimization of WDR5 binders

Dr. Rima Al-awar earned a PhD in synthetic organic chemistry from North Carolina State University and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill prior to joining Eli Lilly and Company in 1995.

In 2002, while still at Eli Lilly, Dr. Al-awar was promoted to Head in Discovery Chemistry Research and Technologies and later served as Head in Route Selection in Chemical Product Research and Development. In July 2008 she joined the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research (OICR) as Director and Senior Principal Investigator. Dr. Al-awar also serves as an Associate Professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology at the University of Toronto.

Since joining OICR, Dr. Al-awar's focus has been to build a drug discovery program that can efficiently translate the most promising ideas coming from Ontario's academic community into therapeutic benefits to cancer patients by identifying hits and lead molecules and optimizing them to potential drug candidates.

She has built a team comprised of researchers whose collective expertise spans the entire drug discovery process from target identification and validation to clinical candidate selection. The group has extensive experience within pharma and biotech environments and combines the biology, ADME/PK, analytical, medicinal and computational chemistry expertise with the state of the art infrastructure necessary to successfully advance drug discovery projects.

In collaboration with FACIT, the commercialization partner of OICR, her team has now spun out two companies (Novera and Propellon) and partnered two assets with pharmaceutical companies.