

Kenneth Westerman, Ph.D.

Instructor

Massachusetts General Hospital
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EDUCATION

Ph.D., Biochemical & Molecular Nutrition *Jun 2016 - Aug 2019*
Tufts Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Boston, MA

M.S., Biochemical & Molecular Nutrition, with concentration in Systems Genomics *Sep 2014 - May 2016*
Tufts Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Boston, MA

B.S., Chemical Engineering – *Magna cum laude* *Sep 2010 - May 2014*
Tufts University, Medford, MA

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Instructor

Jul 2022 - present

Postdoctoral Fellow

Sep 2019 - Jun 2022

Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston, MA
Broad Institute of MIT and Harvard, Cambridge, MA
Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA
Advisor: Alisa K. Manning, Ph.D.

Develop methods for gene-environment interaction analysis in large-scale consortia and biobanks, including TOPMed and the UK Biobank. Apply these methods to nutrition and lifestyle exposures to find potential genetic modification of the relationship between these behaviors and cardiometabolic disease risk. Implement and share open-source software tools, cloud workflows, and analysis results to advance the field and promote reproducible science.

Doctoral Student

Oct 2016 - Aug 2019

JM-USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, Boston, MA
Advisor: José M. Ordovás, Ph.D.

Doctoral Thesis: Integration of genomics, epigenomics, and diet for cardiovascular risk prediction

Uncovered novel epigenomic signals predictive of incident cardiovascular disease and assembled associated predictive models. Demonstrated that DNA methylation may act as a “molecular recorder” of cumulative risk factor exposure and that epigenomic risk predictors may be synergistic with traditional risk scores. Provided proof-of-concept for the prediction of response to dietary fat using genome-wide gene-diet interaction results.

Graduate Student

JM-USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, Boston, MA

Master's Directed Study

Jan 2015 - Dec 2018

Developed a cheminformatic workflow based on quantitative structure-activity relationship machine learning models to discover targeted uses of food compounds. Published an open-source software tool implementing the method and an associated manuscript.

Master's Practicum

Sep 2014 - Jan 2015

Analyzed 16S metagenomic data to uncover dietary effects on murine microbiome patterns.

GRANTS, HONORS, AND AWARDS

K01 Research Scientist Development Award – NIDDK *2022 - present*

Early Career Abstract-based Travel Award – CHARGE Consortium *2023*

Advocacy Certificate for Human Genetics and Genomics – ASHG *2022*

Early Career Investigator Achievement Award – CHARGE Consortium *2022*

Early Career Abstract-based Travel Award – CHARGE Consortium	2022
Early Career Educational Travel Award – American Society for Nutrition	2021
Semifinalist, Charles J. Epstein Trainee Award – American Society for Human Genetics	2021
Emerging Leaders in Nutrition Science Award – American Society for Nutrition	2021
Finalist, Postgraduate Research Award Competition – American Society for Nutrition	2021
Harvard T32 Training Program in Endocrinology – NIDDK	2020-2021
BioData Catalyst Fellowship – NHLBI	2020-2021
Gerald Cassidy Student Research Award – JM-USDA HNRCA at Tufts University	2018
IMPACT Fellowship – MIT IMPACT program	2018
Tufts T32 Training Program in Nutrition and Cardiometabolic Disorders – NHLBI	2016-2019
Honos Civicus Society – Tufts University civic honor society	2015

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

InsideTracker , Cambridge, MA	Jan 2016 - Dec 2019
Data Scientist	
Analyzed large behavior and blood biomarker datasets from a commercial personalized nutrition platform. Led the statistical modeling and manuscript preparation for the company's first peer-reviewed publication. Developed a software tool for automated analysis and visualization of biomarker data that is now used across the company.	
Tufts Medical Center , Boston, MA	Jun 2019 - Aug 2019
Bioinformatician	
Consulted on the content of reports for a machine learning-based biological analytics platform being developed within the Tufts Clinical and Translational Science Institute.	
Harvard Medical School , Boston, MA	Jun 2015 - May 2016
Technical Outreach Coordinator	
Worked with biological research groups to find gaps in computational workflows and identified relevant resources within the IT department; projects ranged from RNA-Seq analysis in R to system administration.	

PUBLICATIONS

Published

<p>Westerman KE, Walker ME, Gaynor SM, Wessel J, DiCorpo D, Ma J, et al. Investigating gene-diet interactions impacting the association between macronutrient intake and glycemic traits. <i>Diabetes</i>. 2023; 72(5):653-665.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> First example of an analytical modeling strategy incorporating the complexity of rare genetic variants, gene-environment interactions, and nutritional epidemiology.
<p>Kim H, Westerman KE, Smith K, Chiou J, Cole JB, Majarian T, et al. High-throughput genetic clustering of type 2 diabetes loci reveals heterogeneous mechanistic pathways of metabolic disease. <i>Diabetologia</i>. 2023; 66(3):495-507.</p>
<p>Cole JB, Westerman KE, Manning AK, Florez JC, Hirschhorn JN. Genetic heritability as a tool to evaluate the precision of 24-hour recall dietary questionnaire variables in UK Biobank. <i>Front. Genet</i>. 2023; 13:1070511.</p>
<p>Sevilla-Gonzalez M, Manning AK, Westerman KE, Aguilar-Salinas CA, Deik A, Clish CB. Metabolomic markers of glucose regulation after a lifestyle intervention in prediabetes. <i>BMJ Open Diabetes Res. Care</i>. 2022; 10:e003010.</p>
<p>DiCorpo D, Gaynor SM, Russell EM, Westerman KE, Raffield LM, Majarian TD, et al. Whole genome sequence association analysis of fasting glucose and fasting insulin levels in diverse cohorts from the NHLBI TOPMed program. <i>Commun. Biol</i>. 2022; 5(1):756.</p>

<p>Westerman KE, Majarian TD, Giulianini F, Jang DK, Florez JC, Chen H, Chasman DI, Udler MS, Manning AK, Cole JB. Variance-quantitative trait loci enable systematic discovery of gene-environment interactions for cardiometabolic serum biomarkers. <i>Nat. Comm.</i> 2022; 13:3993.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First demonstration of an “exposome-wide” approach to gene-environment interaction testing • Altmetric score of 29 (93rd percentile of tracked articles of a similar age)
<p>Gaynor SM, Westerman KE, Ackovic LL, Li X, Li Z, Manning AK, Philippakis A, Lin X. STAAR Workflow: A cloud-based workflow for scalable and reproducible rare variant analysis. <i>Bioinformatics.</i> 2022; 38(11):3116-3117.</p>
<p>Westerman KE*, Lin J*, Sevilla-Gonzalez M, Tadess B, Marchek C, Manning AK. Gene-environment interaction analysis incorporating sex, cardiometabolic diseases, and multiple deprivation index reveals novel genetic associations with COVID-19 severity. <i>Front. Genet.</i> 2022; 12:782172.</p>
<p>Westerman KE, Miao J, Chasman DI, Florez JC, Chen H, Manning AK, Cole JB. Genome-wide gene-diet interaction analysis in the UK Biobank identifies novel effects on hemoglobin A1c. <i>Hum. Mol. Genet.</i> 2021; 30(18):1773-1783.</p>
<p>Westerman KE, Pham DT, Hong L, Chen Y, Sevilla-González M, Sung YJ, Sun YV, Morrison AC, Chen H, Manning AK. GEM: scalable and flexible gene-environment interaction analysis in millions of samples. <i>Bioinformatics.</i> 2021; 37(20):3514-3520.</p>
<p>Christensen JJ, Ulven SM, Thoresen M, Westerman K et al. Associations between dietary patterns and gene expression pattern in peripheral blood mononuclear cells: A cross-sectional study. <i>Nutr. Metab. Cardiovas. Dis.</i> 2020; 30(11):2111-2122.</p>
<p>Liu Y, Shen Y, Guo T, Parnell LD, Westerman KE, Smith CE, Ordovás JM, Lai C-Q. Statin use associates with risk of type 2 diabetes via epigenetic patterns at <i>ABCG1</i>. <i>Front. Genet.</i> 2020; 11:622.</p>
<p>Westerman K, Liu Q, Liu S, Parnell LD, Sebastiani P, Jacques P, DeMeo DL, Ordovás JM. A gene-diet interaction-based score predicts response to dietary fat in the Women’s Health Initiative. <i>Am. J. Clin. Nutr.</i> 2020; 111(4):893-902.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided proof-of-concept for polygenic scores based on interaction effects rather than main effects
<p>Westerman KE, Harrington S, Ordovás JM, Parnell LD. PhyteByte: Identification of foods containing compounds with specific pharmacological properties. <i>BMC Bioinformatics.</i> 2020; 21:238.</p>
<p>Westerman K, Fernández-Sanlés A, Patil P, Sebastiani P, Jacques P, Starr JM, Deary IJ, Liu Q, Liu S, Elosua R, DeMeo DL, Ordovás JM. Epigenomic assessment of cardiovascular disease risk and interactions with traditional risk metrics. <i>J. Am. Heart Assoc.</i> 2020; 9(8):e015299.</p>
<p>Westerman K*, Kelly J* et al. Epigenome-wide association study reveals a molecular signature of response to phyloquinone (vitamin K1) supplementation. <i>Epigenetics.</i> 2020; 15(8):859-870.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One of the first demonstrations of epigenetic prediction of response to dietary inputs
<p>Westerman K, Sebastiani P, Jacques P, Liu S, DeMeo DL, Ordovás JM. DNA methylation modules associate with incident cardiovascular disease and cumulative risk factor exposure. <i>Clin. Epigenetics.</i> 2019; 11:142.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided empirical evidence for the established theoretical model of DNA methylation as a “molecular readout” of cumulative risk factor exposure.
<p>Reaver A, Hewlings S, Westerman K, Blander G, Schmeller T, Heer M, Rein D. A Randomized, Placebo-Controlled, Double-Blind Crossover Study to Assess a Unique Phytosterol Ester Formulation in Lowering LDL Cholesterol Utilizing a Novel Virtual Tracking Tool. <i>Nutrients.</i> 2019; 11(9):2108.</p>
<p>Westerman K, Reaver A, Roy C, Ploch M, Sharoni E, Nogal B, Sinclair DA, Katz DL, Blumberg JG, Blander G. Longitudinal analysis of biomarker data from a personalized nutrition platform in healthy subjects. <i>Sci. Rep.</i> 2018; 8(1):14685.</p>
<p>Horowitz AI, Westerman K, and MJ Panzer. Formulation influence on the sol–gel formation of silica-supported ionogels. <i>J. Sol-Gel Sci. Technol.</i> 2016; 78:34-39.</p>

Koh YW, **Westerman K**, and Manzhos S. A computational study of adsorption and vibrations of UF6 on graphene derivatives: Conditions for 2D enrichment. *Carbon*. 2015; 81:800-806.

Reviews

Westerman KE and Ordovás JM. DNA methylation and incident cardiovascular disease. *Curr. Opin. Clin. Nutr.* 2020; 23(4): 236-240.

PRESENTATIONS

Oral

- “Dissection of a known gene-physical activity interaction using metabolomics”. CHARGE Consortium Meeting, Boston, MA. 2023
- “Genome-wide gene-lifestyle interaction analysis for cardiometabolic health”. Division of Preventive Medicine Faculty Seminar, Brigham and Women’s Hospital. 2023
- “Gene-macronutrient interactions impacting glycemic traits in the TOPMed cohorts and beyond”. Nutrient-Gene Interactions Research Interest Group Business Meeting, American Society for Nutrition Virtual Meeting. 2022
- “Efficient derivation of summary statistics from multi-exposure, genome-wide, gene-environment interaction studies”. CHARGE Consortium Meeting, Philadelphia, PA. 2022
- “Creating a research portal for vQTL and gene-by-environment associations”. Common Metabolic Disease Knowledge Portal Network Webinar. 2021
- “Systematic discovery of gene-environment interactions for metabolic serum biomarkers”. American Society for Human Genetics Virtual Conference. 2021
- “Identification of gene-diet interactions impacting glycemic biomarkers in the multi-ethnic TOPMed cohorts”. 2nd International Conference on Precision Nutrition and Metabolism in Public Health and Medicine, Rhodes, Greece. 2021
- “Identification of genetic loci impacting COVID-19 severity via gene-environment interaction analysis incorporating known risk factors”. International Genetic Epidemiology Society Virtual Conference, Lightning Talk. 2021
- “Identification of gene-diet interactions impacting glycemic biomarkers in the multi-ethnic TOPMed cohorts”. American Society for Nutrition Virtual Conference. 2021
- “Systematic discovery of gene-environment interactions for cardiometabolic serum biomarkers”. CHARGE Consortium Virtual Meeting. 2021
- Panel moderator: “Nutrigenetics, nutrigenomics, and precision nutrition”. Tufts Research and Data Symposium, Virtual. 2021
- “Epigenome-wide association study of plasma phylloquinone response to phylloquinone supplementation”. American Society for Nutrition Conference, Baltimore, MD. 2019
- “DNA methylation-based cardiovascular risk assessment”. Nutritional Genomics Organization Conference, Varna, Bulgaria. 2017
- “A chemogenomics approach defines novel food, chemical and genetic mediators of triglyceride homeostasis”. Nutritional Genomics Organization Conference, Barcelona, Spain. 2015

Poster

- American Society of Human Genetics Meeting, Los Angeles, CA 2022
- CHARGE Consortium Meeting, Seattle, WA 2022
- American Society for Nutrition Virtual Conference 2022
- CHARGE Consortium Meeting, Virtual 2021

American Heart Association Epi Lifestyle Virtual Conference	2021
American Society for Human Genetics Virtual Conference	2020
American Society for Nutrition Virtual Conference	2020
CHARGE Consortium Meeting, Houston, TX	2020
American Society of Human Genetics Conference, Houston, TX	2019
American Society for Nutrition Conference, Baltimore, MD	2019
RECOMB Conference, Washington, DC	2019
Experimental Biology Conference, San Diego, CA	2018
Tufts Data Intensive Studies Center Symposium, Medford, MA	2017

PATENTS

LD Parnell, MS Obin, and KE Westerman . “Methods of Identifying and Formulating Food Compounds That Modulate Phenotype-Related Targets.” US Provisional Patent Pending.	2016
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TEACHING AND MENTORSHIP EXPERIENCE

Joanna Lin , Undergraduate, Bowdoin College Mentored on genetic epidemiology and the scientific publication process. Resulted in our co-first author publication exploring gene-environment interactions for COVID-19 severity.	2020 – 2021
Teaching Assistant , Tufts Friedman School Course: Graduate biochemistry (BCHM 0223) Independently led twice-weekly review sessions for classes of 15+ students.	2015 & 2016

UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Founder and organizer , Nutritional genomics discussion group at MGH/Broad Institute	2020 - present
Organizer , Omics in epidemiology journal club	2019 - 2021
Co-founder and Coordinator , “NewTriton” talk series at the Tufts Friedman School	2015 - 2018
Research Working Group Member , Tufts Friedman School Strategic Plan	2015
Research Committee , Tufts Friedman School Student Research Conference	2014 - 2017

PEER REVIEW

Journals

American Journal of Clinical Nutrition
Diabetologia
Genes and Nutrition
Journal of Nutrition
Clinical Epigenetics
Frontiers in Genetics
Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology
Nutrition and Metabolism
Nutrition and Cancer
Scientific Reports

Meeting Abstracts

American Society for Nutrition Annual Meeting