Dr. Michelle Li, MD
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Abstract/Bio:

Dr. Li is leading the investigator-initiated GRADE study, which will be the first in the world to explore the potential role of growth differentiation factor 15 (GDF-15) as a predictive biomarker of treatment-related toxicities in patients with HER2-low and HER2-positive metastatic breast cancer receiving trastuzumab deruxtecan (T-DXd). While T-DXd has transformed outcomes in this population, its clinical benefit is frequently limited by side effects such as nausea, vomiting and weight loss. Despite dose reduction and supportive care strategies, these symptoms may result in early treatment cessation and therefore compromise therapeutic benefit. The GRADE study addresses a critical unmet need by evaluating whether levels of GDF-15, a stress-related hormone that is elevated in many inflammatory conditions including breast cancer, can help clinicians identify patients at highest risk of toxicity and poorer outcomes. By integrating longitudinal GDF-15 measurements with toxicity profiles and progression-free survival, this study will determine whether GDF-15 can serve as a clinically actionable biomarker to personalize supportive care strategies and improve quality of life while on treatment, as well as lay the critical groundwork for future interventional Studies.

Dr. Li is a medical oncologist and early career clinician-researcher with a strong interest in identifying biomarkers to optimize the tolerability and efficacy of breast cancer therapeutics. She received her medical degree with honors from Monash University, and completed her internal medicine and medical oncology training in Melbourne, Australia. In 2024, she undertook a clinical trials and translational research fellowship with Professor Sherene Loi at the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre. Currently, she is an Advanced Research Fellow in the Department of Breast Oncology at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, and a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne.