

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

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**Kerry Strong Russell, M.D., Ph.D.**

Independent Consultant for Clinical Development  
Boston, MA

## The goal was MD Anderson

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What started as a high school field trip to MD Anderson for Kerry Strong Russell, M.D., Ph.D., led to a goal and a passion for science and its application to human disease.

“We visited the mathematical modeling lab in the breast imaging center and heard about all the amazing new technology being developed at MD Anderson to detect breast cancer. I will never forget that day because I decided I would work to train at MD Anderson and set my education course with that goal in mind,” Russell says.

Russell graduated from Rice University in 1985 with a bachelor’s degree in Biochemistry, then joined the Doctor of Medicine and Doctor of Philosophy dual degree program the UTHHealth Houston McGovern Medical School and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center UTHHealth Houston Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences (GSBS). At GSBS, Russell focused her studies on the molecular biology of cancer, specifically the transcriptional regulation of an oncogene associated with breast cancers.

In 1992, Russell obtained her M.D. from the McGovern Medical School and her Ph.D. from GSBS. She continued her studies by completing a residency in Internal Medicine at Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven, Conn., in 1995 and a postdoctoral fellowship in Cardiovascular Medicine at Yale School of Medicine, also in New Haven, in 2000. She spent the following 13 years running a lab focused on cardiology and the cardiovascular complications of cancer and its treatment at Yale School of Medicine before shifting to career in clinical development. Russell worked for Novartis and Dicerna/Novo Nordisk before becoming the Chief Medical Officer at Terns Pharmaceuticals, from which she retired in July 2023. She continues to pursue her love for science and biomedical research as an independent consultant for clinical development.



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“MD Anderson provided superb scientific training that has served me well throughout this diverse career,” Russell says. “My excitement and enthusiasm for translating scientific discoveries into new treatments for patients, especially those with cancer, is directly related to my experience at MD Anderson.”

When asked what advice Russell would share with prospective students, she says, “MD Anderson is a fantastic place where you can learn to do great science that will help patients. There is no more rewarding career I can imagine. It has been excellent.”

During her time at GSBS, Russell also met her lifelong partner and 1991 GSBS alumnus, Raymond Russell, M.D., Ph.D. The two worked side-by-side at Yale School of Medicine, where they started a specialty program in cardio-oncology. Together, they have a wonderful daughter and an Airstream trailer in which they enjoy traveling around North America. In addition to traveling, Russell also enjoys playing piano, writing fiction and outdoor activities such as hiking, camping and scuba diving.

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