



# DoIM NEWS

FALL 2004, VOL. 1

Information Exchange from the Division of Internal Medicine

## FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

### Dr. Steven I. Sherman Establishes Clinical Trials for Thyroid Cancer and Making Cancer History

A butterfly-shaped gland located in the neck, the thyroid plays an important role in a person's well-being. The thyroid generates hormones that control diverse bodily functions such as contraction of the heart, maintenance of body temperature, and cholesterol metabolism. Nodules of the thyroid occur commonly, found in up to 20% of all women, but fortunately most of these nodules are benign (non-cancerous) tumors. However, escalating numbers of thyroid cancers are being diagnosed each year, increasing at a rate higher than that of most other malignant tumors. Whereas most thyroid cancers are slow growing and not fatal, the treatment for advanced and metastatic thyroid cancers is generally unsuccessful.



Dr. Steven I. Sherman was trained as a thyroid specialist at John Hopkins School of Medicine and came to M. D. Anderson in 1993 interested in identifying optimal treatments for thyroid cancer. He was recently appointed as the Chair of the Department of Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders. For the last 5 years, he has dedicated most of his research efforts to the problems of patients with advanced metastatic thyroid cancer for whom conventional therapies have proven to be mostly unhelpful.

As the Director of the National Thyroid Cancer Treatment Cooperative Study Group (NTCTCSG), he has been in a position to lead new efforts to overcome this challenge. He works with collaborators at 10 other institutions to analyze the impact of various standard

modes of therapy on disease recurrence and survival through a prospective registry that has accumulated nearly 20,000 patient-years of data, with newer analyses forthcoming to address the impact of primary treatments on patient survival. As these studies have evolved, many traditional assumptions about the value of surgery, radioactive iodine, and thyroid hormone suppression therapy are being tested. But, for the patient with advanced metastatic disease, Dr. Sherman and the group are at the forefront of developing multicenter clinical trials that evaluate novel therapies that might be effective for this particular malignancy. Within M. D. Anderson, numerous endocrine faculty members have developed collaborative efforts with researchers in multiple other departments to enroll

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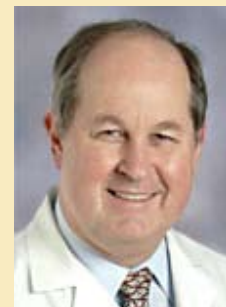
- NEW APPOINTMENTS FOR DR. MICHAEL TUVIM AND DR. STEVEN I. SHERMAN
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THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS  
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 CANCER CENTER  
*Making Cancer History®*

## A Few Words from Dr. Gagel

Faculty in the Division of Internal Medicine address a broad spectrum of symptom complexes in patients with cancer. To create a focus on symptom research within the DoIM, we are pleased to announce that Dr. Charles Cleeland and the Department of Symptom Research joined the Division on September 1, 2004. Dr. Cleeland is an internationally recognized expert on the study of and characterization of symptom complexes. He has broad expertise in developments of questionnaires for symptom analysis and is using these techniques to study the most important problems in patients with cancer. Dr. Cleeland will be joined by faculty members including Dr. Xin Shelley Wang, Tito Mendoza, Ph.D., Cielito Reyes-Gibby, Dr.P.H., and Guadalupe Palos, Dr.P.H. It is our hope that this group of talented individuals will intermingle with those of you within the Division who have research interest in this arena to create a new and broad-based focus on symptom management associated with internal medicine problems in patients with cancer. Please join me in welcoming this talented group.

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## A Warm Welcome to the Department of Symptom Research

Charles Cleeland, Ph.D., founded the Pain Research group in 1979 at the University of Wisconsin, and soon became an internationally recognized expert on the assessment and treatment of cancer pain. Dr. Cleeland and the Pain Research Group relocated to M. D. Anderson in 1996. In March 2002, the Pain Research Group became the Department of Symptom Research. The department integrates laboratory research to develop animal models of pain, fatigue, and cognitive impairment with descriptive research and interventional trials in patients.

Treating cancer-related symptoms has become a priority for cancer treatment centers. Cancer-related symptoms often cause treatment delays, distress for cancer survivors, and become the focus of care when disease is not curable.

M. D. Anderson's Department of Symptom Research, the newest component of the Division of Internal Medicine, is at the forefront of discovering new ways of assessing and managing the symptoms of cancer and its treatment, and identifying the mechanisms that cause these symptoms. Dr. Charles Cleeland, an internationally recognized expert on the assessment and treatment of cancer pain, brought the group, then known as the Pain Research Group, to M. D. Anderson in 1986. Since that time the group has been a pioneer in research on cancer pain, cancer-related fatigue, and supportive care. The mission of the Department is to develop measurements and therapeutic strategies for multiple symptoms related to cancer or cancer therapy, and to alleviate the symptom burden experienced by our patients. As a result of our commitment to improving symptom relief, Symptom Research has been designated the World Health Organization Collaborating Center for Supportive Cancer Care.

Our research currently focuses on behavioral and medical interventions for pain, fatigue, cognitive impairment and sleep disturbance. We collaborate with medical specialists who confront these symptoms in our patient population—medical, surgical and radiation oncologists, interventional radiologists, anesthesiologists, and oncology nurses - both here at M. D. Anderson and internationally.

The Department of Symptom Research has developed validated symptom assessment tools for clinical and research use by health care professionals and clinical researchers around the world. The department's measures of pain, fatigue and multiple symptoms have become standards for clinical trials internationally. More recently, the department has collaborated with basic and clinical scientists in the development of models of relating symptoms over time with underlying biological mechanisms, such as inflammation. Current funded projects include: genetic determinants of symptom expression, longitudinal symptom surveillance systems that provide feedback and treatment suggestions to providers, models of risk for severe symptoms and the exploration of inflammatory cytokines in symptom production, and disparities in symptom care that may be based on ethnic or socioeconomic status.

A current project, a clinical trial for the relief of cancer related fatigue with Dr. Escalante as PI, illustrates the potential for collaboration between the Department of Symptom Research and other departments within the Division.

The Department of Symptom Research is made up of seven faculty and seventeen staff. For more information on department current research directions and personnel, access our website at [www.mdanderson.org/departments/prg](http://www.mdanderson.org/departments/prg)



## A Few Words from Dr. Gagel

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Dr. Cleeland will also bring his administrative team who include, Program Director and Department Administrator (ad interim), Pam Jones, Manager of Protocol Administration, Marilyn Morrissey, M.P.H., Research Nurse Supervisor, Beth Johnson, R.N., Sr. Research Nurse Jane Brown, R.N., B.S.N., Sr. Research Nurse, and Linda McCrory, R.N. We extend our welcome to them as well.

I would also like to announce the appointment of Dr. Michael Tuvim of the Department of Pulmonary Medicine to the position of Chairman of the Research Committee. In addition, Dr. Daniel Lenihan, of the Department of Cardiology, has agreed to serve as Chairman-Elect. The Research Committee has been reconstituted this year with both basic science and clinical members. It is currently actively working to develop several projects to advance the research mission of the institution. This is an important committee and we look forward to their efforts to improve the quality of basic science and clinical research in the Division of Internal Medicine during the coming years. You will be hearing more about this important body in coming issues.

I am pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Steven I. Sherman as the new Department Chairman for Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders. Dr. Sherman, who has served ably in an ad interim status for the past 4 years, is an internationally recognized expert on thyroid cancer. He is the Director of the Thyroid Cancer Cooperative Study Group, a multi-institutional group who has performed important studies on the epidemiology and treatment of thyroid cancer. During the past several years he has reorganized the Department of Endocrine Neoplasia into four separate focus areas: thyroid cancer, neuroendocrine cancer, disorders of bone and mineral metabolism, and a newly created focus on diabetes mellitus. This is an unprecedented expansion of endocrine activity and we are pleased that he will continue to lead this developing effort. Please join me in congratulating him on accepting this new position.

Thank you, Dr. Robert F. Gagel

### Of Note...

**Christopher Evans**, Ph.D., Pulmonary Research has a published paper on PubMed, "Mucin is produced by clara cells in the proximal airways of antigen-challenged mice". The paper identifies the localization, ontogeny, gene expression patterns, and secretory function of mucin producing cells in the lungs of mice. The clinical correlate that these studies point to is that of mucus hypersecretion and small airway blockage in human diseases such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and cystic fibrosis. He invented a new histochemical staining method for labeling and quantifying mucin in histologic specimens. An example of its use in measuring mucous cell secretion is demonstrated.treatment.

# Fall Employee Service Awards FY '04



## 5 Years

**Dai Trang Pham-Williams, ID, IC & EH**

**Lisa R. Howard, Sr. Secretary, GIM, AT & EC**

**Katherine W. Lim, Accountant II GIM, AT & EC**

**Jackie Calderon, Senior Administrative Assistant, Div. Symptom Research**

**Cielito Reyes-Gibby, Assistant Professor, Div. Symptom Research**

**Idelle Senegal, Pt. Access Spec., Int. Med. Ctr.**

## 15 Years

**Dr. Issam I. Raad, ID, IC, & EH**

**Ellen F. Manzullo, Professor GIM, AT & EC**

## Awards

### Physician Scientist Award for FY04 goes to Dr. Robeto Adachi

Mast cells play key roles in defense against bacterial infection and parasite infestation. Upon stimulation, their main response is the immediate secretion of inflammatory mediators by a process known as degranulation. Using genetically modified mice, Dr. Adachi, is proposing to study the effects of excessive or defective mast cell degranulation in the ability of these animals to control bacterial and fungal infections. He hopes these fundamental findings will identify new targets to prevent or treat pneumonia, the main cause of infectious mortality and morbidity in patients with cancer and other immunosuppressive disorders.

**Roberto Adachi, MD**

Assistant Professor

Department of Pulmonary Medicine

### \$50,000 Awarded To UT M. D. Anderson Spore In Melanoma Developmental Research Project

Dermatology Department Principal Co-Investigators,

**Dr. Madeleine Duvic, (left)** Professor and Deputy

Chair and **Dr. Parul Hazarika, (right)** Assistant

Professor have been

awarded a \$50,000

UT MD Anderson

Spore in Melanoma

Developmental

Research Project

grant.



## Dr. Steven I. Sherman Establishes Clinical Trials for Thyroid Cancer and Making Cancer History

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patients with advanced thyroid cancer in phase I and phase II drug development trials and to contribute to basic science studies in this disease.

Dr. Sherman's interest in addressing this problem was highlighted in 1999 when he was asked to speak at the annual meeting of the American Thyroid Association on the topic of multicenter clinical trials for thyroid cancer. As none existed at that time, he chose instead to talk about the need for endocrinologists to develop strong collaborations with oncologists and unique opportunities to improve on the existing unsuccessful therapies for metastatic disease.

Leading by example, he capitalized on the extensive expertise in M. D. Anderson with novel treatments to prevent the modification of the genetic material in tumor cells, called DNA hypermethylation. Research in the mechanisms by which thyroid cancer cells acquire more aggressive behavior had identified DNA hypermethylation as a key step toward loss of responsiveness to standard therapies. With assistance from Dr. Hagop Kantarjian, chair of the Department of Leukemia and a recognized expert on such treatments in leukemia patients, he submitted a proposal to the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to test the experimental DNA methylation inhibitor decitabine in patients with metastatic papillary or follicular thyroid cancer. With strong collaboration with clinicians such as Dr. Merrill Kies in the Department of Head & Neck Medical Oncology, Dr. Homer Macapinlac in Diagnostic Imaging, and endocrinologists such as Dr. Nicholas Sarlis and Dr. Naifa Busaidy, the study was approved and initiated at M. D. Anderson earlier this summer. Of particular excitement, however, to Dr. Sherman is that this effort actually represents the first multicenter clinical trial of an investigational drug for patients with this advanced disease, and the trial is now active at four other cancer centers which participate in the NTCTCSG. Subsequent to the approval of the decitabine study, the NCI requested additional new drug trials in metastatic thyroid cancer, and this research group was awarded its second multicenter study using the recently approved drug bortezomib.

Collaborative efforts by multiple investigators at M. D. Anderson have led to the development or initiation of an unprecedented eight clinical trials for patient with endocrine tumors such as thyroid cancer, adrenal cancer and pituitary tumors. Dr. Sherman emphasizes that the most important factor that made all of this possible is the team effort and the interdisciplinary collaboration of faculty endocrinologists, medical and surgical oncologists, radiologists, and pathologists, along with invaluable contributions by research nurses and data managers. Dr. Sherman is particularly gratified because patients are recognizing that they now have a slate of options to participate in a clinical trial in the hope that new knowledge will prove to be helpful for others with these diseases. The research of Dr. Sherman and his many colleagues is providing hope for patients with thyroid cancer and making cancer history.

Dr. Sherman also serves as the Chair for the Thyroid Cancer Guidelines Panel for the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN), and he was recently elected to the Executive Council of American Thyroid Association. At M. D. Anderson, he has served on numerous committees and task forces, chairing the Clinical Research Committee and Graduate Medical Education Committee for two years each.

## Congratulations

Congratulations **Ancita Fadol, CNS,FNP, RN-** Advanced Practice Nurse in the Department of Cardiology, and **Roy Merritt,** patient care assistant, emergency center on being chosen as one of the five finalists for the prestigious 2004 Julie and Ben Rogers Award for Excellence. Your colleagues have singled you out as outstanding employees in the area of patient care at M. D. Anderson. Your superb dedication and personal commitment continue to help this institution fulfill its vital ongoing mission and for this we are deeply grateful to you.

## What's New In The Department? **Breakfast Meeting**

**September 14, 2004**

Invited guests join Dr. Gagel and Rosemary Scarfia for a delightful breakfast and an opportunity to share ideas and information.

### Guests included:

Internal Medicine, Tina Bartie  
Cardiopulmonary Ctr., Idelle Senegal  
Emergency Ctr., Jibao Musa  
Dermatology, Betty Spears  
Endocrine, Eileen Huang  
Pulmonary, Dr. Carlos Jimenez  
Cardiology, Amber Reece  
ID/IC/EH, Cheryl Perego  
Gastrointestinal Med. & Nutrition,  
Dr. Alexander Dekovich  
Symptom  
Research, Marilyn  
Morissey  
Division of Internal  
Med., Khanh  
Nguyen



## DoIM Welcomes

### New Faculty:

**James Uyeki, M.D.**, Assistant Professor, Department of General Internal Medicine, AT & EC  
**Jerry Henderson, M.D.**, Assistant Professor, Department of General Internal Medicine, AT & EC  
**Sunil Sahai, M.D.**, Assistant Professor, Department of General Internal Medicine, AT & EC  
**Bob Sun, M.D.**, Assistant Professor, Department of General Internal Medicine, AT & EC

### New Employees:

Department of Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders  
**Kim Desrouleaux**, Research Nurse  
**Jeffrey Cui**, Database Coordinator  
**Debra Anders**, Sr. Secretary  
**Erica Arispe**, Sr. Secretary  
  
Department of Pulmonary Medicine  
**Debbie Wallace**, Physician Assistant  
  
Department of General Internal Medicine, AT & EC  
**Doriel Ward**, Program Manager  
  
Department of Symptom Research  
**Annette Sanchez**, Senior Secretary

## Oncolog Magazine Features Endocrine Faculty

### July/August Issue

Featured in "Treating Patients with Cancer Requires Looking Beyond the Tumor" and "Treating Cancer-Related Fatigue" **Dr. Ellen F. Manzullo**, professor in the Department of General Internal Medicine, Ambulatory Treatment, and Emergency Care, consults with patient in the Ambulatory Treatment Center.



### September Issue

"Treating Acromegaly," **Dr. Steven G. Waguespack**, an assistant professor in the Department of Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders, shows patient Cruz Rosales a model of a pituitary gland tumor.



**Dr. Rena Sellin**, professor, Department of Endocrine Neoplasia and Hormonal Disorders writes about "Cancer-Related Neuroendocrine Dysfunction".

## For PTO Time Keepers, Life Just Got a Little Easier

Thanks to the caring concern of **Pedro R. Prado**, Financial Analyst in the Department of Infectious Diseases, Infection Control and Employee Health. Pedro attended the Time Keepers Training Program and noticed people were somewhat confused and overwhelmed at the 20 new pay codes they would have to utilize for each employee. He decided to create a table for easier interpretation and to maintain accuracy. The result has been well received and we will probably see it on the Human Resources Web Site in the near future. Congratulations Pedro for creating a helpful tool for our Time Keepers and your innovative thinking.



## DoIM NEWS

### Newsletter Committee

Head, Division of Internal Medicine,  
**Robert F. Gagel**

Division Administrator, **Rosemary Scarfia**

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### Submit news to:

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## Events

### Vth International Conference on Cancer-Induced Bone Disease (CIBD)

Davos, Switzerland  
March 20-24, 2005

### Online Information

[www.ibmsonline.org/cancerbone.htm](http://www.ibmsonline.org/cancerbone.htm)

