

New Division Head Reorganizing with Aspirational Goals



“Being at MD Anderson is a tremendous opportunity to build on an immense history of excellence in numerous areas, including the care of sarcoma and leukemia patients and the development of new drugs and cellular therapies for pediatric cancer patients,” said **Richard Gorlick, MD**, division head of Pediatrics and the Children’s Cancer Hospital, effective Dec. 5, 2016. Gorlick comes to MD Anderson from The Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, New York, where he served as professor of Pediatrics and Molecular Pharmacology, and from The Children’s Hospital at Montefiore, where he served as division chief of Pediatric Hematology-Oncology and vice chairman of Pediatrics. He is internationally recognized as a **physician-scientist** in the field of osteosarcoma.



Gorlick and **Lisa Hafemeister, MHA**, division administrator, are working on some top priorities. “Immediate short-term goals are recruitment of faculty, development of a new team-based structure, improving patient care access, expanding personalized medicine tumor profiling and drug access, and reimagining our Adolescent and Young Adult Program (AYA),” he said. The AYA program may include a new clinic space for that subset of patients with more assistance for onco-fertility care. In January, Gorlick presented the idea of restructuring current clinical and research methods to form 16 teams. Faculty and staff were encouraged to join as many teams as they would like based on their interests. “The work should be functional and aspirational. Admittedly, this may be too many teams, but natural selection will lead to merger or eradication of some of the groups over time,” he

admitted. Two stem cell transplantation physicians and one leukemia faculty have accepted offers to join the division this summer, with recruitment underway to identify another leukemia expert following the departures of faculty in the past couple of years. These additional oncologists will help increase patient volume, with an emphasis on stem cell/bone marrow transplantation.

Clinical Charge Nurse Dreamed of Becoming a Princess Until Cancer Changed Her Plans

LeighAnna Hutchinson, RN, BSN, clinical charge nurse at the Children’s Cancer Hospital, understands exactly what her young patients mean when they tell her they don’t want more chemo that might make them feel sick, that they don’t want another needle stick or procedure, or that they don’t want to spend another night away from home. The Clear Lake native received excellent training at nursing school, but she also has personal knowledge of the disease. Hutchinson is a pediatric cancer survivor herself. She was diagnosed at age seven with *two cancers*—granulocytic sarcoma that presented as a brain tumor and acute myeloid leukemia (AML), primarily a cancer of the bone marrow and lymph nodes.



Learning About Cancer before Second Grade

Cancer in children is rare, but it is rarer to have this type of sarcoma presentation in the brain. It’s normally first found in the chest or abdomen of adults after an AML diagnosis. Her survivor’s story started the summer before she was to start second grade. One evening after watching television, Hutchinson decided she was ready for bed.

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“As I was walking upstairs, I just casually mentioned to my mom that I was seeing two televisions,” Hutchinson recalled. “She asked me to repeat what I said, and I told her, ‘There are two of them.’” *But there weren’t.* Hutchinson’s mom looked at her daughter’s eyes and noticed that her left eye had crossed inward. Concerned, her mom called two neighbors—a nurse and an optometrist who then advised her to bring her daughter to an ophthalmologist. After that came an urgent referral to a pediatric neurologist at The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) in Galveston, CT scans and MRI studies to confirm a tumor that was pressing on the optic nerve, and then surgery to remove it. Friends advised her parents to take her to MD Anderson to **David Tubergen, MD**, now retired, for the rest of her treatment. Because her condition was so rare, her doctor put together a multidisciplinary team that created a treatment plan for her, which was supposed to include three years of chemotherapy. The first cycle went well, but on the way home from the second cycle, Hutchinson spiked a fever of 103 degrees and was rushed back to the hospital where she remained for two months. During that time, she suffered higher temps, multiple fungal infections and neutropenia. She had no immune system left.

When Nothing Else Worked: They Tried One More Thing

Doctors at that time warned her parents that the only thing that might save her was a procedure that had only been done four times in Houston on pediatric patients—but never at MD Anderson. And, only one of those kids had survived. Her parents said yes to granulocyte transfusions. The side effects of these white blood cell transfusions caused more fevers, terrible chills, and stroke-level blood pressure.



With mom, Jaynie

But after three weeks, Hutchinson improved and was discharged in September of that year. By November, bone marrow tests could detect no cancer in her body, and doctors decided no other chemotherapy would be needed. By her 10th birthday, Hutchinson was allowed to have her requested earrings because her platelet counts were finally normal. She was under watch for five years, but 19 years from the date of diagnosis, Hutchinson remains cancer free.

Life Now

“As a little girl before cancer I wanted to be what every other little girl wanted to be when she grows up—a princess, teacher, or veterinarian, but things changed and I decided that I wanted to be a pediatric cancer nurse like all the nurses who were good to me when I was sick,” Hutchinson explained. “I remember the close relationships I developed with them and with other kids who were at hospital with me.” She was accepted at Baylor University and upon graduation came to work at MD Anderson. “My professor told me during job fairs that I should not set my sights on a place as prestigious as MD Anderson for a first job. She said no one she knew got a job here right out of school. But, I did,” Hutchinson said. Her initial role was as a pediatric floor nurse for three years. A year and a half ago, she was promoted to her current position. Her future is bright. She’ll figure out her next move when she complete a terminal doctorate program in nursing practice.

Good luck, LeighAnna!

Education Series for Non-Clinical Employees Underway

The first one-hour session for employees who do not provide patient care for employees was held Jan. 31.

Lisa Hafemeister, MHA, division administrator, said it is intended to provide information to employees about the numerous services we offer to our patients.

Demetrios Petropoulos, MD, associate professor in Pediatrics was the first speaker. He gave an overview of what stem cell transplantation is and discussed its benefits and short- and long-term risks. **Rhonda Robert, PhD**, professor in Pediatrics, and her team lead the second session. They shared the role they play in testing for neurophysiology status, providing psychotherapy, helping young patients reintegrating in a school environment or helping our young adult patients determine possible career paths. Employees will be emailed in advance about the next educational opportunity.

We're grateful to our partners and school program for helping our patients and their families fit in some fun!



The Julia Cobb JuCan Foundation donated hundreds of toys & gift cards to make sure our patients got to open fun gifts on Christmas Day.



Gingerbread Construction & Deconstruction

Art... just because!



Community Project: hand-made blankets in honor of MLK Day



Designed and donated by these teens: Lilly Pads to help Patients Have Fun Getting

**Ms. Lisa, art teacher
extraordinaire**



Noon Year's Eve Party



**Always
camera
ready: This
patient was
excited
about
Houston
Super Bowl
activities!**



Rodeo Houston Hitched a Saddle at the Pedi Dome!



**"Triumph Over Kid Cancer Foundation" Supported
Sweet Treats & a Build-a-Bear Clinic for
Valentine's Day Event**



A night out on the town: our patients were very excited to spend time with Miss Texas USA & meet 2017 Rotary Lombardi Award Winner Jonathan Allen, former defensive lineman for the University of Alabama

March is Child Life Month: Recognizing Specialists who make a Difference



Take a look at some members of our Child, Adolescent and Young Adult Life Program as we honor their contributions to the emotional stability and healthy development of Children's Cancer Hospital's patients. The team kicked off Child Life Month in March with a Carnival on G9.

The team uses age and developmentally appropriate speech to regularly communicate with patients about their disease, diagnosis, and treatment to make the hospital experience more normal and less frightening. They teach coping skills to help the kids get through procedures and work with parents to explain to our patients' parents and siblings how cancer impacts their loved one's cognitive, emotional, and physical well-being. Child Life members also make themselves available for supervised play time—so kids can just be kids—and they host group activities, such as movie times, game nights, and parties for just about every holiday, as well as several camps and a prom.

Two Fellows Graduating, Four Joining us For Next Phase of their Training

Two fellows will graduate from the Division of Pediatrics Clinical Fellowship Program this summer.

Ryuma Tanaka, MD, will be going to St. Jude Children's Hospital in Memphis, Tenn., where he will continue his training as a neuro-oncology fellow.

Pamela Camacho, MD, is investigating opportunities. Four new candidates will join us this July. They are:

- **David McCall, MD**, The University of Alabama at Birmingham
- **Avis Harden, MD**, Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, FL

- **Sana Mohiuddin, MD**, Texas Tech University Health Science Center at Amarillo
- **Muhammad Baig, MBBS**, University of Arizona at Tucson

Winston Huh, MD, associate professor and program director, said annually he receives 70 to 80 applicants and works with division faculty to interview about 24 candidates.

Division Loses Six Employees in Reduction in Force

Pediatrics lost six employees when MD Anderson instituted a reduction in force in early January 2017. They were a receptionist, an administrative assistant, a senior administrative assistant, a patient service coordinator, and two childcare assistants who took care of the children of adult patients or their visiting family members. **Lisa Hafemeister, MHA**, division administrator, said at a division-wide meeting that the departures will not impact patient care and were part of the required cuts across all areas of the hospital. "We have a great deal of hard work in front of us, but I am fully confident in us as a team that we will achieve the best for our patients and team members," she said.