

DoCMessages

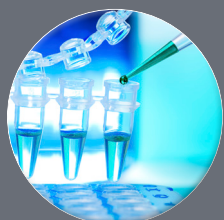
A Division of Cancer Medicine Information Exchange

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MDAnderson
Cancer Center
Making Cancer History®

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Patient Care



Research and Education



Accolades



Administration

AML survivor forms gaming community for teens living with and beyond cancer

Seven years after Steven Gonzales won his fight against acute myelogenous leukemia (AML) with treatment that involved chemotherapy and a double umbilical cord blood transplant, he leveraged his experience to create a virtual video game arcade that provides a safe forum for other patients around the world.

"Instead of just connecting to a random person on the Internet, they'd be connecting with someone who could potentially better understand what they are going through," he explained.

Steven was diagnosed in 2007 at age 12 about a week after experiencing unexplained nausea and vomiting, and waking up with a swollen face and petechiae of the eyes during a Boy Scout camping trip. When his dad took him to an urgent care clinic, the doctor could not figure out what was going on. The next was a trip to an emergency room, where the physician "basically tried to laugh us out the door, telling me he could find nothing wrong, and that I was probably just nervous about starting a challenging new magnet school program," Steven said. But before they left, Steven's mother insisted on a CAT scan and blood work. "The emergency room doctor later returned to our room and admitted something really was wrong. Then, we went to Texas Children's Hospital, where they narrowed it down to acute lymphocytic leukemia, AML, and one other thing," Steven said. His mother, a former researcher at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, walked her son's labs and images through our front doors.

A pediatric specialist here identified Steven's illness the same day and encouraged immediate treatment. The preteen had AML (M6) and was given a 2% chance of survival. The prescribed treatment was chemotherapy

and a double cord blood transplant because Steven's mixed racial heritage—one part Puerto Rican and two parts Native American—made finding an appropriate HLA match for bone marrow transplantation impossible. Both cords were harvested by staff at the Cord Blood Bank, a program of the Department of Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapy.

"During the first cord procedure, I was really sick, felt terrible, was nauseous, and couldn't sleep. That's when my dad turned on a video game, and we played a level or two before I fell asleep. When I woke up, I was done with the first procedure," he remembered.

Steven said it meant a lot to him in the weeks that followed to be able to walk around the PediDome talking to other kids and sharing video games with them as they were going through their treatments. He has since formed a non-profit organization, The Survivor Games, to connect patients with similar interests. Steven recently obtained 503c status for the organization and is working with child life specialists to determine best approaches, formulating a survey to determine what the favorite games are right now, and exploring fundraising opportunities.

"This is something I'm passionate about, and I'm fully committed. To any teenager going through cancer right now, I'd say that it's hard. It's going to be rough and scary, but just hang in there. Other people your age are going through the same thing and if you can find them, having a friend or community makes things a whole lot easier," he said.



By Maxsane Mitchell

Research and Education



Dr. Hong gives graduating fellows advice one last time before retiring as division head

All eyes were on **Waun Ki Hong, MD**, then-division head of Cancer Medicine, when he approached the dais at the Hematology/Oncology Fellowship Graduation. After welcoming the friends and family members of all 14 graduates, he announced that this would be his last time attending the ceremony as the division's leader.

"I'm at this podium with a tremendous sense of humility. In 2001, when I started as division head, I planned to be on this job for five years. But 13 years later, I am a little sad, yet excited, about the career transition I am making. I say 'transition' because the word retirement is awful," he commented and chuckled along with the audience at the June 20 event.

He retired as head of the biggest division at MD Anderson at the end of August but returned in the fall to work part-time at the Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan Institute for Personalized Cancer Therapy (IPCT) and with the Advanced Scholar Program within Cancer Medicine. "I had many duties as head of Cancer Medicine, but among all of them, I most enjoyed the opportunity to work with fellows," Hong said. "Working with the executive fellowship committee, I feel confident that we achieved our goal to become one of the premier programs in the country for training the next generation of medical oncologists and researchers. I believe the data back me up."

Hong said that since 2001, the division has graduated almost 200 fellows, with 60% going on to work in academic environments and approximately 30% of all fellows winning coveted American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Young Investigator Awards. The Advanced Scholar Program, established in 2008 to give graduates an additional year to complete laboratory research under the mentor of their choice — and later expanded to include clinical research — has had 14 scholars. "I also want to give a special thanks to **Bob Wolff, MD**, who has worked very closely with the fellows to establish an atmosphere of academic excellence," Hong mentioned.

His final advice to the last class of trainees:

- Be faithful and honorable citizens in the field of medicine, and life
- Always work with pride and integrity
- Do your best and assume a sense of responsibility, as if the patients have no one else but you
- Respect your colleagues as much as you want them to respect you

"It has been my privilege to serve you. Now, in this next phase of my life, I will definitely return to the institution to continue to serve, but I am also looking forward to spending more time with my wife, children, and grandchildren, who live on two different coasts," Hong said.

Research and Education



Back row: Henry Conter, Meghan Karuturi, Amanda Bucheit, Krina Patel, Rashmi Murthy, Hans Lee, Koichi Takahashi
Front row: Christopher Benton, Jeffrey Yorio, Isabella Glitza, Sausan Abouharb, Young Chae, Jianjun Zhang, Van Morris

Graduates urged to go out into world as part of MD Anderson's legacy

Fourteen physicians waiting to receive certificates of completion after three years of training in the Division of Cancer Medicine's Hematology/Oncology Fellowship Program received congratulations from their program director, and a bit of advice. "You're starting a new journey that will have many successes and challenges, especially as this country makes major changes to its healthcare delivery system. As you face what is ahead, I urge you to remember where you came from. You are now part of MD Anderson's legacy, and that carries meaning," said **Robert Wolff, MD**, also deputy division head for clinical and educational affairs.



Wolff shared impressions of the graduates as he presented their credentials. He referred to Amanda Bucheit, MD, as a "calm, get it done, no drama," trainee. He said he was looking forward to watching Meghan Karuturi, MD, develop as an oncologist whose focus on breast cancer care in the elderly will certainly be needed as a large population of Baby Boomers grows older. She will have company in the Department of Breast Medical Oncology from Rashmi Murthy, MD, who has a passion for research of HER2-positive breast cancer care. Their program director jokingly described Koichi Takahashi, MD, as "the only fellow I've been afraid to ask about his research — because I worry I won't understand it." He will join the Department of Leukemia as an assistant professor this fall. Van Morris, MD, an ASCO YIA, was lauded not only for his mastery of clinical care and research interest in BRAF mutation in colon cancer, but for wearing "the most bow ties and playing the most tennis" during his training. Isabella Glitza, MD, PhD, was celebrated for research work she will continue with mentor and Department of Melanoma chair, **Patrick Hwu, MD**. Henry Conter, MD, was recognized for pursuing with zeal his ideas of more affordable healthcare delivery. "He earned a master's in finance during his fellowship, and now has a job in his native Canada, where he hopes to become a thought leader in how to improve the cost delivery of healthcare," commented Wolff.

The chief fellows spoke on behalf of their class, thanking their families and spouses for attending this final graduation with them, noting that the ceremony marked the end of at least a dozen years of medical education and training. Krina Patel, MD, used a baseball analogy to the delight of Hong, who is a longtime fan of the game. "We're glad we can now be called up from the minors. This is, in part, due to Dr. Hong, who always made time to see us. We hope we can live up to your name," she said. The chiefs presented Hong with a book of baseball quotes and a deck of baseball cards that featured their "stats" of accomplishments for the year 2030.

Research and Education



The graduates marveled at how Wolff was able to handle his responsibilities as program director, medical oncologist, and international fundraiser for the institution. “Dr. Wolff has many jobs,” said Jeffrey Yorio, MD, “In the morning, when he’s ‘just’ a doctor, you might find him in his office or the clinic. But by night, he might be on a flight to the Middle East to make an international house call or raise money.” To help him get around, the fellows presented Wolff with a caped Superman action figure, which had a nearly shaven head similar to his own.

The group admired **Michael Kroll, MD**, professor in Benign Hematology, for his “genius-level intellect,” and presented him with an Iron Man action figure.

The fellows also recognized **Katherine Pisters, MD**, professor in Thoracic/Head and Neck Medical Oncology, for her mentorship and expressed their indebtedness to **Alyssa Rieber, MD**, assistant professor in General Oncology and director and chief of oncology at Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital, for the impact she’s had on them as a teacher in challenging cases at the county hospital.

The class also gave a special thanks to **Janice Schwarz, MBA**, former associate program director. Karuturi noted the people they most needed to acknowledge were not at the ceremony. “We want to thank our patients for trusting us with their lives. It was an honor to care for them and learn from them,” said Karuturi.

What’s next for the graduates

Six of the 14 graduates will continue with MD Anderson as assistant professors in Cancer Medicine departments, while four others will become instructors in the Advanced Scholar Program, which gives each of them an additional year to work on research projects with the supervision of a division mentor.

Assistant Professors:

- **Sausan Abouharb, MD**, Breast Medical Oncology/Regional Care Centers
- **Isabella Glitza, MD, PhD**, Melanoma Medical Oncology
- **Meghan Karuturi, MD**, Breast Medical Oncology
- **Rashmi Murthy, MD**, Breast Medical Oncology
- **Krina Patel, MD**, Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapy
- **Koichi Takahashi, MD**, Leukemia

Advanced Scholar Instructors:

- **Christopher Benton, MD**, Leukemia
- **Hans Lee, MD**, Lymphoma/Myeloma
- **Van Morris, MD**, Gastrointestinal Medical Oncology
- **Jianjun Zhang, MD, PhD**, Genomic Medicine

The remaining graduates committed to other hospitals and academic programs.

- **Amanda Bucheit, MD**, START Center of Cancer Care in San Antonio
- **Young Chae, MD**, Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center of Northwestern University in Chicago
- **Henry Conter, MD**, Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Ivey International Centre for Health Innovation in London, Ontario, Canada
- **Jeffrey Yorio, MD**, Texas Oncology in Austin

Nomination and award come as a surprise to Arceneaux winner



Investigational Cancer Therapeutics Associate Professor Siqing Fu, MD, PhD, and APN Diane Barber, RN, PhD, discuss a patient's recent laboratory results and images prior to an exam.

When MD Anderson's executive vice president and physician-in-chief shows up at your clinic along with the vice president and chief nursing officer and ask for you by name, it's kind of a big deal. When it happened to **Diane Barber, PhD**, advanced practice nurse in Investigational Cancer Therapeutics, she was momentarily speechless until she realized the surprise visit meant she had won the 2014 Ethel Fleming Arceneaux Outstanding Nurse-Oncologist Award. The honor, which comes with a \$15,000 check, is presented yearly to recognize a nurse for exhibiting excellence and providing exemplary hands-on care. It is considered the top nursing award at the institution. **Eva Lu Lee, RN, MSN**, supervisor, midlevel provider in Neuro-Oncology, was also celebrated as a finalist for the honor.

"Winning the Arceneaux Award is one of the most humbling and rewarding experiences of my nursing career. I never imagined in a million years that I would ever be nominated for this prestigious

award, nor did I expect to be a finalist, given that there are so many amazing and accomplished advanced practice nurses at MD Anderson," Barber said. "I am eternally grateful to **Dr. Siqing Fu**, my peers, and my patients for nominating me for doing something that I love—being an oncology nurse practitioner."

Nominators repeatedly cited Barber's superior clinical skills, including the way she runs the Clinical Center for Target Therapy's (CCTT) Fast-Track Clinic, such as the time she recognized that a patient who was experiencing increasing shortness of breath may have been suffering from a pulmonary embolism. She immediately referred the man to the Emergency Center, where doctors confirmed her suspicion and admitted him to the intensive care unit. Nominators also appreciated Barber for taking on patients in the Clinical and Translational Research Center (CTRC) even when they were not on her original schedule.

She frequently participates in institutional leadership efforts, such as the APN orientation program, but her contributions to the nursing field are also numerous. Barber has presented at more than 11 national and international conferences, and has been published in 10 scholarly journals about nursing practice and research. Additionally, she is an active member of the Oncology Nursing Service and is president-elect of its Houston chapter, serves as a visiting professor at Chamberlain College of Nursing, and has traveled to Nigeria on a cancer prevention medical mission. Barber, whose nursing doctorate examined the study of physical activity in cancer survivors and their caregivers, is a co-investigator of a study exploring predictors of survival in cancer patients that include psychosocial and physiological factors.

Grateful patients and their families have described Barber in glowing terms. "One year ago, I started my battle with cancer, and as the days went by each day seemed and felt the same—long, anxious, and uncomfortable. Then, I was blessed to be able to participate in a trial that might save my life. Sunshine came through, along with an angel that touched our lives. Diane makes my visits to MD Anderson so pleasant, and the journey feels way easy when I see her. She has a passion for caring for people," he said.

Barber plans to spend some of the reward money to throw a surprise birthday party for her 90-year-old grandmother who raised her, to go on a nice vacation with her husband, and to bank the rest.

By Maxsane Mitchell

Accolades

SCTC lab director recognized for work as health science instructor



Congratulations to **Suzanne Dworsky, MBA**, administrative director for Stem Cell Transplantation Clinical Labs, for being named the 2014 Clinical Laboratory Science (CLS) Outstanding Instructor of the Year by students at the University of Texas School of Health Programs, where she works as an adjunct instructor. Dworsky, who prior to joining the Division of Cancer Medicine worked for 16 years at MD Anderson's Blood Bank as a phlebotomist, certified technologist, and then manager, teaches immunohematology and phlebotomy to students pursuing undergraduate degrees. In their nominations, students wrote that because Dworsky has years of experience in the field, she makes the material clear and interesting. "She is very engaged, extremely knowledgeable, and gives examples that are really helpful," said a nominator.

3 Cancer Medicine faculty members appointed to endowed professorships



Lorenzo Cohen, PhD, professor in General Oncology, was awarded the Richard E. Haynes Distinguished Professorship for Clinical Cancer Prevention.



Vali Papadimitrakopoulou, MD, professor in Thoracic/Head and Neck Medical Oncology, was awarded the Jay and Lori Eisenberg Endowed Professorship.



Elizabeth Shpall, MD, professor in Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapy, was named the Howard Foster Smith and Lee Dennis Smith Chair for Cancer Research in the Field of Hematology. She is also the medical director of the Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) Cell Therapy Laboratory and director of the Cord Blood Bank (CBB).

Leukemia research nurse named a finalist for Julie and Ben Rogers Award



Maria Cielo Foudray, RN, senior research nurse in Leukemia, was one of five finalists for the 2014 Julie and Ben Rogers Award for Excellence in Patient Care. Sixty nominations were considered for the award that recognizes consistent excellence and dedication to MD Anderson's mission to eliminate cancer.

The accolade rotates among one of five areas each year—patient care, research, education, prevention, and administration—and comes with a \$15,000 gift for the recipient and \$1,500 gift for each finalist.

Philanthropist Regina Rogers of Beaumont established the award in 1987 in honor of her parents and in appreciation of the care her mother and brother received as patients here. Rogers met with the nominees at a special luncheon held in August, and presented the award in September.

Eight people, including patients, faculty, and coworkers, nominated Foudray. She was appreciated for handling difficult situations with remarkable patience and for establishing trust with patients by making herself available day and night to respond to their calls and emails, preparing explanatory materials about their protocol requirements they could present to their internists back home, and for making herself seem like a member of their families, going as far as identifying common areas of interest such as love of pets, and arranging a birthday party for a patient who would be spending her 70th birthday at the hospital.

A nomination from one patient's family reads in part, "She had a way of putting us at ease no matter what the situation. Recently Dad was taken off his study, but we didn't realize that we were going to lose Maria in the process. You can't imagine how upset my Dad was to learn this. He really thought a lot of her. Before his diagnosis, Dad didn't have much to do with doctors or hospitals, but Maria helped him be more at ease through the entire process. We fell in love with her."

By Maxsane Mitchell

11th Annual Employee Recognition & Awards recipients honored for passion, hard work and innovation

By Maxsane Mitchell

"This will be my last appearance at the division's Employee Recognition and Awards Program because I will be moving in the next few months from the driver's seat to the back seat—turning over the wheel to someone else after 14 years," said **Waun Ki Hong, MD**, then-division head for Cancer Medicine, while addressing the audience at the May 14 program. "I must tell you from the bottom of my heart that I am so grateful for everything you have done for the division during my tenure. We have accomplished many things together." Hong, who retired in August 2014, said that one of the things he's most proud of, in terms of teambuilding in the division, was implementing the employee awards program 11 years ago. "The caliber of nominees in each category remains high every year, and I salute each of you for your passion, hard work, innovation, and core values."



Exemplary winner honored for patient advocacy in field she says is hard, but worth it

When a nurse practitioner learned that a patient of hers—an Army soldier who'd served his country in Iraq—was denied insurance coverage to pay for wound dressing supplies for his face, she jumped into action and called vendors for help. As expected, she was transferred a couple of times, but eventually reached a representative who was so moved by the soldier's story that he volunteered to provide supplies for as long as the young man needed them. The nurse believed

her efforts were all in a day's work, but her colleagues recognized what she'd done as exemplary. That type of patient advocacy was one of the reasons **Sarah Baldwin, RN, MSN, ANP**, advanced practice nurse in Investigational Cancer Therapeutics, was selected as the 2014 Exemplary Employee of the Year at the Division of Cancer Medicine's 11th Annual Employee Recognition and Awards Program, held May 14. In the past year, Baldwin said yes twice to a high-profile patient who requested that she travel overseas to his home to help continue his complicated regimen, an acknowledgement of her superb clinical skills and knowledge. Additionally, she regularly shares her knowledge with colleagues by conducting in-service sessions. She also took it upon herself to write a pamphlet about "Do Not Resuscitate" instructions for patients and their families that was so good, it was later adopted by the Patient Education Office and posted on the institution's website.

Baldwin, upon hearing her name announced as the winner, said she was not expecting to receive the award. "I feel like every one of us here deserves an award for what we do, because it is so hard, but rewarding. What we do means so much to our patients," she commented. "I want to thank my team—Jennifer and Holly—who do the exact same thing I do every day. I'd also like to thank my parents for their support, and thank my 2-year-old daughter, who gives me smiles every day when I come home from work. I love my job and my patients." Each year, the Exemplary Employee accepts a framed certificate, a badge pin, and a \$5,000 check. Their portrait also hangs in the division office for one year. Baldwin said she plans to use her windfall to pay off graduate school loans. Congratulations!



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Accolades

• • • Citation for Excellence winners



Administration: Nominators expressed their appreciation of **Tatianna Robles, MS**, program manager for research in Genitourinary Medical Oncology, for her integrity, adaptability, and organizational skills. She manages the needs of multiple researchers at the Koch Center for Applied Research of Genitourinary Cancers, and in the past year did a very good job of planning advisory board meetings, the Samuel Lectureship, donor events, and a faculty retreat in which physicians and investigators were invited from around the world. She also created and maintains the department's SharePoint sites and seeks out assignments that help staff develop career skills. Robles thanked division leaders for putting on an Awards Program that recognizes employee contributions. "To my department, I say 'thank you' for your hard work. I wouldn't have a job without you. And as Dr. Logothetis teaches us that we should leave more behind than what we were ever given—I try," she commented.



Administrative Support: **Velma Medrano**, senior procurement coordinator in Leukemia, is considered by her colleagues to be the content expert for all things related to the MD Anderson way of processing and purchasing. Specific examples include her management of the MD Anderson reception at the American Society of Hematology Annual Meeting in which a lot of venue details are given to her at the last minute. She always manages the event so that it goes off without a hitch and meets all of MD Anderson's requirements for approvals and payments. Medrano was also asked to participate in a pilot project to update MD Anderson's catalog of supply companies. She thanked **Mary Silverstein**, her department administrator, for the opportunity to have challenging projects, and acknowledged that although she's been here for 30 years, she has no plans to retire anytime soon.



Advanced Clinical Practice: Coworkers and patients who nominated **Ryanne Coulson, MPAS**, physician assistant in Gastrointestinal Medical Oncology, appreciated her immense depth of knowledge about colorectal cancer and the way she provides patients with thorough explanations about disease progression and treatment options. One patient gave the example of how Coulson's clinical acumen identified the cause of sudden weight loss that was not treatment-related—a thyroid problem that now responds well to medication. Coulson was also acknowledged for developing a database of molecular profiles that help route patients into appropriate clinical trials. "I first came to MD Anderson as a student on rotation, and when I got a job here, I planned to stay for a year or two. That was seven years ago. The PAs are very supportive, and I had the fortune of working for **Dr. Scott Kopetz** as my first assignment, which I've kept," she said. "I'm thankful for this award, but the real award comes from getting all the patient praise and helping them."



Clinical Nursing Practice: **Mary "Tina" Morrison, RN**, clinical nurse in the Ambulatory Treatment Center, was nominated for the tremendous effort she makes to educate patients on their treatment and side effects, and for sharing her knowledge with newer nurses on campus and through her involvement with the Oncology Nursing Society. She has traveled as far as China to imbue information on treatment modalities. Additionally, Morrison is appreciated for being fair when assigning patients based on acuity and complexity of treatment and for having the type of compassion that patients can experience on a personal level, including her willingness to be a sounding board for frustrated family members who need to unburden themselves about their role as caregivers. "My mother taught me to serve others as if I'm serving the Lord, and that is what I've tried to do. I'd also like to thank my husband and children for sacrifices they've made while I worked, and my managers for being supportive," Morrison said. "Thanks also to my patients who teach me something new every day about courage, patience, hope, and perseverance."

Accolades ... Citation for Excellence winners continued



Clinical Research: Nominators used the word “impeccable” to describe work that **Sapna Parshottam, MS**, manager of clinical protocol administration in Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapy, performs on a regular basis. She has developed clinical trial protocols and documentation for investigational new drugs (INDs) that are submitted for FDA approval, initiated a regulatory compliance administration program within the Center for Cancer Immunology Research, and wrote all of the quality control standard operating procedures for multiple labs. During her time at MD Anderson, Parshottam obtained the institution’s first FDA cost recovery approval of an investigational cell therapy product, and was recently invited to join the Institutional Manufacturing Oversight Committee that makes recommendations to executive leadership about future IND studies. Parshottam’s comments upon receiving her award made many in the audience laugh. “I’ve worked for many different companies—large pharmaceuticals and biotech—with lots of stressful projects. However, this position is the most stressful that I’ve had, but at the same time the most rewarding because we get to help patients,” she remarked.



Communications, Education, and Information Services: **Leslie Loddeke, BS**, department publications coordinator in Melanoma Medical Oncology, was celebrated for transforming the way her department communicates with prospective patients, referring physicians, and patient-focused organizations. She revamped the department’s website, greatly increased Melanoma’s Facebook “likes” from 400 to over 700 in just a year, and shaped its booming Twitter account from 650 followers to a whopping 1,200. Loddeke also performs multiple “other duties as assigned,” such as helping faculty investigators write winning award application packets, editing scientific manuscripts, and even drafting correspondence on behalf of her department chair, **Patrick Hwu, MD**. She thanked her chair and department administrator, **Randy Vidrine, MS**, whom she referred to as her “sine qua non,” which means without whom nothing could exist! “Thanks also to leadership for putting on this program, which is really instructive and inspiring to everyone because you can hear about the terrific work people all around you are doing. There’s so much to admire,” she said. “I’m deeply grateful.”



Divisional Support and Collaboration: Nominators from the Department of Genomic Medicine and the Institute for Applied Cancer Science recognized **Dianna “Didi” Menard**, senior recruitment specialist in Human Resources, for “almost single-handedly helping to recruit 80 scientists and administrative staff in two years.” She’s appreciated for spending time with managers to truly learn what education and skills they were looking for in new hires, for making herself available beyond an eight-hour workday to attend workshops and career fairs off campus to find appropriate candidates, and for helping newly hired personnel with everything from finding housing to good daycare. “What an honor. I’m thankful to work with people who inspire me and are so dedicated, focused, and passionate in their journey to make cancer history. Thank you for making me part of your team,” Menard said.



Financial Services: **Alfredo Perez, BBA**, financial analyst in Genitourinary Medical Oncology, was commended by his colleagues for keeping up with the balances of 300 separate accounts, which helps his department remain in good standing with MD Anderson auditors. Perez is appreciated for his easy rapport, his preparedness when meeting with principal investigators to discuss their research funds, and his help in guiding other analysts around Research One. “When I learned that I was nominated for doing my job, I was shocked. I want to thank the entire staff and my department administrator, chair, and principal investigators,” he said.



Laboratory Research: **Anna Sergeeva, PhD**, senior research scientist in Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapy, was recognized for designing 8F4, a novel antibody, the first of its kind to selectively target acute myeloid leukemia cells, but not normal leukocytes. Nominators say this molecule has shown exciting progress in laboratory studies and will soon be produced for Phase I clinical trials. Additionally, Sergeeva is credited for maintaining meticulous data, so much so that when labmates submit their own work, they say they attempt to meet “Anna’s seal of approval,” meaning their documentation has matched her rigorous analysis. “I think everyone in our section deserves an award because each one of us is dedicated to the work of transplantation immunology. I’m thankful to my supervisor, **Dr. Jeff Molldrem**, for our project, which is now very close to going to clinical trial. I like being appreciated by my colleagues,” she said.



Patient Services: Nominators highly praised the success record of **Ruby Fischer, RN, MPH**, patient access coordinator in Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapy. She’s responsible for making winning arguments to get insurance companies to overturn their denials to assist patients with stem cell transplantation costs. In the past year, Fischer won 17 out of 28 appeals. Additionally, she was involved in helping her department develop an approval process for the use of IVIG, a high-dollar drug used to treat infection in stem cell transplant patients. She also recently launched educational sessions to teach patient access specialists about the makeup of different diagnoses, which they found helpful, as they are the first people patients talk to when scheduling appointments at the clinic. Fischer, pictured with Stem Cell Transplantation and Cellular Therapy Chair **Richard Champlin, MD**, (left), and Hong, attributed part of her success to listening to other nurses who help patients receive financial support from insurance companies, and to following the edict of her department chair. “He tells us, ‘Don’t raise your voice, just make your argument better,’ and that’s what works for many of our patients,” she remarked.



Research Nursing Practice: **Maria Badillo, RN, OCN**, research nurse supervisor in Lymphoma/Myeloma, is considered among her nominators as the driving force behind the successful FDA approval of ibrutinib, the breakthrough drug for relapsed and refractory mantle cell lymphoma. Her recruitment efforts made MD Anderson the highest enrollment site in the large, multicenter study. The study received a perfect score from the FDA—a feat considered impossible—and also came with a special congratulatory note from reviewers who appreciated the meticulousness of Badillo’s data. When she accepted her award, she commented that standing before a few hundred of her division colleagues was scarier than an FDA audit. “I’d like to share the honor with my fellow research nurses because we all work so hard. I also want to recognize my principal investigators, **Drs. Michael Wang** and **Jorge Romaguera**, because they are great mentors and very supportive,” she said.



An unexpected honor

At the end of the program, Hong pulled off a surprise by recognizing one more Cancer Medicine employee. “I’ve had some tremendous help managing a division as big as ours. One person, though, has been especially pivotal and invaluable,” he began. “**Wendy Austin** has been meticulous in every aspect of her work these last 14 years—in the areas of clinical care, research, education, and finance. She’s very smart, and I want to present her with an award and honorarium to acknowledge her as division administrator.” Austin replied that it had been an honor and privilege to work for him and that it was an experience she would never forget. She also expressed her appreciation to division employees who work every day in one way or another to make life better for patients. “Three months ago, we lost my 55-year-old brother five days into an AML diagnosis, and I can tell you, having been on the other side, that what you do for patients and their families really matters,” Austin said. “I would ask that none of us squander the opportunity that we’ve heard about today to be able to change someone’s life.”

Dr. Champlin integral to organizational strategic plan



Division Head *Ad interim* **Richard Champlin, MD**, is actively participating on the leadership teams for three of the five focus areas of MD Anderson's strategic goals presented by President **Ron DePinho, MD**, on Sept. 18. Champlin is a division head representative on the teams for People We Serve, Science That Enables, and Systems That Support. The remaining two focus areas are People Who Serve and Sustainability.

The strategic goal of People We Serve is to improve the patient scheduling experience and reduce patient wait times for at and between appointments.

"Time is the most precious thing our patients have. They want to be able to spend it with their families," DePinho said.

Science That Enables is centered around achieving decisive research discoveries that advance knowledge and lead to innovative clinical treatment. Included in this goal is to attract and retain transformative scientists, illustrated by the recent recruitment of "the Father of Tamoxifen," **V. Craig Jordan, PhD, DSc**, as a professor of Breast Medical Oncology with a joint appointment in Molecular and Cellular Oncology; Stephen Hahn, MD, Division Head of Radiation Oncology and Department Chair of Radiation Oncology; Breast Medical Oncology Chair **Debasish (Debu) Tripathy, MD**; and David J. Tweardy, MD, Division Head of Internal Medicine. "These are world-class individuals who wanted to join our mission," DePinho said.

Enhancing information systems to optimize both patient care and research is the goal of Systems That Support. The ongoing implementation of the Epic electronic health record system directly addresses this goal. System build is under way, and the first phase of end-user training will take place in 2015.

When Champlin stood up to offer a comment at the end of the presentation, DePinho thanked him for his service to the Division of Cancer Medicine. Champlin said, "One of our most vexing problems is intradepartmental scheduling of patients so that their clinic visit is right next to their CT appointment so they are not waiting six hours between appointments. Developing effective multidepartmental workgroups that can solve these problems is key to the first strategic aim." DePinho's statement, "Thank you for volunteering for that as well," brought a round of laughter from the packed Hickey Auditorium.

During the presentation, DePinho also thanked former Division Head **Waun Ki Hong, MD**, for his three decades of service and "inspirational leadership that transformed the institution and left an indelible mark" on not only the organization but also the field of cancer research.

By Claire Blondeau



Don't throw darts, flow chart!

Process mapping is key to quality health care

The importance of process and measurement is key to health care quality, experts emphasized at a recent Division of Cancer Medicine Grand Rounds presentation. "If you don't know what the process is, you don't know what to do. You may as well throw darts," said **Doris Quinn, PhD**, director of process improvement and quality education.

Division Head *Ad interim* **Richard Champlin, MD**, introduced the Sept. 23 event by saying it's a different kind of Grand Rounds meeting, focusing on quality of care instead of the science behind the medicine. "This is an area we as an institution need to address much more thoroughly," he said.

John Bingham, vice president of performance improvement and chief quality officer, began the presentation by showing MEDPAR case mix index (CMI) data showing severity of illness increasing over time from 2011 to 2014. However, MD Anderson's CMI is lower than the comparison population. "This is our work in the future. We have to fix this," Bingham said. He posed the rhetorical question, "Is this a documentation or a coding problem? Or are our patients just not that sick? In the future, this will be critical for payment." As EVP and Physician-In-Chief **Thomas Buchholz, MD**, reminded managers in a recent FridayNote email communication, "institutional and provider-specific quality data soon will be available to the public and eventually may be tied to our reimbursement."

The value of quality measurement started with pioneer W. Edwards Deming, whose techniques and philosophies were adopted by Toyota and started the quality movement in manufacturing, Bingham said. Later, business strategist Michael Porter quantified the value of healthcare as outcome achieved per dollar of cost. Bingham encouraged the audience to measure and report the outcomes of every provider to improve patient care and quality health care delivery.

Quinn echoed his statement, mentioning that in the past, health care facilities would be reimbursed when a patient broke a hip, got pneumonia or self-extubated. "Those days are going away. What happens to patients is going to cost us dearly."

Bingham wrote the foreword to the groundbreaking 2001 IOM report "Crossing the Quality Chasm," which specifies six crucial measures for quality in health care: safe, timely, effective, efficient, equitable, and patient centered. In their journal article upon which the Grand Rounds presentation was based, Bingham and Quinn stated that a quality gap also exists "between the medical education that we have and that which we could have." They created a matrix incorporating the six IOM quality measures and the six core competencies from the Accreditation Council of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME): patient care, medical knowledge, interpersonal and communication skills, professionalism, system-based

practice, and practice-based learning and improvement. An interactive tool based on the matrix is available in the Quality College on the intranet. Their original paper and several related articles also are posted there, along with instructions, video tutorials and case studies.

The matrix is "a tool to look at patient care from the ground level," Bingham said.

Quinn illustrated the matrix by detailing several real-world cases. She first showed the matrix as completed from an intern's point of view, and then the more complete matrix after faculty evaluated the case. She compared "what is learned" as the tip of the iceberg compared to "what needs to be improved upon."

Quinn emphasized the importance of consistent procedures to deliver quality outcomes, specifically, time out procedures. Following a tried-and-true process, such as that developed for suspected stroke victims, is of the utmost importance in the health care. She compared lack of process to throwing darts, and said that flow charts can be especially illuminating of processes that are unnecessarily complex or that contain so many steps that it short circuits timely care. She illustrated one case in which a patient presented to the ER with pneumonia and needed IV antibiotics, which the ER staff was not authorized to provide—at the facility in question, only a medicine resident could prescribe IV antibiotics. The patient waited several hours before effective treatment started, which exacerbated his condition and could have led to catastrophic results. After this incident, "We got together and said 'this system is not working.'" Quinn said that creating a flow chart directly led to improving patient care. "Do we really know what care costs, who does what and how long it takes?" she said. "No flow chart, no process knowledge."

Quinn also showed how to use a cause-and-effect "fishbone" diagram to evaluate care in the case of a diabetic patient, how to calculate cost of care by hours spent per employee classification on the flow chart.

It takes about 20 minutes to evaluate a case using the interactive matrix. Quinn advises filling out the bottom row, the improvement plan, last. Data can be added hopping around from cell to cell, or consecutively by column (IOM measures) or row (ACGME measures). Creating matrices for multiple similar cases can assist in identifying patterns and analyzing steps ripe for improvement. She mentioned how such tools were used in creating the standard care plan for suspected stroke victims. For many other diagnoses, there are no guidelines or systems. Quinn stated, "There is an opportunity here for each program to look at variabilities and design guidelines."

Administration

Upcoming DoCM Grand Rounds

November 4, 2014

Louise Strong, MD, and Michelle Jackson, MD Anderson
Advances in Screening for Li-Fraumeni Syndrome
Families, Li-Fraumeni Syndrome Education
and Early Detection (LEAD) **AT&T Auditorium**

November 11, 2014

Katy Rezvani, MD, PhD, MD Anderson
The Role of a Natural Killer Cell Immune
Surveillance in Cancer

November 18, 2014

Alma Rodriguez, MD, MD Anderson
Domains and Measures of Quality in Cancer Care

November 25, 2014

Daniel G. Tenen, MD
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
Cancer and the RNA World

December 2, 2014

John Heymach, MD, PhD, MD Anderson
Bites from the Kras Slice: Co-Occurring Genomic
Alterations Define Subsets of KRAS - Mutant Cancer
with Distinct Biology and Therapeutic Vulnerabilities

December 16, 2014

DoCM State of the Division Address &
Faculty Award Program, FY14 Year In Review

Cancer Medicine Grand Rounds are held on Tuesdays, 8 to 9 a.m., Main Building,
Floor 11, Elevator B, Hickey Auditorium (R11.1400) unless otherwise noted.

Fun Run: Head For The Cure



Armstrong, Ritterhouse, Loch and Gilbert celebrate after the run.

Mark Gilbert, MD, professor in Neuro-Oncology, was among several people representing MD Anderson at the Second Annual Head for the Cure 5K Run and Walk. More than 500 people participated in the Sept. 13 event at the Pearland Town Center that raised over \$66,000 to support the Brain Tumor Trials Collaborative. Gilbert and Terri Armstrong, Ph.D., a professor at UTHealth School of Nursing, are the principal investigators. Also pictured are MeLesa Ritterhouse, clinical nurse, MD Anderson Brain & Spine Center, and Carolyn Loch, research nurse, MD Anderson Neuro-Oncology.

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