Message From the Chair

Kenneth Rosenzweig, MD, Professor and Chair, Department of Radiation Oncology

I hope everyone is off to a happy and healthy start to 2019. This year will be a groundbreaking year for the Department of Radiation Oncology at the Mount Sinai Health System.

Early 2019, the New York Proton Center, of which Mount Sinai is one of the three founding members, is scheduled to treat its first patient. The center is located on 126th Street between Second and Third avenues, a quick trip from The Mount Sinai Hospital. This will be the first proton center to be opened in New York State, and Mount Sinai physicians will be on site caring for patients who need this specialized form of radiation therapy.

Additionally, Mount Sinai continues to perform important research in all aspects of cancer care. You can read about some of our work in this newsletter. We also highlight some of the awards our Department members have received, including one from the Association of Community Cancer Centers honoring our palliative care program, the only radiation oncology program the association recognized this year.
Welcoming New Faculty

Pinaki R. Dutta, MD, PhD, is the Director of Radiation Oncology at Mount Sinai West. He treats a wide variety of cancers, specializing in head and neck, lung, and gastrointestinal cancers. Dr. Dutta uses advanced radiation techniques to treat tumors located near critical organs to increase the amount of radiation to the tumor and reduce the amount that reaches nearby healthy tissues. These include intensity-modulated radiation therapy, image-guided radiation therapy, 3D conformal radiation therapy, and stereotactic radiosurgery.

Dr. Dutta graduated from Johns Hopkins University and received his medical and doctoral degrees from the University of Maryland School of Medicine. He was chief resident at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine from 2007 to 2009 before joining Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in 2009. During his nine years at Sloan Kettering, Dr. Dutta maintained an active clinic where he treated more than 400 patients each year. In addition, he led research projects on head and neck cancers and published on topics such as optimizing management of post-operative oral cavity cancers.

Audrey Saitta, MD, is the new Director of Regional Operations in the Department of Radiation Oncology. With more than two decades of experience, Dr. Saitta is a leading cancer care expert with a specific interest in breast cancer, women’s health, and palliative care. Prior to joining Mount Sinai Health System, Dr. Saitta was Senior Vice President and Chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology at NYU Lutheran Medical Center. She served as the Service Chief of the NYU Langone Hospital–Brooklyn Radiation Oncology Department and was the Chief of Radiation Oncology at the Brooklyn Campus of the VA NY Harbor Healthcare System.

Dr. Saitta comes with a wealth of experience in clinical practice as well as an administrative background. She received her medical degree with honors from SUNY Downstate College of Medicine, and a Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from St. John’s University, where she graduated summa cum laude. Dr. Saitta was born in Bologna, Italy, and speaks fluent Italian. She has coordinated multiple outreach programs including Relay for life, Cancer Survivors Day, the Look Good, Feel Better Program, and Think Pink Day for breast cancer awareness.

Zahra Ghiassi-Nejad, MD, PhD, is a radiation oncologist at The Mount Sinai Hospital. She specializes in treating GYN, GI, and soft tissue malignancies. Dr. Ghiassi-Nejad completed her training as a physician-scientist at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in 2013. Her graduate work focused on identifying critical pathways in hepatic fibrogenesis and the role of autophagy in fueling stellate cell activation. She completed her internship and residency in radiation oncology in 2018 and served as chief resident from 2017-2018.

Dr. Ghiassi-Nejad’s research interests include identifying optimal strategies for combining immunotherapy and radiation to improve patient outcomes, as well as developing strategies to reduce normal tissue toxicity.
Enhancing Patient Experience

MSH Summer Wellness Program

In the summer of 2018, The Mount Sinai Hospital’s Radiation Oncology Department hosted its first Summer Wellness Program—a four-week experience that promoted relaxation, creativity, and healthy living. The series was open to both patients in active treatment or post-treatment, as well as their caregivers.

Rebecca Kelly from The Creative Center led the first workshop titled Baubles, Buttons and Beads. Participants had the opportunity to create a piece of jewelry while socializing and enjoying refreshments. At our Chair Yoga and Mindfulness workshop, led by Eva Berlin—a certified yoga therapist and a student at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai—students, patients, and caregivers were introduced to meditation and relaxation exercises including simple breathing techniques, guided imagery, and gentle body movements.

Patients and caregivers also learned how to use writing to express thoughts and feelings about their cancer experience and shared their stories with one another. The last workshop was led by Paula Occiano RD, CDN, CSO, and Melissa Fraser, RD, nutritionists at the Ruttenberg Treatment Center, who led a discussion about nutrition before, during, and after radiation therapy.

This wellness series gave patients and caregivers the opportunity to come together and learn creative coping strategies. “I enjoyed learning yoga – it will be very helpful in my recovery,” one patient commented. Others expressed how much they enjoyed the series and look forward to future programming.

Many thanks to all of the workshop facilitators for generously volunteering and sharing their expertise.
Ring This Bell

Mount Sinai West was recently highlighted in *Inside Mount Sinai*, the newsletter for the Mount Sinai Health System, for the significant impact its patient bell has had on patients and staff.

Patients in our departments may be on treatment many times for multiple weeks—a physically and emotionally trying experience. When our patients finish treatment, it is certainly worthy of a celebration. As patients finish their last treatment, they can proudly ring a ceremonial bell at Mount Sinai West and The Mount Sinai Hospital. This celebration can include the radiation therapists, radiation oncologist, nurses and supportive team members who cared for them during the course of their treatment. A plaque reads “Ring this bell three times well, its toll to clearly say, my treatment’s done this course is run and I am on my way!”

At Mount Sinai West, patients also receive an Achievement of Excellence certificate signed by their radiation therapy team. “It is often an emotional moment and a feeling of immense relief”, says Natoshia Houston, Technical Supervisor, Radiation Oncology. “It is also rewarding for our staff to celebrate this significant milestone with patients as they move onto their next step in treatment or return to their daily routine.”

Awards and Recognition

ACCC Innovator's Award

The Department of Radiation Oncology was awarded the Association of Community Cancer Center’s 2018 Innovator Award for its program, Improving Care of Advanced Cancer Patients with a Dedicated Palliative Radiotherapy Team. This program developed a specialized service model that focuses on patient quality of life, rather than the traditional disease-focused model for radiation oncology.

Under the leadership of Kavita Dharmarajan, MD, MSc, the Palliative Radiation Oncology Consult (PROC) resulted in significant savings per hospitalized radiation patient, increased the use of shorter but equally efficacious radiation courses across numerous patient populations, and produced a 7 percent increase in pain improvement.

We congratulate Dr. Dharmarajan and the palliative care team.
Cullman Family Award for Excellence in Physician Communication

Award recipients: Vishal Gupta, MD (left), Kenneth Rosenzweig, MD (middle), Michael Buckstein, MD, PhD (right)

We are proud to congratulate three of our radiation oncologists as recipients of the 2018 Cullman Family Award for Excellence in Physician Communication. Working together and communication are considered key drivers in influencing how patients perceive their quality of care.

Kenneth Rosenzweig, MD, Michael Buckstein, MD, PhD, and Vishal Gupta, MD, were ranked in the top one percent nationally in provider communication for 2017 as measured by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ Clinician and Group Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CGCAHPS) patient experience survey.

Congratulations to our recipients on this achievement.

4D Technology Development Program Award

As part of the annual Mount Sinai Innovation Awards, Yading Yuan, PhD, has received the 4D Technology Development Program Award for his project, Deep Planning: Knowledge-based automated radiotherapy planning via deep learning. The awards highlight researchers, students, faculty, and investigators who have made significant, creative, and noteworthy strides in science, research, technology, and entrepreneurship.

Dr. Yuan’s work will greatly improve planning, quality, and speed using artificial intelligence.
Manjeet Chadha, MD, was awarded the Distinguished Physician Award at the 2018 American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin Annual Gala. She is now among an elite group to receive this recognition for exceptional contributions to medicine, specifically the field of radiation oncology.

Dr. Chadha Appointed to NRG Oncology Breast Committee

In addition, Dr. Chadha has been appointed a three-year term to the NRG Oncology Breast Committee. This appointment is given to physicians with expertise in breast cancer research and treatments as well as participation in NRG breast cancer trials.

Grant Highlights

Jalal Ahmed, MD, PhD, Awarded Lung Cancer Research Foundation Grant

We congratulate Jalal Ahmed, MD, PhD, for receiving a Lung Cancer Research Foundation grant for his program, Targeting the tumor microenvironment to advance CAR T cell therapy for lung cancer, and we look forward to his work ahead.

The foundation is the pre-eminent nonprofit organization on funding innovative, high-reward research with the potential to extend survival and improve quality of life for people with lung cancer. The foundation awards research grants to 13 investigators around the world for innovative research focused on the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of lung cancer. In 2018, the foundation received a record-breaking 201 grant applications, representing 116 institutions and 21 countries.
Clinicai Impacts

Prostate Brachytherapy Workshop

A real-time prostate brachytherapy workshop was held at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai on November 3, 2018, organized by Richard Stock, MD, the course director. Radiation oncologists, urologists, medical physicists, and physicians were educated and trained on real-time ultrasound guided techniques for performing low dose rate (LDR) prostate brachytherapy. Participants learned to use a Mick applicator, an ultrasound unit, treatment planning software, and ultrasound probe stepper to implant loose LDR seeds compatible with real-time planning.

This hands-on workshop was made possible by these Mount Sinai faculty: Richard Stock, MD; Nelson Stone, MD; Robert Stewart, MD; Yeh-Chi Lo, PhD; Ming Chao, PhD; Vishruta Dumane, PhD; Ren-Dih Sheu, PhD; Amber Tseng, MS; Junyi Xia, PhD; and Yading Yuan, PhD. We thank you for your work and innovation.
Interpreters on Wheels

In the fall of 2018, all Mount Sinai Radiation Oncology departments received new clinical buddies, otherwise known as interpreters on wheels. These four-foot-tall, rolling devices provide on-demand video and audio interpretation of 240 languages, all at the touch of a button. A patient can point to the language name (in both English and the language in question) on the iPad to start. If patients cannot read, their language can be found by the country of origin. Video of an interpreter appears on the screen, and then the face-to-face dialogue can begin.

In addition to spoken languages, our clinical buddies—named Polly, Hector, Robyn, and Flo—can interpret American Sign Language. We are proud of this access to total communication we provide and encourage everyone to use these interpreters on wheels.

ASTRO and RTC 2018

The Mount Sinai Radiation Oncology Department had a significant presence at the 2018 American Society for Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) Convention and Radiation Therapy Conference in San Antonio. Our oral and poster presenters reflected the dedication, creativity, and drive of our staff. We congratulate our team on their achievements:

Oral Presentations

- Kimberly Smith, MHA: Voice Enabling MOSAIQ and other Clinical Efficiencies at Mount Sinai
- Kavita Dharmarajan, MD: Palliative Care Poster Discussion
- Clodagh Starrs, RT(T): Individualized Care for Survivors of Abuse, Clodagh was honored as a keynote speaker for the conference
- Fatima Do, RT(T) and Clodagh Starrs RT(T): Modified Protocol for DIBH SBRT Liver Cancer
• Maria Dimopoulos, MBA, RT(T): Speechless: Preparing Students to Communicate with Patients Undergoing Radiation Therapy
• Clifford Temple, RT(T): Best Practices for SBRT Lung Cancer Treatment
• Danielle McDonagh, MS, RT(T): Transgender Patient Care in Radiation Oncology
• Kenneth Rosenzweig, MD: Challenging Cases in Lung Cancer: Oligometastatic Disease
• William Su, BA: Long Term Outcomes in Patients with Recurrent HPV Related Oropharyngeal Cancer
• Vishal Gupta, MD: Latest Advances in Nasopharyngeal Carcinoma
• Eric Lehrer, MD: Treatment of Brain Metastases with Stereotactic Radiosurgery and Immune Checkpoint Inhibitors
• Kavita Dharmarajan, MD, MSc: Use of Advanced Technologies in Palliative Care: A Brave New World or a Costly Mistake?
• Sonam Sharma, MD: Effect of Introducing a Default Order Option on Unnecessary Daily Image Guidance during Palliative Radiotherapy: A Cluster Randomized Stepped-Wedge Clinical Trial
• Vishruta Dumane, PhD: Training and Evaluation of a Knowledge-based Planning System for Treatment Planning of Malignant Pleural Mesothelioma to the Intact Lungs
• Heather McGee, MD, PhD: Characterization of the Immune Exhaustion Phenotype in Murine Bladder Cancer Following Radiation

Poster Presentations
• Jalal Ahmed, MD, PhD, Application of 18-F Fluciclovine PET/CT in Guiding Salvage Radiation Therapy for Recurrent Prostate Patients
• Camille Hardy, BS, Safety of Liver Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy for Hepatocellular Carcinoma Following Transarterial Radioembolization vs. Transarterial Chemoembolization
• Stanislav Lazarev, MD, Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy for Centrally Located Hepatocellular Carcinoma: Outcomes and Toxicities
• Stanislav Lazarev, MD: Intermediate-Term versus Longer-Term Androgen-Deprivation Therapy for High-Risk Prostate Cancer Treated with High Dose Radiation: 12-Year Outcomes Data
• Marcher Thompson, MD: Evaluation of Patient Characteristics, Treatment Decisions and Survival of Young Patients under the Age of 50 Diagnosed with Colorectal Carcinoma
• Shuta Wang, PhD: Focused Ultrasound Induced-Blood-Brain Barrier Opening in Post-Radiosurgery Mouse Brain for Locally-Enhanced Systemic Therapy
• Manjeet Chadha, MD: The Optimal Adjuvant Monotherapy in Older Patients with Hormone Receptor Positive Early Stage Breast Cancer is Breast Radiation Not Endocrine Therapy, Dr. Chadha’s work will be featured in *Frontiers in Oncology* journal
• Oren Factor, MD: Rapid In-Field Failures Following Adjuvant Radiation for Buccal Squamous Cell Carcinoma
• Brianna Jones, MD: Predictors of Contralateral and Bilateral Lymph Node Metastases in Head and Neck Cancer: A Closer Look at the Ipsilateral neck
• Lucas Resende Salgado, MD, MPA: Concurrent Radiation and Biological Therapy is Safe in Multiple Myeloma
• Shuta Wang, PhD: Radiation Fractionation Regimen Selection for Palliation of Metastatic Multiple Myeloma in the Era of Biological Therapeutics
• Stanislav Lazarev, MD: Short Hypofractionated Radiotherapy in Palliation of Pediatric Malignancies: Outcomes and Toxicities
• Kathryn Marquen, BA: Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of Selective Internal Radiation Therapy with Yttrium-90 Resin Microspheres Verses Sorafenib in Advanced Hepatocellular Carcinoma
• Greeshma Rajeev-Kumar, BS: Emotional Quality of Life Among Patients with Oropharyngeal Carcinoma Treated with Radiation Therapy
• Lucas Resende Salgado, MD, MPA: Biologic Subtypes as a Predictor of Local Control of Breast Cancer Brain Metastases after Stereotact
• William Smith, MD: Prolonged Opioid Dependence Following Post-Operative Head and Neck Radiation Therapy

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**Concurrent Radiation and Biological Therapy is Safe in Multiple Myeloma**

*Lucas Resende Salgado, MD, MPA, Shuta Wang, PhD, Xiaoli Shen, MD, Guangyu Feng, PhD, Eun-Mi Lee, MD, Hui Shen, MD, Yuanjia Wang, MD,ு Fun Zhang, MD, Yuan Wang, MD, Yutong Yang, MD, Jianan Chen, MD, Wei Li, MD, and Pan Xie, MD*

**Purpose**

To determine if concurrent radiation and biological therapy is safe and effective in the palliation of metastatic multiple myeloma.

**Material & Methods**

Patients with metastatic multiple myeloma were treated with concurrent radiation and biological therapy. The primary outcomes were progression-free survival (PFS) and overall survival (OS).

**Results**

Median PFS was 12 months, and median OS was 24 months. No significant toxicities were reported.

**Conclusions**

Concurrent radiation and biological therapy is safe and effective in the palliation of metastatic multiple myeloma.

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**Prolonged Opioid Dependence Following Post-Operative Head and Neck Radiation Therapy**

*William H. Smith MD, Ji Hyun Kang PhD, Wei Li MD, Suyi Wang MD, and Michael D. Sallis MD*

**Purpose**

To evaluate the prevalence and predictors of prolonged opioid dependence following post-operative head and neck radiation therapy.

**Material & Methods**

Patients who underwent post-operative head and neck radiation therapy were retrospectively reviewed. The outcome was prolonged opioid dependence, defined as opioid use for more than 6 months post-operatively. Logistic regression was used to identify predictors of prolonged opioid dependence.

**Results**

Prolonged opioid dependence was observed in 20% of patients. Independent predictors included higher pre-operative pain scores and use of adjuvant chemotherapy.

**Conclusions**

Prolonged opioid dependence is a common complication following post-operative head and neck radiation therapy. Higher pre-operative pain scores and use of adjuvant chemotherapy are independent predictors.

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**References**


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Stanislav Lazarev, MD
ROI 5K
New York Rad Runners

In addition to the oral and poster presentations, the Department of Radiation Oncology also raised money for the Radiation Oncology Institute and participated in the 5K Run for the Future. The Mount Sinai New York Rad Runners enjoyed racing the San Antonio River Walk before gearing up for their presentations.

Follow us on Instagram

Search for the handles @MountSinaiRadOnc and @MountSinaiRTTedu

Interested in joining our social media committee?
Take a picture we should post?

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