

Focus on Faculty #43

Antonio Vigano



[Dr. Antonio Vigano](#) is an Associate Professor in the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology at McGill, director of the Cancer Rehabilitation Program (CAREPRO) at the McGill University Health Centre, founding member of the McGill Research Centre for Cannabis, and founding director of the McGill Nutrition and Performance Laboratory.

While attending a lecture as a second-year student in the Faculty of Medicine of Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy, Dr. Vigano recalled hearing the Latin sentence: “Divinum Sanare Dolorem” (Divine is Healing Pain). This sentence would remain with him and would shape him as a person and physician. Throughout his early clinical years, he would have many encounters with cancer patients admitted to internal medicine and surgical wards with unrelieved pain and other symptoms. This convinced Dr. Vigano to join the first Italian palliative care program at the National Cancer Institute, Milano Italy founded by Drs. Vittorio Ventafridda, Franco DeConno and Carla Ripamonti, and encouraged him to complete his undergraduate clinical training as well as his medical thesis. While working with these medical leaders in the field of palliative medicine, Dr. Vigano presented research posters at the first two European Palliative Care Conferences in Milano and Paris and at the 8th edition of the International Congress on Care of the Terminally Ill in Montreal. At that time, he met with other pioneers in palliative care such as Dr. Elisabeth Kubler Ross, Prof. Irene Higginson and Dr. Balfour Mount. During the summer breaks, he also interned in hospices belonging to the Marie Curie Memorial Foundation in London, UK, and met with Dame Cicely Saunders at St Christopher’s Hospice. During his residency in Anaesthesia and Pain Therapy at the Università Degli Studi, Dr. Vigano worked towards the creation of the first Italian public palliative care unit at the “Pio Albergo Trivulzio” the biggest geriatric hospital in Northern Italy.

After completing his residency, through a scholarship of the Italian Association for Cancer Research, Dr. Vigano moved to Edmonton, Alberta to become a clinical-research fellow in the Palliative Care Program led by Dr. Eduardo Bruera. His plans to return to Italy changed after his encounter with

Francesca, a very talented organ player at the main Italian Church in Edmonton, who became his wife and mother to Claudio and MariaLuisa. Thanks to another prestigious scholarship from the Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research, Dr. Vigano pursued a Master's of Science in Epidemiology at the University of Alberta while being able to maintain a young family of three for five years and of four thereafter. During the third year of his Master's, Dr. Vigano travelled to Hamilton, Ontario to work on the Evidence Based Medicine projects with Dr. Alejandro Jadad at McMaster University, and to London, England to increase his skills in palliative care research with Professor Irene Higginson at the Department of Palliative Care and Policy at King's College School of Medicine and Dentistry. In 1998, after the departure of Dr. Eduardo Bruera from Edmonton, Dr. Vigano took the position of Research Manager in the Edmonton Regional Palliative Care Program, under the direction of Dr. Robin Fainsinger. After completely dedicating himself to five years of research, Dr. Vigano returned to clinical work through a second clinical fellowship in Edmonton, and in 2002, he was offered the position of Assistant Professor in the Division of Palliative Care of the Department of Oncology at McGill, under the direction of Dr. Anna Towers.

In 2005, Dr. Vigano received both the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) New Investigator and the Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec (FRSQ) Chercheurs-boursiers cliniciens career awards. Through a Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI) award, he founded the McGill Nutrition and Performance Laboratory in 2006.

Dr. Vigano has either first or senior authorship on over 55 publications in peer reviewed journals, 40 invited lectures, 115 peer-reviewed published abstracts and four book chapters. These reflect his clinical interests and expertise and include: the organization of the first palliative care unit in Italy within a public hospital, prognostication in terminal cancer patients, age-related changes in opioid consumption, cancer cachexia assessment and management, prevalence and role of hypogonadism in male cancer patients, cancer pre-habilitation and rehabilitation and more recently the role of medicinal cannabis in pain and symptom management, supportive and palliative care. Dr. Vigano was appointed Expert on Medical Cannabis by the Court of Quebec, created the first world-wide post-doctoral research fellowship in medicinal cannabis and cancer supportive care within McGill's Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology, developed the first cannabis clinic within a quaternary oncology centre, and is Principal Investigator in several cannabis clinical trials including the first large scale, multicenter, Phase 3 study examining the role of cannabis in relieving pain and improving quality of life in patients with advanced cancer.

We asked Dr. Vigano to provide a list of a few of his recent articles, especially those articles that have given him great pride and have received widespread recognition amongst his peers. This is what he provided:

Cyr, C., Arboleda, M.F., Aggarwal, S.K., Balneaves, L.G., Daeninck, P., Néron, A., Prosk, E., **Vigano, A.**, 2018. Cannabis in palliative care: current challenges and practical recommendations. *Annals of Palliative Medicine* 2018; 7(4): 463-477.

Vigano, A., Kasvis, P., Di Tomasso, J., Gillis, C., Kilgour, R., Carli, F. Pearls of optimizing nutrition and physical performance of older adults undergoing cancer therapy. *Journal of Geriatric Oncology*, v8 n6 (2017 11 01): 428-436

Vigano, A.A., Morais, J.A., Ciutto, L., Rosenthal, L., Di Tomasso, J., Khan, S., Olders, H., Borod, M., Kilgour, R.D., Use of routinely available clinical, nutritional, and functional criteria to classify cachexia in advanced cancer patients. *Clinical Nutrition*, 2017. 36(5), 1378-1390.