

# **ANNUAL REPORT 2019**

Submitted by Eduardo L. Franco, O.C., MPH, DrPH, PhD (Hon), FRSC, FCAHS  
James McGill Professor and Minda de Gunzburg Chair  
Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology

*Annual Report prepared by Gayle A. Shinder, PhD, Chair's Senior Advisor for Academic Affairs, Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology.*

### ***Foreword by the Chair***

The Department's Strategic Planning Retreat on April 6, 2019 was a big success with over 70 attendees representing both our research and clinical faculty members. With the guidance of the facilitator, Mr. Ken Steele, attendees provided valuable feedback on what they felt were priorities for the Department. While budgetary realities limit what is feasible, some suggestions have been implemented. For example, in September the Department hired a Senior Data Analyst, Dr. Farzin Khosrow-Khavar, to assist Department members and their trainees with the design, execution, analysis, and reporting of a wide range of cancer research studies. He has been working with several Department members including Drs. Tamim Niazi, Jan Seuntjens, Thierry Muanza, Mark Basik and Joanne Alfieri. He also is involved on a project with the Rossy Cancer Network.

In 2019, I created the 5-member Chair's Executive Committee to provide input to me on matters related to Academic Programs (Dr. Gayle Shinder), Educational Affairs (Dr. Joanne Alfieri), Clinical Affairs (Dr. Wilson Miller) and Administrative Affairs (Ms. Christina Raneburger – Associate Director, AEC-7). I also appointed Dr. Tarek Hijal as Director of Radiation Oncology (he was serving as Interim Director).

In March 2019 we welcomed our new Communication and Events Administrator/VSPo Coordinator, Ms. Saadia Agha. Ms. Agha has connections with the Canada-Pakistan Affiliated Chamber of Trade (CPACT) and facilitated an affiliation between our Department and that organization. In December I signed a Letter of Intent for fundraising activities with CPACT focusing on our educational mission.

Our Third Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology Distinguished Lecture and Awards Ceremony was held on October 7, 2019. This year's Distinguished Lecturer was Dr. Richard Margolese who spoke about the history of breast cancer treatment. Award winners were Dr. Antoine Loutfi (Lifetime Achievement), Dr. Jan Seuntjens (Research or Clinical Service), Dr. Tamim Niazi (Teaching and Mentorship) and Ms. Jacqueline Vachon (Academic, Clinical or Research Support). This year, the Department of Oncology/Rossy Cancer Network's Kuok Fellowships were awarded to MSc candidates, Mr. Kenneth Drummond, Ms. Ankita Ghatak and Ms. Sarah Mackay.

We continued our popular "Focus on Faculty" profile series which I began in June 2015, with profiles in basic cancer research (Dr. Sonia del Rincon, Dr. Miltiadis Paliouras); clinical research (Dr. Phil Gold); gynecologic oncology (Dr. Walter Gotlieb, Dr. Lucy Gilbert); medical oncology (Dr. Michael Pollak, Dr. Wilson Miller); radiation oncology (Dr. Luis Souhami); surgical oncology (Dr. Sender Liberman); medical physics (Mr. William Parker); palliative/supportive care (Dr. Krista Lawlor); and psychosocial oncology (Dr. Argerie Tsimicalis).

The Medical Physics Unit had a noteworthy year: They received a positive assessment during their Cyclical Review; On November 7<sup>th</sup> they celebrated 40 years of medical physics at McGill with a symposium and panel discussion as well as the presentation of the 2019-2020 Podgorsak Fellowship.

On July 5<sup>th</sup> the Division of Cancer Epidemiology, which I lead, had a special seminar and celebration to commemorate the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Division. We were joined by a delegation of the Cancer Research Society which supports the Division.

As we looked ahead to 2020 we were planning to celebrate the Department's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year with: (i) the launch of our Graduate Diploma in Oncology and its six new courses which received approval from the various university committees in 2019 and was granted final approval by Senate in January

2020; (ii) the launch of the new Department website; (iii) a fundraising event in collaboration with CPACT; (iv) Symposium and Awards Ceremony; (v) Resident-organized symposium; (vi) Public Lecture in collaboration with the Goodman Cancer Research Centre. The COVID-19 pandemic has derailed some of those plans however we are happy to report that we have launched the Graduate Diploma in Oncology and the courses which will begin in September 2020. The courses will be delivered online. We also have launched the new Department website, [www.mcgill.ca/oncology](http://www.mcgill.ca/oncology). The events we were planning will be postponed to 2021.

On the subsequent pages we report just a small fraction of the many accomplishments of our large Department which has close to 200 faculty members

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Chair, Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology

## ***Summary of Department Activities***

### **1. Research and Publications**

Cancer-related research, teaching and clinical care are conducted throughout McGill and its affiliated hospitals, namely at the Goodman Cancer Research Centre, the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) including the Cedars Cancer Centre and the MUHC Research Institute, the Jewish General Hospital (JGH) including the Segal Cancer Centre (Lady Davis Institute), St. Mary's Hospital Centre (SMHC) and at the Department's headquarters located at 5100 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West, Suite 720. Cancer-related research activities at McGill include:

- Basic research focusing on understanding at the molecular, cellular, and tissue levels the development and growth of tumours and their resistance to therapy;
- Translational research for the development and testing of novel therapeutics; biomarkers, and molecular signatures as targets for cancer detection or treatment;
- Phase I, II and III clinical research studies testing the efficacy of new cancer treatment therapies;
- Radiation physics studies to improve the delivery of radiotherapy;
- Genetic studies of inherited susceptibility to cancer;
- Epidemiological studies of the etiology, prevention, screening, and prognosis for several cancers;
- Psychosocial research aimed at improving the emotional well-being and quality of life of cancer patients and their families, and managing pain and other symptoms of the disease;
- Health systems research aimed at improving the quality of cancer care and clinical outcomes.

**Publications** (full list: <https://www.mcgill.ca/oncology/about-department/annual-reports>)

#### **Keynote Speaker**

**Gerald Batist** - CHI's 11<sup>th</sup> International Leaders in Biobanking Congress 2019, October 30-November 1, 2019, Miami, Florida. "Serial Biobanking in the Context of Specific Therapies for Metastatic Cancer: Clinical and Scientific Rewards of a Complex Multidisciplinary Team Effort"

**Michael Pollak** - 25th AICR Research Conference: Diet, Obesity, Physical Activity and Cancer - Beyond the Blueprint: "Obesity, Metabolic Dysregulation and Cancer"

**Luis Souhami** - Congress of the Brazilian Society of Radiotherapy. October 2019

**Anna Towers** - Surgery for lymphedema: the CLF statement. Canadian Lymphedema Framework Conference, Toronto Nov 2 2019

#### **Major Funding (our researchers are successful in earning many grants but these are special...)**

- Stand Up to Cancer Canada - **Nahum Sonenberg** and **Michael Pollak** received \$6 million to lead a pan-Canadian multidisciplinary team of researchers to develop new and improved approaches in the treatment and care of metastatic breast cancer.
- The Quebec Cancer Consortium for Novel Therapeutics and Biomarkers, led by the Goodman Cancer Research Centre, received \$10 million in new funding from the Ministère de l'Économie et de l'innovation du Québec to develop novel therapeutics and biomarkers for cancer.

### **2. Clinical Innovation**

- **Shirin Enger** and her team developed the Betasense nuclear medicine imaging technique which can be performed non-invasively.
- **Lucy Gilbert, Kris Jardon and Xing Zeng** developed a non-invasive test to screen for endometrial and ovarian cancers.

### 3. Teaching and Learning

- Graduate Diploma in Oncology
  - Due to government changes in funding Master's non-thesis programs, a strategic decision was made to convert our 45-credit MSc in Oncology, Non-thesis program proposal to a 30 credit Graduate Diploma in Oncology.
  - Approved by Faculty of Medicine's Biomedical Curriculum Committee in September, CGPS (Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies) in November, SCTP in November and APC in December. Senate approval in January 2020.
- Postgraduate Medical Education (Medical, Surgical and Radiation Oncology Residency Training Programs)
  - Royal College Accreditation review, week of March 18th.
    - Surgical Oncology – Accredited. Next accreditation in 2027.
    - Radiation Oncology – Accredited. External review May 31, 2022.
    - Medical Oncology – Accredited. External review May 31, 2022.
  - Resignation of Scott Owen as Program Director of the Medical Oncology Residency Training Program. Replaced by Lawrence Panasci as Interim Program Director.
  - Appointment of Cristiano Ferrario as CBD Lead in Medical Oncology.
  - Radiation Oncology - Implementation of Competency-based Medical Education
  - Radiation Oncology's Quality Improvement Day on June 26<sup>th</sup>
- Visiting Speakers Program in Oncology
  - 5 speakers in 2019, all from the USA
  - Topics included multiple myeloma, lung cancer, renal cell carcinoma, mantle cell lymphoma and Waldenstrom's Macroglobulinemia

### 4. Involvement in the Community

*The Department supported the following initiatives*

- 5th International Drug Discovery and Development Forum (\$500).
- Canadian Cancer Research Conference (\$2000)

### 5. Milestones

#### Promotions

- Mark Basik – Professor
- Marc Fabian – Associate Professor
- Melissa Henry – Associate Professor
- Elliot Mitmaker – Associate Professor
- Tamim Niazi – Associate Professor

#### New Appointments

- Christoph Borchers – Professor. Joined McGill full-time as McGill Proteomics Director
- Victoria Mandilaras – Assistant Professor (Medical Oncology)
- Julie Goudreault – Faculty Lecturer (Radiation Oncology)
- Catherine Goudie - Associate Member (Pediatric Hematology-Oncology)
- Caroline Reinhold - Associate Member (Diagnostic Radiology)
- James Renaud - Adjunct Professor (Medical Physics)

- Barbara Rivera Polo - Adjunct Professor (Cancer Genetics)
- Issam El Naqa - Adjunct Professor (Medical Physics)
- Michel Wissing - Affiliate Member (Cancer Epidemiology)

#### **New Appointments from the Medical Physics Unit**

- Emily Poon (Assistant Professor)
- Peter Watson (Assistant Professor)
- Krum Asiev (Faculty Lecturer)
- Hamed Bekerat (Faculty Lecturer)
- Tanner Connell (Faculty Lecturer)
- Dominique Guillet (Faculty Lecturer)
- Gyorgi Hegyi (Faculty Lecturer)
- Li Heng Liang (Faculty Lecturer)
- Russell Ruo (Faculty Lecturer)
- Monica Serban (Faculty Lecturer)
- Nada Tomic (Faculty Lecturer)

#### **Departures**

- Barbara Rivera Polo – Assistant Professor (Cancer Genetics)

#### **Obituaries**

- Laurie Hendren - May 27, 2019 - Collaborator of John Kildea, Tarek Hijal and Jamil Asselah on the Opal project.
- Anna Derossis - October 13, 2019 – Surgical Oncology, Past Director of the Surgical Oncology Residency Training Program.

#### **Years of Service Milestones – 2019**

- **15 Years**
  - Thierry Alcindor
  - Annett Körner (Associate Member)
  - Peter Siegel (Associate Member)
- **20 Years**
  - Linda Ofiara (Associate Member)
- **25 Years**
  - William Foulkes
  - Vincent Giguère
  - Sarkis Meterissian
  - Simone Chevalier (Associate Member)
- **30 Years**
  - Morag Park
  - Margery Knewstubb
- **40 Years**
  - Alan Peterson
- **45 Years**
  - René Michel (Associate Member)

#### **6. Honours, Awards and Prizes**

- Herbert Black Chair in Surgical Oncology – Mark Basik

- James McGill Professor
  - Celia Greenwood
- Distinguished James McGill Professor
  - Wilson Miller
  - Alain Nepveu
  - Jerry Pelletier
- FRQS Salary Awards
  - Argerie Tsimicalis – FRQS Chercheurs boursier Junior 1
- Canada Research Chair
  - Shirin Enger
- **Joanne Alfieri** - 2019-2020 *Richard and Sylvia Cruess Faculty Scholar in Medical Education* at McGill.
- **Armen Aprikian** – Elected President-Elect of the Canadian Urology Association in 2019. Will be President in 2020.
- **Gerald Batist** - *2019 Award for Exceptional Leadership in Cancer Research* from the Canadian Cancer Research Alliance.
- **Julia Burnier**
  - Recognized by the Canadian Cancer Research Alliance for her contribution as a *Science Partner in the Patient Involvement in Cancer Research Program (PIP)* at the Canadian Cancer Research Conference.
  - Cedars Cancer Centre Shibata Award
- **Robin Cohen** - The 1st place trainee poster award at the International Congress on Palliative Care is now named in her honour: *The Robin Cohen Award*. It is the only named award at the congress.
- **Fabio Cury** - elected as the Quebec Director on the 2019-2021 Board of Directors of CARO.
- **Sonia Del Rincon**
  - Early Career Investigator Award in Cancer- CIHR
  - Cole Foundation Transition Award - New Investigator
- **Shirin Enger** – Numerous awards for the students in her lab
  - *Best in Physics Award* (CARO)
  - *Cunningham Young Investigators Award* (Canadian Organization of Medical Physicists)
  - Winner of the *Centech propulsion program*
  - *Marika Zelenka Roy Innovation Prize* (McGill Clinical Innovation Competition)
  - *Young Investigator Competition Award* (Curietherapies)
  - *2nd prize in the Young Investigator Competition* (MUHC-RI)
- **Zu-hua Gao** - Inducted as *Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences*
- **Lucy Gilbert** – Elected to serve as representative of the full-time academic staff at large on the McGill Board of Governors for a three-year term.
- **Lucy Gilbert, Kris Jardon and Xing Zeng** - awarded the *2018 Discovery of the Year Public Choice Award* from Québec Science Magazine, for their work on a non-invasive test to screen for endometrial and ovarian cancers.
- **Phil Gold**
  - Honorary Doctorate (D.Sc) from the University of British Columbia.
  - Promoted to *Grands officier (Grand Officer)* of the Ordre National du Québec.
- **Philippe Gros** – *Chevalier (Knight)* of the Ordre National du Québec.
- **Sender Liberman** – 2019-2020 Faculty Honour List for Educational Excellence

- **Carmen Loiselle** – Inducted as *Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences*
- **Christine Maheu** – UBC School of Nursing's *School of Nursing Centenary Medal of Distinction*.
- **Koren Mann** - LDI Leadership Award 2019
- **Morag Park** – *Grand Prix Scientifique*. Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation
- **Jerry Pelletier** – *Robert L Noble Prize* for outstanding achievements in basic biomedical cancer research, from the Canadian Cancer Society.
- **Michael Pollak** – Elected as *Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada*
- **George Shenouda** - Teacher of the Year 2019 in Radiation Oncology
- **Sonia Skamene**
  - Class of Medicine 1970 Educational Award for Teaching Excellence and Innovation (\$7000) for 2019
  - Elizabeth & Arnie Vered Cancer Research Scholarship from the MUHC Research Institute for 2019
- **Martin Vallières, Carolyn Freeman, Sonia Skamene and Issam El Naqa** – *Rotblat Medal* from the journal *Physics in Medicine & Biology* (most citations in the preceding 5 years).
- Opal Project Awards – John Kildea, Tarek Hijal and others including Jamil Asselah and the late Laurie Hendron
  - 2019 *Coup de coeur des ministres* of Les Prix d'excellence du réseau de la santé et des services sociaux.
  - *Grand Prix de l'année* at Le Gala des Prix TI en Santé et Services Sociaux.
  - Inaugural *Trottier-Webster Award* for innovation at the RI-MUHC
- Nominated as an 'Unsung Hero' by the Faculty of Medicine for McGill's bicentennial celebrations
  - Robin Cohen
  - Gayle Shinder