

Focus on Faculty # 70

Nathalie Johnson



Dr. Nathalie Johnson is a tenured Associate Professor in the Departments of Medicine and Oncology at McGill and has been a clinician-scientist at the Lady Davis Institute and Jewish General Hospital (JGH) since 2010. Her main clinical expertise is treating adolescents and young adults, who mainly get Hodgkin lymphoma and diffuse large B cell lymphoma. As a dedicated physician, the most important lesson she teaches residents and hematology fellows is to “treat the person, not the disease”. She leads many clinical trials investigating novel drugs in patients with lymphoma, both in the frontline and relapse setting. Her translational research focuses on understanding therapeutic resistance, which is the main cause of death in these patients. The goal is to identify the emergence of resistant clones during therapy by sequencing plasma circulating tumour DNA. She also studies the clonal evolution that occurs over the course of therapy, focusing on the tumour genomics and immunophenotype of the micro-environment, to seek vulnerabilities that can be exploited as alternative therapeutic strategies. She established a tissue and cell bank at the JGH to perform this translational research, which she shares with other researchers at McGill and across Canada.

Outside the hospital, Dr. Johnson devotes a significant amount of her time to McGill and the community. In addition to her academic duties and teaching, she provides mentorship to the next generation of clinician scientists, as the program director for the clinical investigator program. She reviews grants for multiple agencies and acts as a scientific officer at CIHR. She is a director on the board at Lymphoma Canada, a non-profit agency that supports and teaches patients living with lymphoma. She also volunteers a significant amount of time to the Jewish General Hospital Foundation. Since 2017, her team for the Ride to Conquer Cancer, Immune Force One, has raised over \$300,000. These 2-day

cycling events have inspired her, as she witnesses first hand the triumph of the human spirit in overcoming adversity.

“Down” time for her involves being outdoors, either playing sports with her family or gardening. Winters are spent skiing and summers road and mountain biking. There is no family vacation that doesn’t involve wearing some sort of helmet. The 2020 “COVID” garden was the best ever, but required great lengths to keep the wild-life in TMR from attacking it. Pursuing such activities are great for the body and mind, allowing her to recharge her batteries and return to work with more energy and focus.