

Focus on Faculty #86

Sarit Assouline



Dr. Sarit Assouline is an Associate Professor in the Department of Medicine and an Associate Member of the Gerald Bronfman Department of Oncology at McGill University. After completing her medical degree at McGill in 1997, Dr. Assouline trained in Internal Medicine at the University of Toronto, and then Hematology and Oncology at McGill University. Dr. Assouline also completed a Masters' degree in Epidemiology and Biostatistics at McGill, and a fellowship in drug development at the Canadian Cancer Trials Group (CCTG), Queens University. As a hematologist and clinician-scientist, she has focused on two overarching goals.

The first goal was to develop a phase 1 and 2 clinical trial program for hematologic malignancies at the Jewish General Hospital (JGH), Segal Cancer Center within the framework of the Clinical Research Unit (CRU), where she is currently Associate Director. At the outset of her association with the JGH, there were no early phase trials for leukemia, lymphoma, and myeloma. In a few years, under the leadership of Dr. Assouline and with the assistance of the Department of Oncology, the program has grown to accommodate over 20 trials per year and has contributed to the approval of many practice-changing therapies for these diseases. Dr. Assouline has designed and conducted several academic clinical trials in collaboration with brilliant scientists from McGill and the Université de Montréal. Her pioneering efforts paved the way for colleagues in the Division of Hematology to develop their own clinical trial portfolios, making the practice of hematology at the JGH uniquely innovative and academic.

The second goal of her program was to provide state-of the art clinical care for patients with chronic myelogenous leukemia (CML) through the CML clinic at the Segal Cancer Centre. Dr. Assouline developed the CML Clinic, the first of its kind in Quebec, in 2004 with Dr. Carlo

Gambacorti, from the Università de Milano in Bicocca, her mentor at the time. Dr. Assouline has treated hundreds of patients with CML, with whom she can say she has shared many of life's precious moments. The CML clinic has contributed to the advancement of care for patients with CML through clinical trials testing novel therapeutic approaches. Dr. Assouline conducted the first study in Quebec which tested the stopping of treatment in patients. She has also performed numerous epidemiological studies among patients with CML. Recognized as a leader in CML research, Dr. Assouline was appointed Vice-President responsible for research in CML for the Groupe Quebecois de Recherche en LMC/NMP (leucémie myéloïde chronique/néoplasie myéloproliferative), founded by colleagues at Hôpital Maisonneuve-Rosemont and the MUHC. This group represents the highest standard of focused physician collaboration for the welfare of patients.

Working relentlessly toward these two main goals has offered immeasurable rewards. Dr. Assouline considers herself privileged to help countless patients. She has published over 100 papers and has had the honour of contributing to the professional development of fellow clinician scientists, research coordinators and nurses, residents, and medical students. Dr. Assouline holds an FRSQ Chercheur Clinicien Senior Award and is the Disease Site Co-Chair for Hematology at the CCTG, where she interacts with clinical trialists from across North America to develop innovative trials that benefit Canadians living with hematologic malignancies.

When not at work, Dr. Assouline enjoys the company of her husband and three children, and strives to perfect her hand-stand push-ups, chest-to-bar pull-ups, and dead-lifts at the CrossFit gym.