

ANNUAL REPORT

2012

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*Annual Report prepared by Gayle A. Shinder, PhD, Program Coordinator,
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Foreword by the Chair

One of the most vibrant communities in the Faculty of Medicine, the Department of Oncology turned 21 in 2012. I was asked by Dr. David Eidelman, Dean of Medicine to continue in the role of Interim Chair for the entire year. My successor will be appointed in 2013 but in the meantime I continued to build on the same vision of “strategic pragmatism” I imparted to the Chair’s role in 2011. In brief, the goal is to derive strength from the existing multi-silo structure of the oncology network at McGill, with its centres and hospital units that have much to gain in maintaining their independence and direct representation in the Faculty of Medicine. The Chair of the Department of Oncology should build on the strengths of this robust network, catalyze the academic and research interactions, nurture the careers of its faculty members, and ensure that the department meets its mission within McGill and provides a useful service to society.

Oncology is a large department with 161 ranked faculty members and an additional 74 associate members or adjunct professors, each of whom mobilizes a team of research, clinical, and administrative support staff and trainees. Managing the academic and administrative requirements of such a large faculty is not a simple matter. There are daily processes that need to be administered, all with the goal of nurturing the academic trajectory of our researchers and clinicians and tending to their needs. There are complex procedures for faculty recruitment, promotion, accreditation, and tenure that require close oversight. Not a single week goes by without a gut-wrenching decision to be made. There are bills and salaries to be paid, and periodic evaluations and reaccreditations of our research and teaching programs that require close supervision. There are also occasional sensitive matters that require mediation and conciliation.

We saw in 2012 the maturity of a revolutionary idea: the Rossy Cancer Network (RCN). Launched officially at McGill in the summer of 2012 it has become a vibrant force in bringing the quality of cancer care at McGill to the level of the world’s top cancer centres. The Department of Oncology serves as the hub for the RCN and as a conduit for the numerous academic activities that will link the oncology community to the various work streams in improving cancer care and patient satisfaction. Lessons are being learned as we proceed to make the RCN a reality in close cooperation with our partners at the hospitals.

McGill had a challenging year in 2012 and Oncology was affected as well. Our budget was reduced for the second year in a row, which has increased the hardship already experienced in 2011. We are still being able to sustain our teaching and academic activities but for 2013 and beyond we will have to seek new solutions and adopt a more cost-effective approach to managing our department. Some day in the not-too-distant future we will reminisce about the rough waters of the era we live with a sense of pride that as a department we once again emerged strengthened in circumventing today’s political and financial challenges.

May 2012

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James McGill Professor and Interim Chair, Department of Oncology

Summary of Department Activities

1. Research and Publications

Our faculty and associate members conduct oncology research in a broad range of disciplines including (i) basic research focusing on understanding at the molecular level, the processes involved in the development and growth of tumours; (ii) translational research looking at the development and testing of novel therapeutics; (iii) a wide range of Phase I, II and III clinical research studies testing the effectiveness of cancer treatment therapies, including chemotherapy and radiotherapy; (iv) cancer genetics studies looking at genes involved in inherited susceptibility to cancer; (v) cancer epidemiology studies aimed at providing insights into the etiology, prevention, and prognosis for several cancers, most notably cervical, prostate, and head and neck cancers; (vi) psychosocial oncology research aimed at improving the emotional well-being of patients and their families throughout the illness trajectory; (vii) research to identify ways to help patients manage pain and other symptoms of the disease such as lymphedema, weight loss and fatigue; and (viii) palliative care research aimed at helping patients and their caregivers cope at end of life.

Research funding comes from provincial, national and international sources. One of the major grants received in 2012 was the Terry Fox Research Institute grant of \$4 million over 4 years awarded to Drs. Gerald Batist and Steven Gallinger (Toronto) for the pan-Canadian Consortium for Colorectal Cancer (C4).

Examples of plenary or keynote lectures given by our faculty include (i) “Cervical Cancer Screening: New developments, evidence, tests and future scenarios” by Dr. Eduardo Franco at the Canadian Cancer Screening Conference, Canadian Partnership Against Cancer in March (Montreal), (ii) Dr. Michael Pollak’s presentation at the Keystone Symposium on Cancer Metabolism in February (Banff), (iii) Luis Souhami’s keynote address at the annual meeting of the Association des Radio-oncologues du Quebec in June (Quebec City).

A comprehensive summary of the 2012 academic activities and publications of 83 of our faculty and associate members can be found on the Department of Oncology website: http://www.medicine.mcgill.ca/oncology/news/news_annualreport.asp.

Clinical Research Program (CRP)

The CRP is continuing to open new studies and accrue patients to ongoing studies. The Program ended the 2011/2012 fiscal year with a considerable positive balance which has been used to help pay off its debt to the Faculty of Medicine. The CRP Retreat on April 20th provided information on the procedures and challenges faced by the CRP, and it was also a forum to brainstorm on ways to overcome the challenges and implement solutions. The new steering/oversight committee for the CRP met for the first time in mid-November to help guide the program as they seek ways to improve time to trial approval, increase accrual rates and improve their fiscal health. The steering committee includes stakeholders from the university, hospitals, IRB and pharmacy.

2. Teaching and Learning

Dr. Franco instructed the Director of Undergraduate Oncology Education, Dr. Jamil Asselah, to write a proposal for an enhanced role for oncology education in the undergraduate curriculum. He asked Dr. Shinder to assist him with the background research to document oncology education in other Canadian universities. Our department's goal is to enhance the quantity and quality of oncology teaching in the new undergraduate medical education curriculum. In November 2012 the new proposal was submitted to the University's New Curriculum Initiative committee led by Dr. Robert Primavesi. The final recommendations from the committee were that they were supportive of increasing the presence of oncology in the curriculum and that we were to negotiate with the leaders of the Fundamentals of Medicine and Dentistry (FM&D), Transition to Clinical Practice and Clerkship portions of the curriculum for oncology teaching time. This is a work in progress. Thus far we have secured Dr. Michael Pollak for the teaching of the lecture *Clinical Guidelines for the Prevention of Cancer* in FM&D. Dr. Asselah is currently in talks with the leads of the Internal Medicine portion of the clerkship to have time set aside for students to rotate through the oncology outpatient clinics.

Drs. Bernard Lapointe, Golda Tradounsky and Dawn Allen submitted a proposal to the New Curriculum Initiative committee regarding palliative care teaching. Currently the undergraduate medical education program offers 20 hours of palliative care teaching in concert with the Physicianship and Clinical Medicine programs. In the new curriculum, Palliative Care McGill has integrated their content across the disciplines over all four years and has increased students' exposure to palliative care by 3 hours. Though they would like to accommodate more requests from students for elective rotations, they are also proud to be able to supervise elective rotations of approximately 12 medical students per year.

The palliative care post-graduate education program includes a Royal College approved residency in Palliative Medicine as well as one-month rotations for oncology, family practice, and internal medicine residents. In 2012, Palliative Care McGill provided over 100 one-month resident rotations for a broad range of disciplines (family medicine, internal medicine, radiation oncology, medical oncology, psychiatry, geriatrics, and gyneco-oncology) and the supervision of 3 palliative care fellows.

The Directors of the Medical, Surgical and Radiation Oncology as well as Palliative Care residency training programs (Drs. Lawrence Panasci, Ari Meguerditchian, Khalil Sultanem and Golda Tradounsky, respectively) with the assistance of Ms. Naomi Scobie, have been preparing for the March 2013 Royal College Accreditation.

3. Involvement in the Community

Rossy Cancer Network

The Rossy Cancer Network (RCN), an initiative sparked by the vision of and generous donation from the Larry and Cookie Rossy Family Foundation, was inaugurated in March 2012. The initiative brings together McGill and its teaching hospitals (MUHC, Jewish General Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital Centre) with the goal of integrating cancer care across the hospital sites. Dr. Eduardo Franco, as Interim Chair of the Department, sits on the Executive Committee while other members of the department provide input through the five workstreams: Indicators and Outcomes (led by Dr. Gerald Batist), Integrated View of Patients and Data (led by (Dr. Armen

Aprikian), Patient Experience (led by Ms. Ann Lynch from the MUHC), Synoptic Reporting for Pathology (led by Dr. Indrojit Roy from St. Mary's Hospital) and Palliative Care (led by Dr. Bernard Lapointe).

The indicators and outcomes workstream generated great interest amongst department clinicians in the different hospitals as they came together face-to-face and electronically to identify key quality indicators for breast, colorectal, lung and prostate cancers. Dr. Carmen Loiseau, whose research focuses on information-seeking behavior of patients, is a member of the Patient Experience workstream. Moreover, Drs. Zeev Rosberger and Gayle Shinder are members of the Patient Reported Measures subcommittee whose mandate is to develop a distress screening program across the hospital sites.

Second Annual Gerald Bronfman Centre Symposium

Dr Franco organized for the second year this important event. The Second Annual Gerald Bronfman Centre Symposium, was held on November 26, 2012. This year's focus was on basic cancer research and featured a keynote address by Dr. Ann Chambers from the Department of Oncology at the University of Western Ontario, as well as talks by our own department members, Drs. Morag Park and Antonis Koromilas. Immediately following the symposium several members of the department were presented with the Gerald Bronfman Centre Awards. Drs. Phil Gold (Basic Cancer Research) and Ervin Podgorsak (Medical Physics) were honoured with Lifetime Achievement Awards, Dr. Gerald Batist received the Research and Clinical Service Award, Dr. Robin Cohen the Teaching and Training Award and Ms. Naomi Scobie the Academic, Clinical and Research Support Award.

Department of Oncology Presence at the UICC World Cancer Congress

The McGill Department of Oncology was one of the sponsors of the 2012 UICC World Cancer Congress held in Montreal from August 27-30. Drs. Eduardo Franco, Gerald Batist and Carolyn Freeman were members of the Host Committee, and the Department of Oncology had a prominently-placed booth in the exhibitors' hall which featured bilingual posters describing the various facets of the department. Several faculty members presented at the Congress.

19th International Congress on Palliative Care

The 19th International Congress on Palliative Care held in October 2012 received a record number of abstracts and broke earlier attendance records with 1661 participants representing 56 countries. A new initiative in this 19th congress was live-streaming of selected sessions to a number of developing countries.

The Visiting Speakers Program in Oncology (VSPO)

The VSPO is a joint initiative with the Université de Montréal. On the McGill side, Dr. Thierry Alcindor is the co-Director and Ms. Winie Celestin is the Administrator. The VSPO would not be possible without the generous support of its many corporate donors. (www.medicine.mcgill.ca/oncology/speakers/speakers_visiting-speakers.asp). In 2012 the VSPO hosted 13 speakers from Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, UK and USA who spoke on a variety of topics including myeloma, prostate cancer, psychosocial oncology and palliative care.

4. Milestones

New Hires

Assistant Professors: Joanne Alfieri, Marc Fabian, Kris Jardon, Ari Meguerditchian,
Joshua Press, Arman Sarfehnia, Philip Wong

Adjunct Professors: Ghassan El-Baalbaki, André-Guy Martin, Marie-Hélène Mayrand,
Shireen Sirhan, Terence Sullivan

Promotions

Tarek Hijal: Assistant Professor; Jian Hui Wu: Associate Professor with tenure

Departures

Edson Moreira, Visiting Professor, Cancer Epidemiology; Bruno Gagnon, Assistant Professor,
Palliative Care

5. Honours, Awards and Prizes

Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal

Phil Gold, Bernard Lapointe, Neil MacDonald, David Mulder

James McGill Professor

Alain Nepveu, Jerry Pelletier

McGill Service Recognition

Dr. Anna Towers – 25 years; Dr. Richard Margolese – 40 years; Dr. Moulay Alaoui-Jamali –
20 years; Dr. Antonis Koromilas – 20 years; Dr. Lawrence Panasci- 30 years; Dr. Eduardo
Franco – 20 years; Carol-Ann Vasilevsky - McGill Quarter Century Club

Bassam Abdulkarim

Elaines T. & Charles H Peters award. Montreal General Hospital Foundation (Value \$75,000).

Thierry Alcindor

Pass with distinction awarded by Board of Examiners of the University of Oxford for
outstanding master's dissertation.

Pnina Brodt

The UICC Yamagiwa-Yoshida Memorial International Cancer Study award

Issam El Naqa

FRSQ (Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec) Salary Award (Ranked#1 in the competition),
supplement covered; CIHR (Canadian Institutes of Health Research) New Investigator Salary
Award

Eduardo Franco

Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences, Ottawa, Canada (September 2012).

Tom Hutchinson

Faculty Honour List for Educational Excellence, June 2012

Carmen Loiselle

Florence Prize for Excellence in Research from the OIIQ (l'Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec).

Roger Tabah

Certificate of Founder Designation in General Surgical Oncology, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada.

Michel Tremblay

Prix Michel Sarrazin 2012 du Club de Recherche Clinique du Quebec.

Ivan Topisirovic

CIHR New Investigator Award; Chercheurs-boursier (Junior 1) Fonds de la recherche en santé du Québec (FRSQ), Canada. Declined.

McGill Cyclical Review of the Department of Oncology

The Department of Oncology was the first clinical department to undergo the University's cyclical review process. The self-study document was over 2000 pages including 36 pages of responses to the cyclical review template questions and 29 appendices. It was prepared by Dr. Gayle Shinder with editorial review by Interim Chair, Dr. Eduardo Franco and contributions of individual reports from faculty members. The Cyclical Unit Review Office and members of the review committee had high praise for the completeness and organization of the documentation and CURO saw our document as the model for subsequent clinical departments undergoing the cyclical review process. The site visit took place from April 10-12, 2012 and leaders (and sometimes other members as well) of the various Department programs and divisions met with the committee members either at the Gerald Bronfman Centre, the Goodman Cancer Centre, the Segal Cancer Centre (JGH) or the Montreal General Hospital (MUHC). Committee members also met with a group of medical residents in oncology as well as a group of graduate students who work with our department's faculty members.

Our document presented a very candid view of the strengths and weaknesses of our Department and those weaknesses which we had already taken steps to address. Many of our self-assessed strengths and weaknesses were also identified by the review committee as they spoke with members of our department. The review committee presented their report in May 2012 with recommendations on addressing some of the ongoing issues. The Cyclical Review process has enabled us to take a step back and critically assess where we are now and where we would like to be in the future. It has allowed us to determine where improvements are needed and we have been working towards implementing changes to improve our role in teaching and clinical research and to encourage a sense of belonging to the Department of Oncology by all faculty, staff and students who are part of, or who have links to our department. Dr. Franco submitted a 7-page letter of response to CURO where he specified the areas in which remedial steps were already taken.