

ANNUAL REPORT 2015

Submitted by Eduardo L. Franco, DrPH, FRSC, FCAHS, James McGill
Professor and Minda de Gunzburg Chair, Department of Oncology

*Annual Report prepared by Gayle A. Shinder, PhD, Academic Advisor to the
Chair, Department of Oncology.*

Foreword by the Chair

The Department of Oncology celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2015 and in November/December three events took place which celebrated this milestone year:

- 1) On November 24th the Department joined the Goodman Cancer Centre, the MUHC Research Institute and the McGill Faculty of Medicine in celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the discovery of the carcinoembryonic antigen (CEA), an event honouring Drs. Phil Gold and Samuel Freedman.
- 2) The Fifth Gerald Bronfman Centre Symposium and Awards Ceremony was held on November 30th. This year's theme was *Advances in the Genetics of Cancer* and featured a keynote presentation by Dr. Todd Golub (Broad Institute of Harvard and MIT) as well as talks by Department of Oncology members, Drs. Nada Jabado and William Foulkes. Dr. Morag Park chaired the symposium and Dr. Patricia Tonin was the moderator. This year's Gerald Bronfman Centre award winners were Dr. Jerry Pelletier (Research & Clinical Service), Dr. Ari Meguerditchian (Teaching and Mentorship) and Maria Fossetti (Academic, Clinical and Research Support). In addition, Department of Oncology Lifetime Achievement Awards were bestowed on Dr. Nicole Beauchemin and Dr. Martin Black.
- 3) On December 1st the Department hosted the First Oncology Postgraduate Medical Education Symposium. I started this initiative to provide the Residents with an exciting opportunity to design a symposium tailored to their interests. It was organized by the Chief Residents: Drs. Khaled Adil, Reem Albeesh, Sara Soldera and Nora Trabulsi with advice from the Program Directors, Drs. Joanne Alfieri, Jean-François Boileau and Scott Owen and support from the Chair's Office (me and Dr. Gayle Shinder). This day-long symposium featured Keynote speakers, Dr. Timothy Whelan (McMaster University) and Dr. José Baselga (Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center), twelve speakers from the Department of Oncology (Drs. Gerald Batist, Jean-François Boileau, Tarek Hijal, Victor Cohen, Lorenzo Ferri, Bassam Abdulkarim, Nathaniel Bouganim, Neil Kopek, Alan Spatz, Armen Aprikian, Cristiano Ferrario, Luis Souhami) and eight posters from the Residents. The success of the event far exceeded expectations as we had 90 attendees including residents from medical, surgical and radiation oncology, and pathology as well as medical students and faculty members.

Earlier in the year there was another celebratory symposium: *Innovations & Controversies: Celebrating Forty Years of Colorectal Surgery in Canada*. This symposium, organized by Dr. Carol-Ann Vasilevsky, took place on April 29-30th and paid tribute to Dr. Philip Gordon.

My initiative to develop an Integrated Graduate Program in Oncology met with an enthusiastic response from the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, Dr. Josephine Nalbantoglu. A Draft Proposal was circulated to Department of Oncology members in November and we are currently in the process of fine-tuning the proposal. We aim to implement an ad hoc program in 2017 and ultimately secure Quebec government approval.

In June I launched our "Focus on Faculty" profile series. Our faculty members are scattered throughout McGill and its teaching hospitals and work in a variety of disciplines. Many are not aware of the work and accomplishments of departmental colleagues working in other areas of

oncology. The 'Focus on Faculty' series is intended to let members know each other a little better and to enhance the sense of belonging they all have with the McGill Oncology Community. I also hope that it will foster new collaborations between colleagues. Each month we bring a new Focus on Faculty profile, which is broadly distributed and placed on our new 'Focus on Faculty' page on the Department of Oncology website. In 2015 we featured Drs. Gerald Batist (June 2015), Luke McCaffrey (July 2015), Tarek Hijal (August 2015), Jaroslav (Jeff) Prchal (September 2015), Robin Cohen (October 2015), Susie Lau (November 2015) and Gabriela Stroian (December 2015).

The Department's Clinical Research Program began its wind-down in 2015. According to new government rules, clinical trials must be managed through the hospitals therefore no new clinical trials are being managed by the CRP. As of the end of 2015 there were still over 100 ongoing trials being managed by the CRP but over the course of 2016 many of these will be transferred to the hospitals.

Many of our clinicians spent the first half of 2015 preparing for their move to the new Cedars Cancer Centre at the MUHC Glen Site. Since most of our faculty members are removed from the McGill campus, there are plans for the Department of Oncology Administrative offices to move from the Gerald Bronfman Centre to a location close to the Glen Site. During the year I looked at several possible locations suggested by the Faculty of Medicine. My Division of Cancer Epidemiology will also move to the new location as will the AEC7 which supports our Department.

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.

Eduardo Franco, DrPH, FRSC, FCAHS
James McGill Professor
Minda de Gunzburg Chair in Oncology
Chair, Department of Oncology

Summary of Department Activities

1. Research and Publications

The research activities in the Department are multi-disciplinary and include basic and translational research in cancer, clinical research, cancer prevention, cancer genetics, cancer epidemiology and population health, psychosocial oncology, palliative care and medical physics.

Publications (full list: http://www.medicine.mcgill.ca/oncology/about/about_annualreport.asp)

In 2015 our members published in top journals in the field such as: Cancer Epidemiology Biomarkers & Prevention; International Journal of Radiation Oncology, Biology, Physics; Journal of Clinical Oncology; International Journal of Gynecologic Cancer; Oncology Nursing Forum; and Molecular and Cellular Biology. Some of our members have also published in top tier journals such as the New England Journal of Medicine (Impact Factor 55.873), Nature (Impact Factor 41.456) and Nature Reviews Drug Discovery (Impact Factor 41.908).

- Dr. Wilson Miller is a co-author on the New England Journal of Medicine paper, *Pembrolizumab versus Ipilimumab in Advanced Melanoma*.
- Dr. Nicole Beauchemin is a co-author on the Nature paper, *CEACAM1 determines TIM-3 mediated tolerance and exhaustion*.
- Drs. Ivan Topisirovic and Jerry Pelletier are co-corresponding authors (along with Dr. Nahum Sonenberg) on the Nature Reviews Drug Discovery paper, *Targeting translational machinery in cancer*.

Major Funding

- Dr. Vincent Giguère: 5.3 million over 4 years from the Terry Fox Foundation
- Dr. Morag Park: Approximately 2.4 million from CFI

CIHR Foundation Grants

Drs. Laurent Azoulay, Eduardo Franco, Morag Park, Janusz Rak and Jan Seuntjens each received CIHR Foundation Grants.

FRQS Salary Awards

- Dr. Sarit Assouline – Chercheurs-boursiers-cliniciens
- Dr. Nada Jabado – Chaires to recherche
- Dr. Kevin Petrecca – Chercheurs-boursiers-cliniciens

Movember Discovery Grants from Prostate Cancer Canada

Drs. Armen Aprikian (PI is Alice Dragomir), Ivan Topisirovic, Michel Tremblay and Jian Hui Wu each received Movember Discovery Grants from Prostate Cancer Canada.

Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation

Drs. Moulay Alaoui Jamali, Mark Basik, William Foulkes, Luke McCaffrey, Morag Park and Michael Witcher each received Quebec Breast Cancer Foundation grants. The combined total is close to \$3 million. Six of nine PIs who received the awards were from McGill Oncology.

Rosby Cancer Network Funding

Cancer Quality and Innovation Research Grants

- Dr. Sarit Assouline as PI and Drs. Laurent Azoulay, Pierre Laneuville and Jaroslav Prchal as co-investigators: Management of Chronic Myeloid Leukemia

- Drs. Thomas Jagoe, Sender Liberman, Barry Stein and Carol-Ann Vasilevsky as co-investigators: Colorectal Cancer
- Drs. George Shenouda and Khalil Sultanem as co-investigators: HPV positive oropharyngeal cancer
- Drs. Michael Hier, George Shenouda, Khalil Sultanem as co-investigators: Radiation Oncology, head and neck cancer
- Dr. Bernard Lapointe as co-investigator: Cancer pain
- Drs. Victor Cohen and Vera Hirsh as co-investigators: Imaging and non-small cell lung cancer.

Quality Improvement Initiatives Fund (QI2)

- Dr. Petr Kavan as PI and Dr. Thierry Alcindor as a co-investigator: Quality of life and care of adolescent and young adults with cancer
- Drs. David Melnychuk and John Storing as co-investigators: Oncology urgent care clinic
- Drs. Thierry Alcindor, Richard Dalfen and Jeremy Sturgeon as co-investigators: Fertility preservation in males newly diagnosed with cancer
- Dr. Zeev Rosberger as co-investigator: Support for cancer patients and their children

Keynote Speakers

- Dr. Walter Gotlieb was a keynote speaker and AGOI Oration at AGOICON 2015, the 23rd Annual Conference of the Association of Gynecologic Oncologists of India, November 27-29.
- Dr. Raghu Rajan was a keynote speaker at the annual Canadian Centre for Applied Research in Cancer conference, May 24, 25 in Montreal.

2. Clinical Research and Clinical Innovation

Clinical research and clinical innovation are very important aspects of the work done by the Department's clinicians. They have played an instrumental role in the development and testing of many new and innovative cancer treatment therapies. Some examples include the following:

- Drs. Bassam Abdulkarim and George Shenouda were MA.20 Study Investigators listed as co-authors on the paper, *Regional Nodal Irradiation in Early-Stage Breast Cancer*. N Engl J Med. 2015 Jul 23;373(4):307-16. doi: 10.1056/NEJMoa1415340
- Dr. Thierry Alcindor is a co-author on the paper, *A Phase II study of SB939, a novel pan-histone deacetylase inhibitor, in patients with translocation-associated recurrent/metastatic sarcomas- NCIC-CTG IND 200*. Annals of Oncology. 2015 Jan 28. pii: mdv033. [Epub ahead of print]
- Dr. Vera Hirsh is a co-author on the paper, *Monotherapy Administration of Sorafenib in Patients With Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer (MISSION) Trial: A Phase III, Multicenter, Placebo-Controlled Trial of Sorafenib in Patients with Relapsed or Refractory Predominantly Nonsquamous Non-Small-Cell Lung Cancer after 2 or 3 Previous Treatment Regimens*. J Thorac Oncol. 2015 Dec;10(12):1745-53. doi: 10.1097/JTO.0000000000000693.
- Drs. Tamim Niazi, Walter Gotlieb, Susie Lau and Boris Bahoric are co-authors on the paper, *Para-aortic and Pelvic Radiotherapy, an Effective and Safe Treatment in Advanced-stage Uterine Cancer*. Anticancer Res. 2015 May;35(5):2893-900.
- The radiation oncology group at the MUHC developed a Cyberknife program and began using the Cyberknife in September 2015.
- The radiation oncology group at the MUHC began a High Dose Rate monotherapy program for prostate cancer patients.

3. Teaching and Learning

In 2015 Drs. Eduardo Franco and Gayle Shinder prepared a Draft Proposal for an Integrated Graduate Program in Oncology which was circulated to Department of Oncology members on November 9th. We received a lot of positive feedback and suggestions which we will consider as we move forward fine-tuning the proposal.

The Residency Program in Radiation Oncology Physics was re-accredited. Dr. William Parker is the Director of this program and Dr. Horacio Patrocinio is the Program Clinical Coordinator.

In 2015 Nathalie Huard became the coordinator of the Visiting Speakers Program in Oncology. The program hosted fifteen speakers from Canada, USA, France, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany and Spain and topics included colon cancer, pancreatic cancer, lung cancer, prostate cancer, breast cancer and hematologic malignancies.

4. Involvement in the Community

Conferences organized by Department members

- Canadian Association of Psychosocial Oncology (April 22-24)
 - Conference Co-Chairs were Drs. Zeev Rosberger and Marc Hamel
 - Dr. Carmen Loiselle was one of the Scientific Chairs
 - Two of the Keynote Speakers were Drs. Tom Hutchinson and Eduardo Franco
- World Rectal Conference on Organ Preserving Perspectives (April 30-May 2) in Montreal – Local organizers: Drs. Té Vuong, Gerald Batist, Slobodan Devic, Carol-Ann Vasilevsky. Dept. of Oncology was a sponsor of this event.
- Workshop on Molecular and Clinical Radiobiology (June 17-19) organized by Dr. Siham Sabri
- International Drug Discovery and Development Forum 2015 (November 2-6) organized by Dr. Bertrand Jean-Claude
- Canadian Cancer Research Alliance Conference (November 8 -10) in Montreal
 - Dept. of Oncology was a sponsor
 - Dr. Morag Park – recipient of CCRA Award for Exceptional Leadership in Cancer Research
 - *Department members on Scientific Program Committee:* Drs. Gerald Batist, Eduardo Franco, Nada Jabado, Carmen Loiselle, Koren Mann
 - *Department members who chaired sessions:* Drs. Gerald Batist, Eduardo Franco, Nada Jabado, Bernard Lapointe, Carmen Loiselle, Koren Mann, Morag Park
 - *Department members who were invited speakers:* Drs. William Foulkes, Eduardo Franco, Nathalie Johnson, Carmen Loiselle, Koren Mann, Jerry Pelletier, Peter Siegel

A group of volunteers in Texas called *Passing the Hat*, donated twenty-six crocheted hats to the Department of Oncology for distribution to cancer patients at the McGill-affiliated hospitals. Dr. Gayle Shinder dropped off nine hats to Cedars CanSupport (Cedars Cancer Centre – MUHC-Glen Site), nine hats to Hope & Cope (Segal Cancer Centre, Jewish General Hospital) and eight hats to Oncology at St. Mary's Hospital Center.

5. Milestones

Promotions

Both Drs. Vera Hirsh and Robin Cohen were promoted to Full Professor

New Appointments

- Arezu Jahani-Asl – Assistant Professor, Basic Cancer Research
- John Kildea – Assistant Professor, Medical Physics
- John Storrington – Assistant Professor, Hematology-Oncology
- Rosanna Faria – Affiliate Member. Psychosocial Oncology
- Dominique Fréchette – Faculty Lecturer, Medical Oncology, Gatineau
- Robert Archambault – Faculty Lecturer, Radiation Oncology, Gatineau

Departures

- Issam El Naqa – Medical Physics – converted to Adjunct Professor
- Alasdair Syme – Medical Physics – converted to Adjunct Professor
- Charles Hackett – Faculty Lecturer, Palliative Care
- Pierre Cholette – Faculty Lecturer, Palliative Care
- Vanessa Dumeaux – Assistant Professor, Basic Cancer Research
- Catherine Milne (retired) – Surgical Oncology
- Shirley Lehnert (retired) – Medical Physics

Years of Service Milestones - 2015

NAME	YEARS OF SERVICE		NAME	YEARS OF SERVICE
Bernard Lapointe	15		Sharon Abish	25
Carmen Loisel	15		Jean-Pierre Farmer	25
Jan Seuntjens	15		Philippe Gros	30
Stéphane Richard	20		Michael Pollak	30
Simon Tanguay	20		Nicole Beauchemin	30
Philip Branton	25		Gerald Batist	30
Denis Cournoyer	25		Lawrence Panasci	35
Eduardo Franco	25		José Montes	35
Candida Pizzolongo	25		Michael Thirlwell	40
Antonis Koromilas	25		Martin Black	40

6. Honours, Awards and Prizes

- Dr. Christoph Borchers: Inaugural holder of the Segal Family Chair in Molecular Oncology
- Dr. Michel Tremblay: Chevalier of the Ordre National du Québec
- Dr. Nada Jabado: Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada
- Dr. Philippe Gros: Royal Society’s McLaughlin Medal
- Dr. Christine Maheu: 2015 Pfizer Award of Excellence in Nursing Research
- Dr. Tamim Niazi: Invited to join NCIC CTG Clinical Trials Committee
- Dr. Walter Gotlieb named President Elect for the Society of Gynecologic Oncology and Secretary Treasurer for the International Society of Gynecologic Cancer
- Dr. Tarek Hijal obtained a Master’s Degree with Merit in Health Economics, Policy and Management from the London School of Economics
- Dr. Sara Soldera (Resident): Recipient of NOYCIA Award at ASCO. Media coverage
- Dr. Jean-Pierre Farmer (Pediatric Oncology): Named “Personality of the Week”, in La Presse, October 4th