



BRENDEN-COLSON CENTER FOR PANCREATIC CARE

From the Directors

Dear Brenden-Colson Center Researchers and Supporters,

Things have certainly progressed differently than we expected when we wrote our last Newsletter in January of 2020. But we are happy to report that the BCCPC is now at full operating capacity, within the constraints of OHSU pandemic policies. Our seminars are currently virtual (plan to return to in-person in January 2022), but our labs across OHSU are working hard (while staying safe) to make the discoveries that will further our mission. And this year we were named an **Academic Center of Excellence for both Pancreatitis and for Pancreatic Cancer** by the National Pancreas Foundation.

We are also happy to announce a joint recruitment with the Department of Surgery and CEDAR of **Carmen Curry, NP**, to run our pancreatic cancer high risk surveillance and screening clinic. Ms. Curry comes to OHSU from Inova Schar Cancer Institute and the Georgetown University Hospital (both in DC) with a background in both cancer screening and the GI field. She is already making a difference in expanding the reach of our surveillance program and helping us to recruit subjects for early detection trials.



As you probably know, OHSU has brought in **Dr. Gregory Coté** as the new Division Head for Gastroenterology and Hepatology. Dr. Coté is keenly interested in pancreas research and will help us to expand our endoscopic collection of specimens as well as be instrumental in accelerating enrollment to our early detection trials. We are eager to begin our collaborations with this fantastic new faculty member.

Finally, **Gordon Mills, MD, PhD**, who has for several years advised us as part of our Steering Committee, has accepted our invitation to formally become a BCCPC Program Leader in the area of new therapeutics and personalized medicine. Our efforts have been enriched by his expertise and dedication and we are delighted that he will be taking on this new role for BCCPC.

Thank you for everything you do for our patients and have a wonderful holiday season!

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Brett Sheppard.

Handwritten signature of Rosalie Sears.

Brenden-Colson Center Co-Directors
Brett Sheppard, MD and Rosalie Sears, PhD

Don't forget about **World Pancreatic Cancer Day** – Nov 18th this year.



Wear purple and send your photos to social media (tagging BCCPC on Twitter @OHSUpancreatic)

Staff Updates



John Muschler, PhD, is joining us to manage our patient-derived models of cancer project, teaming up with our new Research Assistant **Kimberly Alarcón**. (John & Kimberly pictured left)



Sydney Owen (left), our current Repository Steward, is expanding her role to include clinical data coordination and analysis.

Alexandra Susser (right) joined BCC as clinical studies coordinator last fall.



The flourishing Grossberg Lab welcomes **Jessica Dickie** (Research Assistant) along with **Paige Arneson-Wissink** and **Beth Worley** (Postdocs). Paige recently earned her PhD at the Mayo Clinic, and Beth hers at Penn State. [Pictured L to R - Beth; Heike Mendez (Lab Manager); Paige; Jessica; and Aaron Grossberg]

TPIAT Program News

BCCPC's Total Pancreatectomy with Islet Auto Transplant (or TPIAT) program, which provides relief for chronic and recurrent acute pancreatitis sufferers, **now has its own lab space!** Thanks to the Department of Surgery for providing the space in CHH1, which we renovated – all new air exchange system! new ceiling tiles! new biosafety cabinet!

In 2021 even in the face of supply issues (thank you to the **Jonker, Cho, and Virology Core labs** who gave us what we were missing!) we performed three more TPIAT procedures, with BCCPC providing the important cell purification lab work that is required for this pancreatitis treatment. Multiple other potential recipients of the procedure are being evaluated by the TPIAT multi-disciplinary selection committee.



Isolating islets in the lab

Swati Mishra, PhD, is heading up the TPIAT lab, working closely with TPIAT program manager **Lisa Bloker, RN**, and with invaluable assistance from transplant surgeon **David Woodland, MD**, and Sears Lab research associate **Colin Daniel**.

A TPIAT **patient testimonial** in a local newspaper attests to the impact of this procedure on quality of life. See article [here](#) (*Madras Pioneer*).

Despite uncertain insurance coverage of the procedure (and none from Medicare), the **OHSU Hospital has agreed to reimburse BCCPC** for the clinical lab work at a per-patient rate that will offset related BCC costs.

Dr. Mishra was approved by the NIDDK's **Integrated Islet Distribution Program** to receive islets for her research on using antibody directed nanocarriers as a novel treatment approach for chronic pancreatitis (and pancreatic cancer).



Preparing pancreas in the OR



Infusing islets into patient

New Partnerships

Our Window of Opportunity or "WOO" trial (run by Dr. Lopez), which uses analysis of a short period of treatment to predict later therapeutic response in pancreatic cancer patients, has successfully enrolled 22 participants to date. We have agreements in place from pharmaceutical companies **Zenith**, **Genentech**, **Loxo Oncology at Lilly**, and **Cardiff Oncology** to provide drugs for the next phase of this trial.

Of the 6 OHSU proposals chosen for support by **AstraZeneca's Partner of Choice** program, 2 are BCCPC projects. The program will provide novel drugs and funding for Dr. Lopez' WOO trial, as well as support for development by Dr. Mills of a clinical assay to detect replication stress (a potential target in 60% of PDAC cases) and for combination therapeutics testing by Dr. Sears.

Dr. Brody has formalized a partnership with **CodeBio** to develop innovative nanotherapy targeted to pancreatic cancer. Specifically, this agreement supports testing the ability of using a novel synthetic DNA delivery platform (3DNA) to deliver a therapeutic payload specifically targeting pancreatic cancer cells while sparing normal, healthy cells.

BCCPC is a founding member of **PRECEDE**, an international collaboration of 35 institutions to create a clinical database and biorepository from individuals at high-risk of developing pancreatic cancer. Through PRECEDE we have partnered with Konica Minolta Precision Medicine to offer expanded genetic testing to high-risk individuals and support research to develop early detection imaging and biomarker strategies. Dr. Sears is on the PRECEDE Executive Board, and Dr. Aaron Grossberg is directing the PRECEDE clinical trial at OHSU.

We have expanded our partnership with **Tempus** to develop radiomics (CT and MRI) image segmentation using artificial intelligence algorithms to detect texture changes indicative of pancreatic cancer at an earlier stage as well as detect response to therapy. This effort, led by Dr. Alex Guimaraes, will be instrumental in our efforts to develop more sensitive early-detection imaging strategies. Our preliminary results have identified pancreas tumor texture elements that can predict outcomes for patients treated with neoadjuvant chemotherapy.

New BCCPC Research

BCCPC recently provided funding to **Drs. Stu Ibsen and Terry Morgan** to accelerate refinement of their early detection blood marker panel. We anticipate that this project will mature to the next stage for larger cohort validation and be adapted for clinical lab implementation.

New Grant Funding

Drs. Marks and Grossberg were recently awarded a 3-year AACR-The Mark Foundation for Cancer Research "Science of the Patient" grant. This award will allow them to expand their research on cachexia in pancreatic cancer. Dr. **Marks** was also awarded two NIH "provocative questions" R01s to study prevention and therapeutic approaches for cancer cachexia.

Drs. Sears and Brody were each awarded NCI supplements (to our U01) for collaborative studies with U. Alabama Birmingham and U. Kansas, respectively. These awards will further drive our analysis of patient-derived models of pancreatic cancer to understand how best to model human disease.

Surgeon physician-scientist Dr. **Robert Eil** researches the immune response to pancreatic cancer and how to drive a productive and robust T cell response to clear tumors. He was just awarded a Career Development Award from the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network for this work.

The RFA for our **FY23 Fellowship** is now posted on our [O2 page](#)
Application Deadline:
February 1, 2022

Dr. Lopez' BCCPC "NeoOPTIMIZE" trial is currently enrolling patients (8 participants enrolled to date). This trial will rapidly evaluate individual patients' response to standard of care therapy (pre-surgery) to determine if the patient should stay on an effective clinically active drug or switch to a different clinically active drug. We will utilize our suite of research analytics to identify signatures of response to these therapies.

BCCPC continues to support development of the **LabKey** relational database structure, now being expanded by the Knight's Computational Biomedicine Program, led by Dr. Shannon McWeeney. This will provide a broader group of OHSU cancer researchers with a rich platform to help develop cutting-edge discoveries.

We award two, 2-year research fellowships every other year. Right now we are supporting **Thomas Sutton, MD**, researching fusion-derived cancer cells to see how they work in pancreatic cancer; and **Sohinee Bhattacharyya, PhD**, looking for ways to target immune-suppressive pathways in pancreatic cancer.

Sharing Our Expertise

- Dr. **Sears** was invited to present at the American Pancreas Association Annual Meeting to discuss her work on genetic drivers of pancreatic cancer. Postdoc **Vidhi Shah** also had her abstract accepted for presentation at this meeting.
- Dr. **Brody**, with clinical collaborator from Johns Hopkins, **Dr. Michael Pishvaian**, has founded the BRCA-PANC Consortium which includes investigators at Memorial Sloan Kettering, Sheba Medical Center (Israel), UCLA, U Penn, and OHSU. Through additional funding just awarded from the Hirshberg Foundation, we will be solidifying our relationships with these outside institutions and creating the infrastructure to collect and study samples from these patients, with the ultimate goal of setting up a multi-institutional clinical trial.
- Dr. **Coussens** ran a "Mentoring the Mentor" workshop for the AACR special conference on pancreas cancer in September, and Dr. **Sherman** led a discussion session on the pancreatic microenvironment; Dr. **Link's** abstract was accepted for oral presentation. Six BCCPC researchers (as well as 2 more from CEDAR) had abstracts accepted for poster presentation: Faculty Drs. **Grossberg** and **Langer**; postdoc **Jaime Abrego**; and students **Gabe Cohn**, **Isabel English**, and **Luke Ternes**.

In the Works

In the next two years BCCPC will produce a **CME symposium on pancreatitis**, to be co-chaired by Drs. Sheppard and Coté, and a CME symposium on pancreatic cancer, to be co-chaired by Drs. Coté, Lopez, and Sheppard. These symposia will provide education to medical providers regarding state-of-the art diagnosis and treatment (including research advances) in this field.

BCCPC is also planning a second **patient and family symposium** (first was in 2019), chaired by Dr. Brody, to provide education and resources to those recovering from or affected by pancreatic disease.

Drs. Sheppard and Brody have been invited to present to the Portland Jewish community on **Ashkenazi genetic risk and research** with regards to pancreatic cancer in January (date TBA).

Dr. Sherman is working with Dr. Cosimo Commisso (Sanford Burnham Prebys, La Jolla) to organize a **joint mini-symposium** between our two institutions focusing on pancreas cancer therapeutics development. Coming soon!

Drs. Sheppard and Lopez are devising a couple of **fundraising events** to help broaden the BCC's base of support and sustainability.

We welcome your participation in the planning and execution of any or all of these events. Stay tuned for details to come!

Thank you
for everything you do for our patients

If you are thinking about your year-end charitable donations, please consider adding the Brenden-Colson Center to your list. Even small gifts join together to help us in our mission.

To make a year-end donation to our program's mission, please use this link to visit the [OHSU Foundation](#) site. Thank you.

If you have ideas about topics or information you would like to see in the newsletter please email us at brendencolsoninfo@ohsu.edu.