

# **Fiscal Year 2020 (April 1, 2019, to March 31, 2020) Accomplishments**

## **Awards**

### **NCI Renews Roswell Park's Core Grant**

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) renewed Roswell Park's comprehensive cancer center designation and core grant, awarding Roswell Park \$22.5 million over the next five years. This is a significant accomplishment for our team and one that separates us from other health care organizations in our community and across the nation. Rep. Brian Higgins, members of our board and cancer survivors joined in the celebration of this by ringing the Victory Bell. All of our employees should be proud of this accomplishment and what it means for the future of cancer care.

The NCI has continuously designated Roswell Park as a comprehensive cancer center for more than four decades, placing it among the top cancer centers around the globe. The designation authenticates Roswell Park's world-class cancer research, education and clinical care programs. The NCI core grant provides substantial federal funds that are vital to the research programs and scientific infrastructure that define our uniqueness and confirm our status.

Roswell Park received the highest application score from the NCI review committee and the largest core grant amount in its history – a lofty achievement that speaks volumes about our team. By making new discoveries about cancer every day — how it grows, how to detect it, how to stop it — and using these discoveries to set the global standards for how to treat it, we save the lives of patients who walk through our doors – and we help to save lives across the world. Cancer research matters.

### **Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Honors Native American Researcher at Roswell Park**

Roswell Park faculty researcher Rodney Haring, PhD, MSW, has been recognized with a Research Into Action Award from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) New Connections initiative. Presented at a capstone symposium in New Orleans, the award honors what Dr. Haring has accomplished as a New Connections grantee with his successful contributions in the field, including his 2010 project that looked at childhood obesity and oral health within Native American communities.

### **Roswell Park Immunologist Honored by University at Buffalo for Contributions to Medical Science**

Roswell Park immunologist Elizabeth Repasky, PhD, was awarded the 2019 Distinguished Biomedical Alumna Award from the University at Buffalo Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. The annual award recognizes Jacobs School graduates, residents and volunteers for outstanding contributions to medicine and biomedical sciences, the arts or humanities. Dr. Repasky earned a doctorate in anatomical sciences from the Jacobs School in 1981 and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the California Institute of Technology.

Dr. Repasky is a Distinguished Member, Professor of Oncology, the William Huebsch Professor of Immunology and Leader of the Cell Stress and Biophysical Therapies Program at Roswell Park. Her groundbreaking research on the impact of body temperature and thermal stress on immunotherapy has led to clinical trials at the cancer center.

### **Roswell Park Environmental Health Expert Earns Presidential Award for Scientists**

Roswell Park's Binnian Wei, PhD, has received a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE), the highest scientific honor bestowed by the U.S. government, from the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. The award recognizes scientists and engineers early in their careers who show leadership potential and are at the forefront of scientific knowledge in the 21st century. The award was established in 1996 by the National Science and Technology Council.

Dr. Wei is an Assistant Professor of Oncology in the Department of Health behavior, exploring emerging health issues such as exposure to chemicals in consumables like e-cigarettes, secondhand marijuana smoke and tobacco smoke. His coworkers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, where he was a research scientist for the Division of Laboratory Sciences in the Tobacco and Volatiles Branch, nominated him for the award.

### **Hyundai Hope On Wheels Presents Roswell Park with \$100,000 Hyundai Impact Award Grant to Support Pediatric Cancer Research**

Hyundai Hope On Wheels® (HHOW), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization supported by Hyundai and its U.S. dealers, announced a \$100,000 Hyundai Impact Award Grant to Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center to continue its long-standing fight against pediatric cancer. The center is one of 77 recipients receiving a combined \$16 million in new grants this year to develop innovative approaches to finding a cure for the disease. The Hyundai Impact Award was presented to Matthew Barth, MD, at Roswell Park. HHOW, one of the largest funders of pediatric cancer research in the nation, this year will reach \$160 million in total lifetime funding since 1998 towards finding a cure. With this latest grant, Roswell Park has received \$300,000 in total grants from HHOW.

### **Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance Awards Rosalind Franklin Prize to Roswell Park's Dr. Kunle Odunsi**

One of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center's most distinguished researchers has been recognized again for his contributions to advance the fight against ovarian cancer. Ovarian Cancer Research Alliance (OCRA) awarded its Rosalind Franklin Prize for Excellence in Ovarian Cancer Research to Roswell Park Deputy Director Kunle Odunsi, MD, PhD, FRCOG, FACOG, during the organization's 2019 Ovarian Cancer National Conference in Seattle, Washington.

OCRA awards a single \$10,000 prize each year to recognize and support an individual researcher's outstanding contributions to basic science, translational or clinical research in ovarian cancer. The Franklin Prize pays tribute to Dr. Rosalind Franklin, a molecular biologist who played a vital role in discovering the structure of DNA and who died of ovarian cancer in 1958, at age 37. Dr. Odunsi oversees Roswell Park's science programs and also serves as Chair of the Department of Gynecologic Oncology, the M. Steven Piver Professor of Gynecologic Oncology and Executive Director of the Center for Immunotherapy at the Buffalo cancer center. The award will support his ongoing work to develop more effective treatments for ovarian cancer and related diseases.

### **Roswell Park Ranked 14th on List of Nation's Best Hospitals for Cancer**

A record of outstanding clinical care and services has once again earned Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center recognition as one of the top cancer hospitals in the country. The Buffalo-based cancer center has been named to U.S. News & World Report's annual list of the Best Hospitals in the nation, and is number 14 on its list of Best Hospitals for Cancer. U.S. News' data-driven ranking places Roswell Park among the top 1.5% of cancer hospitals, and as a high-performing center in two subspecialty areas: colon cancer surgery and lung cancer surgery.

Roswell Park is the only center in Western and Upstate New York to be included in U.S. News' ranking of the top 50 cancer hospitals, and one of only two New York State centers to rank in the top 15 on this respected national list. U.S. News made a few key changes to the methodology by which this year's ratings were calculated, incorporating patient-centered measures such as patient satisfaction and how often patients are discharged directly from the hospital to their homes, as well as risk adjustment to account for the level of complexity in treating sicker patients.

#### **Roswell Park Neurosurgeon Honored by Professional Society**

A Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center neurosurgeon who specializes in treating disorders of the spine, Andrew J. Fabiano, MD, FAANS, Associate Professor of Neurosurgery and Oncology, and Director of the Spinal Oncology Center, has been named a North American Spine Society (NASS) 20 Under 40 Spine Surgeon based on his professional accomplishments, community service and philosophy of care, and a guest examiner by the American Board of Neurological Surgery (ABNS).

A Buffalo-area native, Dr. Fabiano has been on staff at Roswell Park since 2010, caring for patients with both benign and malignant brain tumors. He specializes in removal of spinal tumors and complex spinal reconstruction, and also has special training in minimally invasive techniques. He is also a Clinical Associate Professor of Neurosurgery with the University at Buffalo's Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. In his role as an ABNS guest examiner, Dr. Fabiano will help to conduct and evaluate oral exams for practicing neurosurgeons seeking certification.

#### **Roswell Park Moving Unique Immunotherapy Platform Forward With \$6.42 Million DoD Grant**

A team from Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center is moving forward a new three-part strategy for treating advanced cancers with support from a U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) grant to Pawel Kalinski, MD, PhD, Vice Chair for Translational Research and Rustum Family Professor for Molecular Therapeutics and Translational Research. The four-year, \$6.42 million Breakthrough Award through the DoD's Breast Cancer Research Program will fund a clinical trial in patients with brain-metastatic breast cancer, to be led by Shipra Gandhi, MD, Assistant Professor of Oncology in the Department of Medicine at Roswell Park.

The phase II trial, slated to open in 2020, would be the first clinical study to assess the effectiveness of a three-pronged strategy combining distinct immunotherapy approaches:

- A new dendritic-cell treatment vaccine developed by Dr. Kalinski and colleagues in collaboration with Brian Czerniecki, MD, PhD, Chair of the Breast Oncology Department at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, Florida
- Chemokine modulation using a combination proposed and validated by Dr. Kalinski as an optimized adjuvant for dendritic-cell vaccines, incorporating rintatolimod (brand name Ampligen) and interferon alfa-2b (brand name Intron A)
- Immune checkpoint inhibition

Alone, these therapies are effective for a limited number of patients, but evidence suggests that together they may help break through a persistent challenge in oncology: how to turn "cold" tumors that don't respond to existing therapies into "hot" ones that the immune system can be trained to recognize and pursue.

#### **Western New York Girl Scouts Honor Roswell Park President & CEO as 2019 Woman of Distinction**

The Girl Scouts of Western New York hosted their annual Women of Distinction event on September 26, 2019, honoring nine area women for their strength, dedication and service to the community — with Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center’s top official, Candace S. Johnson, PhD, among them.

The event featured a dinner and awards ceremony to celebrate the nine local leaders. Dr. Johnson and her fellow honorees were nominated by members of the community for showing demonstrated leadership through public service. Her nominator spoke of Dr. Johnson’s advocacy of science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), and how she believes in the “power of the G.I.R.L.” To promote mentorship and inspiration, The awardees were paired with Girl Scouts, who presented their awards. Dr. Johnson received her award from Megan Q. of Hamburg, N.Y., a Girl Scout Ambassador. This was Dr. Johnson’s second Women of Distinction honor; she was also recognized in 1998.

### **Dedication to Patients Earns High Honors for Roswell Park’s Dr. Philip McCarthy**

Two special honors were given at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center on Sept. 28 to Philip McCarthy, MD, who was applauded for his achievements by the City of Buffalo and at the inaugural Fire Ball Sickle Cell Awareness Dinner and Award Ceremony. Dr. McCarthy, Director of Roswell Park’s Transplant & Cellular Therapy (TCT) Center, was the night’s special honoree in recognition of the care he has provided for Josh Collins, the first person locally to receive a blood stem cell transplant (BMT) as treatment for sickle cell disease.

### **GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer Designates Roswell Park as Screening Center of Excellence**

Roswell Park’s efforts to provide the public with lung cancer early detection screening options have earned a prestigious Screening Center of Excellence designation from the GO2 Foundation for Lung Cancer. The nonprofit foundation’s designated centers ensure that screenings transform lung cancer care in the community by providing clear information on who is an eligible candidate and complying with comprehensive best practices by professional governing bodies such as the American College of Radiology (ACR) and the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN).

### **New York Women Power 100 Honors Roswell Park Leaders Dr. Candace Johnson, Leecia Eve**

Media company City & State has recognized Roswell Park President and CEO Candace S. Johnson, PhD, and Board of Directors member Leecia Eve, JD, for their leadership and accomplishments, naming them to its annual New York Women Power 100 list. City & State, which covers government and politics in New York, publishes the list to honor the 100 most influential women in government, public affairs, business, culture, and social sciences. They rank Eve at 40 and Dr. Johnson at 41 on its list of powerful female leaders.

### **The Roswell Park Alliance Foundation Earns Highest Rating From Charity Navigator for Fifth Year**

The Roswell Park Alliance Foundation, the 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that manages all donations made to Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, has received a four-star ranking from Charity Navigator, America’s largest independent charity evaluator. This is the fifth consecutive time that the Alliance Foundation has earned this top distinction, Charity Navigator’s highest possible rating.

Receiving a four-star rating indicates that the Alliance Foundation adheres to sector best practices, exceeds industry standards, executes its mission in a financially efficient way and outperforms most charities in its area of work. Since 2002, using objective analysis, Charity Navigator has awarded only the most fiscally responsible organizations this rating, revealing which charities operate in accordance with industry best practices and whether they are open with their donors and stakeholders. Only 12% of the charities evaluated by Charity Navigator have received five or more consecutive four-star evaluations.

## 97 Roswell Park Physicians Named to Top Doctors List

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center celebrates the 97 physicians across 31 specialties named to Buffalo Spree magazine's Top Doctors list for 2020. The list is compiled through peer surveys of Western New York physicians.

Here are the 97 Roswell Park physicians on the list, and the categories in which they were recognized:

- Ajay Abad, MD, Medical Oncologist — Neurology
- Stacey Akers, MD, FCOG, Gynecologic Oncologist — Gynecologic Oncology
- Nikolaos Almyroudis, MD, Internal Medicine/Infectious Disease Expert — Infectious Disease
- Steven Ambrusko, MD, MS, Pediatric Oncologist and Director of Sickle Cell and Hemoglobinopathy services with the Roswell Park Oishei Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Program — Pediatric Hematology and Oncology
- Hassan Arshad, MD, FACS, Head/Neck Oncologic Surgeon — Otolaryngology
- Andrew Bain, MD, Interventional Endoscopist, Chief of Endoscopy — Gastroenterology
- Barbara Bambach, MD, Pediatric Oncologist with the Roswell Park Oishei Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Program — Pediatric Hematology and Oncology
- Matthew Barth, MD, Pediatric Oncologist with the Roswell Park Oishei Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Program — Pediatric Hematology and Oncology
- Christopher Battaglia, MD, Medical Director of the Intermediate Care Unit — Critical Care Medicine
- Michael Bax, MD, Dermatologic Oncologist — Dermatology
- Ermelinda Bonaccio, MD, Chair of Diagnostic Radiology — Diagnostic Radiology; Radiology
- Kimberly Brady, MD, Dermatologic Oncologist — Dermatology
- Helen Cappuccino, MD, FACS, Breast Surgeon — Breast Surgery
- Amy Allen Case, MD, FAAHPM, Lee Foundation Endowed Chair of the Department of Palliative and Supportive Care and Chief of the Palliative Care Program — Hospice and Palliative Medicine
- Oscar Colegio, MD, PhD, Chair of Dermatology — Dermatology
- Oscar de Leon-Casasola, MD, Chief of Pain Medicine — Pain Medicine
- Todd Demmy, MD, FACS, Thoracic Surgeon — Thoracic Surgery
- Elisabeth Dexter, MD, FACS, FCCP, Thoracic Surgeon — Thoracic Surgery
- Ananda Dharshan, MD, FACP, Associate Director, Intensive Care Unit — Critical Care Medicine
- Grace Dy, MD, Chief of Thoracic Oncology — Oncology
- Amy Early MD, FACP, Medical Oncologist — Oncology
- Stephen Edge, MD, FACS, FASCO, Surgical Oncologist and Vice President for Healthcare Outcomes and Policy — Breast Surgery
- Marc Ernstoff, MD, FACP, Medical Oncologist and Katherine Anne Gioia Chair of Medicine — Oncology
- Andrew Fabiano, MD, FAANS, Director, Spinal Oncology Center — Neurosurgery
- Julia Faller, DO, MS, Medical Director of Perioperative Services — Anesthesiology
- Robert Fenstermaker, MD, Chair of Neurosurgery and Director of Neuro-Oncology — Neurosurgery
- Peter Frederick, MD, FCOG, Gynecologic Oncologist and Director of Minimally Invasive Surgery in Gynecologic Oncology — Gynecologic Oncology
- Simon Fung-Kee-Fung, MD, Radiation Oncologist — Radiation Oncology

- Saby George, MD, FACP, Urologic Medical Oncologist — Oncology
- Elizabeth Griffiths, MD, Medical Oncologist and Director, Myelodysplastic Syndrome Program — Hematology
- Vishal Gupta, MD, Head/Neck Oncologic Surgeon — Otolaryngology
- Khurshid Guru, MD, Chair of Urology and Director of Robotic Surgery — Urology
- Eric Hansen, MD, Staff Physician, Supportive and Palliative Care — Hospice and Palliative Medicine
- Mark Hennon, MD, FACS, Thoracic Surgeon and Director, Thoracic Surgery Training Program — Thoracic Surgery
- Francisco Hernandez-Ilizaliturri, MD, Medical Oncologist and Chief of Lymphoma — Hematology
- Wesley Hicks Jr., MD, FACS, Chair of Head & Neck/Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery — Otolaryngology
- Steven Hochwald, MD, FACS, Surgical Oncologist, Chief of Gastrointestinal Surgery — Colon and Rectal Surgery; General Surgery
- Frederick Hong, MD, Medical Oncologist/Hematologist with Roswell Park Care Network — Hematology
- Renuka Iyer, MD, Medical Oncologist, Section Chief for Gastrointestinal Medicine and Co-Director of the Liver and Pancreas Tumor Center — Oncology
- John Kane III, MD, FACS, Chair of Surgical Oncology and Chief of the Melanoma/Sarcoma Service — General Surgery
- Eric Kauffman, MD, Urologist — Urology
- Kara Kelly, MD, Waldemar J. Kaminski Endowed Chair of Pediatrics at Roswell Park and Chair of the Roswell Park Oishei Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Program — Pediatric Hematology and Oncology
- Adam Kotowski, MD, Medical Oncologist/Hematologist with Roswell Park Care Network — Hematology
- Michael Krabak, MD, PhD, Medical Oncologist/Hematologist with Roswell Park Care Network — Hematology
- Joseph Kuechle, MD, PhD, Orthopedic Oncologist — Orthopedic Surgery
- Michael Kuettel, MD, PhD, MBA, Barbara C. & George H. Hyde Chair in Radiation Medicine — Radiation Oncology
- Moshim Kukar, MD, Surgical Oncologist (gastrointestinal and endocrine surgery) — General Surgery
- Dominick Lamonica, MD, Director of Nuclear Medicine — Nuclear Medicine
- Shashikant Lele, MD, FCOG, Clinical Chief of Gynecologic Oncology — Gynecologic Oncology
- Bethany Lema, MD, Dermatologist — Dermatology
- Mark Lema, MD, PhD, Chair of Anesthesiology, Preoperative Medicine and Pain Medicine — Anesthesiology
- Ellis Levine, MD, Medical Oncologist and Chief of Breast Medicine — Oncology
- Robert Lohman, MD, Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon — Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
- Martin Mahoney, MD, PhD, Staff Physician and Medical Director of both the Employee Health Clinic and New York State Smokers' Quitline — Family Medicine
- Silpa Mandava, MD, Hospitalist Physician — Internal Medicine
- Gary Mann, MD, FACS, Surgical Oncologist — Colon and Rectal Surgery
- Philip McCarthy, MD, Medical Oncologist and Director, Transplant and Cellular Therapy Center — Hematology; Oncology

- Ryan McSpadden, MD, Surgical Oncologist – Otolaryngology
- Laszlo Mechtler, MD, FAAN, FASN, Medical Oncologist and Chief of Neuro-Oncology – Neurology
- James Mohler, MD, Urologist and Senior Vice President for Translational Research – Urology
- Wong Moon, MD, FACS, Plastic/Reconstructive Surgeon – Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
- Steven Nurkin, MD, MS, FACS, Surgical Oncologist – Colon and Rectal Surgery
- Chumy Nwogu, MD, PhD, FACS, Thoracic Surgeon – Thoracic Surgery
- Tracey O’Connor, MD, Breast Medical Oncologist – Oncology
- Kathleen O’Leary, MD, Chief of Surgical Anesthesia – Anesthesiology
- Kunle Odunsi, MD, PhD, FRCOG, FACOG, Deputy Director, Chair of Gynecologic Oncology and Executive Director, Center for Immunotherapy – Gynecologic Oncology
- Can Ozturk, MD, Plastic/Reconstructive Surgeon – Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
- Cemile Nurdan Ozturk, MD, Plastic/Reconstructive Surgeon – Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery
- Gyorgy Paragh, MD, PhD, Dermatologic Oncologist – Dermatology
- Michael Petroziello, MD Interventional Radiologist – Diagnostic Radiology
- Anthony Picone, MD, PhD, MBA, FACP, FACS, Thoracic Surgeon – Thoracic Surgery
- Robert Plunkett, MD, Neurosurgeon – Neurosurgery
- Mariola Poss, MD, FACS, Surgical Oncologist with Roswell Park Care Network – Breast Surgery
- Dheerendra Prasad, MD, MCh, FACRO, Director, Gamma Knife Center, and Medical Director, Radiation Medicine – Radiation Oncology
- Samuel Puvendran, MD, Anesthesiologist – Critical Care Medicine
- Igor Puzanov, MD, MSCI, FACP, Chief of Melanoma and Director, Early Phase Clinical Trials Program – Oncology
- Timothy Quinn, MD, Co-Director, Intensive Care Unit – Anesthesiology; Critical Care Medicine
- Kevin Robillard, MD, Gastrointestinal Endoscopist – Gastroenterology
- Charles Roche, MD, Diagnostic Radiologist, Body Imaging – Diagnostic Radiology; Radiology
- Denise Rokitka, MD, MPH, Pediatric Oncologist with the Roswell Park Oishei Children’s Cancer and Blood Disorders Program and Director of the Pediatric, Adolescent Cancer Survivorship; Young Adult; and Oncofertility programs at Roswell Park – Pediatric Hematology and Oncology
- Ilene Rothman, MD, Dermatologist – Dermatology; Pediatric Dermatology
- Thomas Schwaab, MD, Urologist and Chief of Strategy, Outreach and Business Development – Urology
- Brahm Segal, MD, Chief of Infectious Diseases and Chair of Internal Medicine – Infectious Disease
- Rajeev Sharma, MD, MBBS, FACE, Endocrinologist – Endocrinology, Diabetes and Metabolism
- Anurag Singh, MD, Radiation Oncologist and Director, Radiation Research – Radiation Oncology
- Edward Spangenthal, MD, Clinical Chief of Cardiology – Cardiology
- Raymond Sroka, MD, PharmD, Director, Anesthesia Perioperative Evaluation – Anesthesiology
- Kazuaki Takabe, MD, PhD, FACS, Surgical Oncologist, Chief of Breast Surgery and Alfiero Foundation Endowed Chair in Breast Oncology – Breast Surgery
- Carin Tauriello, MD, Anesthesiologist – Anesthesiology
- Garin Tomaszewski, MD, Interventional Radiologist – Interventional Radiology
- Clare Twist, MD, Pediatric Oncologist with the Roswell Park Oishei Children’s Cancer and Blood Disorders Program and Director of Pediatric Experimental Therapeutics, Roswell Park – Pediatric Hematology and Oncology

- Michelle Walter, DO, Staff Physician, Supportive and Palliative Care — Hospice and Palliative Medicine
- Kimberly Wooten, MD, Head/Neck Oncologic Surgeon — Otolaryngology
- Anthony Yarussi, MD, Associate Chief of Surgical Anesthesia — Anesthesiology
- Sai Yendamuri, MD, FACS, Chief of Thoracic Surgery — Thoracic Surgery
- Jessica Young, MD, Breast Surgical Oncologist — Breast Surgery
- Emese Zsiros, MD, PhD, FACOG, Gynecologic Oncologist — Gynecologic Oncology

### **Roswell Park Earns Distinction for Cellular Immunotherapy Through BlueCross BlueShield**

As Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center continues to utilize the latest immunotherapies that spell hope for so many of our patients, BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York has recognized us as a Blue Distinction Center for Cellular Immunotherapy — CAR-T (chimeric antigen receptor). The center is one of two to receive this distinction in New York State. BlueCross BlueShield defines Blue Distinction Centers as centers committed to bettering patient safety and health outcomes. For the CAR-T designation, hospitals must be certified by a U.S. Food and Drug Administration program to provide such therapies and commit to system-wide monitoring of patient outcomes.

In 2018, Roswell Park received approval to offer two FDA-approved CAR-T therapies, Yescarta® (axicabtagene ciloleucel) and Kymriah® (tisagenlecleucel). These cellular therapies are designed to help a patient’s immune system fight specific types of leukemia and lymphoma. The treatment process starts with collecting a patient’s T-cells from the blood, then genetically modifying those cells to include a new gene that helps strengthen their ability to find and kill cancer cells.

### **Multidisciplinary, Patient-Centered Care Earns Roswell Park Renewed Commission on Cancer Designation**

Providing another view into the center’s high standards of care, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center has earned full accreditation from the Commission on Cancer (CoC), a quality program of the American College of Surgeons. The hospital has been reaccredited for three years.

The Commission on Cancer gives recognition to cancer centers that provide multidisciplinary, patient-centered cancer care. Hospitals are also required to maintain registries through the National Cancer Database, which looks at types of cancer and patient outcomes.

Roswell Park has maintained CoC accreditation since 1931, making it one of the longest-accredited programs. Reviewers noted the center’s expansion of comprehensive services and growth in patient volumes and clinical trial participation, commending the center for “delivering high quality care to all cancer survivors” and expanding services to fit all patient populations.

### **Optum® Designates Roswell Park as a Cancer Center of Excellence**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center announced its designation as an Optum® Cancer Center of Excellence (COE) for our pediatric and adult populations. Optum and its Clinical Sciences Institute — a group of more than 100 practicing clinicians from across the country — develops the COE networks through a rigorous evaluation process. An industry leader in health and wellness, the company has provided evaluations for over two decades.

Roswell Park is one of 37 Cancer Centers of Excellence, and the only such designated center in Western and Upstate New York. COE’s are vetted annually to ensure they meet quality thresholds such as



involvement in clinical research, quality of patient support and outcomes as well as patient satisfaction survey results. Optum has consistently recognized Roswell Park and its quality of care for years.

### **Roswell Park Head and Neck Cancer Chair Honored With Distinguished Alumnus Award**

Recognized for his contributions to patient care, Roswell Park's Wesley Hicks Jr., MD, FACS, has earned a Distinguished Alumnus Award from Weill Cornell Medical Center. Chair of the Department of Head and Neck/Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Dr. Hicks is only the third alumnus to receive this award from Weill Cornell. In awarding this distinction to Dr. Hicks, the school highlighted his leadership, dedication to education and impactful research. His research focuses include tissue engineering, wound healing and the mechanisms involved in wound repair. Dr. Hicks, who has co-authored more than 200 journal publications, has been on staff at Roswell Park since 1991, serving as Chair of his department since 2011.

Dr. Hicks earned his medical degree from the University at Buffalo Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. He completed residencies at Manhattan Eye, Ear & Throat Hospital, The New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center (now New York-Presbyterian Hospital) and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

### **Roswell Park's Marketing/Creative Services Team Wins Awards for Video Production and Storytelling**

Roswell Park's Marketing/Creative Services team received prestigious national and international awards for several videos that were conceptualized and produced in-house. "*500+ A Journey of a Lifetime*" received a platinum award in the documentary category and a gold award in the cinematography category from the Muse Creative Awards. "Dear Cancer..." was a silver award winner from the same organization, as was "*ESR Song of the Open Road.*" Silver Telly Awards were given for "Dear Cancer..." in writing, editing and people's choice categories. That video also won a Gold Hermes Award, along with a platinum award for "ESR Song of the Open Road" and an honorable mention for "Roswell Park 120 Anniversary."

### **Department of Social Work Transitions to Department of Supportive and Palliative Care**

The Division of Social Work was transformed into the Department of Supportive and Palliative Care, under the leadership of Department Chair Amy Case, MD, FAAHPM. Dr. Case has a passion for supporting the psychosocial and mental well-being of patients and their families. In addition, Brian Braun, MSW, LCSW, has been appointed Interim Director of Social Work. Brian is an outstanding social worker and strong advocate for doing what is right for our patients and families. He has a longstanding history of leadership and loyalty to Roswell Park, having begun his journey with us nearly 20 years ago.

### **New Employee Podcast Launched**

Roswell Park launched a new employee podcast designed to discuss a variety of topics, from organizational news to staff member features, current industry topics and little-known information about the cancer center.

### **Roswell Park's Dr. Michael Kuettel Named to National Healthcare Advisory Panel**

The longtime leader of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center's radiation medicine program became the latest official from the Buffalo cancer center to be named to a national healthcare advisory board. Michael Kuettel, MD, MBA, PhD, FASTRO, has been appointed to the Advisory Panel on Hospital Outpatient Payment, which provides expert guidance to the secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the administrator of the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) on issues affecting outpatient medical care.

## **Roswell Park Workforce Swells to Record Level With Latest Slate of Hires and Promotions**

The team at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center has reached record levels, growing to a workforce of more than 3,500. Appointments announced by Roswell Park President and CEO Candace S. Johnson, PhD, and her senior leadership team mark a milestone that reflects expansion across all areas of operations, from clinical care and education to new frontiers in cancer research.

Craig Hendler, MD, promoted to Vice Chair, Radiology

Thomas Laudico, DO, promoted to Director of Body CT and Ultrasound Director of Education

Charles Roche, MD, promoted to Director of Quality, Safety and Research

Marie Quinn, MD, promoted to Director of Breast Imaging

Benjamin McGreevy, MD, promoted to Director of Body MRI

Cathrine Casacci, MSN, BSN, RN, promoted to Executive Director, Inpatient Care Services

Jatinder Singh, MS, promoted to Director, Clinical Performance Management

Paul Bogner, MD, promoted to Director of Surgical Pathology

Shilpa Vyas, MD, Staff Physician, Radiation Medicine (Oneida)

Prabhakara Somayaji, MD, Staff Physician (Niagara Falls)

Nirmala Tasgaonkar, BDS, MDS, FDSRCS(Ed), MSNDRCS(Ed), MS, MBA, DABSCD, Dentist

Meghan Dobson, Esq., Associate General Counsel

Elizabeth Bouchard, PhD, promoted to Associate Director for Community Outreach and Engagement

Laura Mango, MD, promoted to Medical Director of the Assessment and Treatment Center (ATC)

Paul DeJac, MD, promoted to Chief of Hospitalist Medicine

Errol Douglas, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, promoted to Sr. VP/Chief Human Resources Officer

Sandra Gollnick, PhD, promoted to Chair of the Appointment and Promotions Committee, and Director of Faculty Development

Andrew Goey, PharmD, PhD, Assistant Professor of Oncology, Pharmacology and Therapeutics  
Assistant Member, Pharmacology and Therapeutics

Richard Gong, MD, Assistant Professor of Oncology, Diagnostic Radiology and Staff Physician,  
Diagnostic Imaging

Karen J. Kim Yeary, PhD, Professor of Oncology, Cancer Prevention and Control Member, Epidemiology  
and Prevention

Lindsay Lipinski, MD, FAANS, Assistant Professor of Oncology, Department of Neurosurgery

Devi Jeyachandran, MD, Assistant Professor of Oncology, Pathology and Staff Physician, Pathology

Refky Nicola, MS, DO, Assistant Professor of Oncology and Staff Physician, Diagnostic Radiology

Amanda Quisenberry, PhD, Assistant Professor of Oncology

Assistant Member, Epidemiology and Prevention

**Lijian Cai, PharmD, Executive Director, Pharmacy**

Thaer Khoury, MD, promoted to Chief of Breast Pathology

Joseph Toni, Director of Practice Administration

**Brian Braun, MSW, LCSW, promoted to Interim Director of Social Work**

Amy Case, MD, FAAHPM, promoted to Chair, Supportive and Palliative Care

Rob Reed, promoted to Director of Performance Improvement

Anthony Polito, MSN, RN, NE-BC, Executive Director of Perioperative Services

Debora Alessi, Senior Director of Materials Management

Gissou Azabdaftari, MD, promoted to Director of Pathology Network Shared Resource

Laurie Smith, Vice President of Clinical Research Services

Timothy Quinn, MD, promoted to Chief of Critical Care

Paul Bogner, MD, promoted to Director of Surgical Pathology

## Clinical and Scientific Achievements

### **On Solidarity Trip to Israel, Gov. Cuomo Announces Establishment of Joint Program Uniting U.S. and Israeli Cancer Experts in Effort to Research and Develop New Cancer Therapies and Precision Diagnostic Tools**

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo announced in July that Roswell Park has forged agreements with both Maccabi Healthcare Services (Tel Aviv, Israel) and the Tauber Bioinformatic Center at the University of Haifa (Haifa, Israel) with the intention to establish joint programs for discovery, development and clinical implementation of innovative anti-cancer drugs and cancer diagnostic methods. Gov. Cuomo made the announcement during a solidarity trip to Israel.

The collaboration with Maccabi Healthcare, one of the largest health maintenance organizations in the world, serving more than two million patients, will center around bringing emerging therapies in development at Roswell Park to patients at Maccabi through clinical research studies. Initial studies are expected to incorporate immunotherapies, targeted therapies and treatment vaccines for diseases including leukemia and lung, ovarian and brain cancers as well as strategies for improving radiation therapy and addressing age-associated immunological disorders. Roswell Park's work with the Tauber Center at Haifa University will expand an existing research relationship between two centers that have been pioneers in the area of science focused on "intrinsic viruses" within human DNA. These efforts, which will also incorporate contributions from the University of Rochester, are aimed at developing next-generation diagnostic, prognostic and prevention tools through advanced bioinformatics.

### **Dorothy G. Griffin Radiation Oncology Center Opened**

We officially cut the ribbon on the new Dorothy G. Griffin Radiation Oncology Center in Oneida, N.Y., in collaboration with our partners at Oneida Health. A grand opening celebration marked the next step in our expansion of the Roswell Park Care Network in that region of the state. This project was brought to completion as the result of a \$6.75 million grant to Roswell Park from the New York State Department of Health to expand oncology services in that region. The investment was further supported by regional donors who have contributed over \$2.3 million to the project over the past few years, including a \$1 million gift from the Dorothy G. Griffin Charitable Foundation.

Our shared vision with Oneida Health offers patients state-of-the-art equipment and clinical and technical expertise that only a National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer center such as Roswell Park can provide. The 6,000 square-foot center features four exam rooms, a consultation room, a CT scanner, a Truebeam linear accelerator for radiation therapy and required support facilities, with clinical and quality management provided by Roswell Park radiation oncologist and medical director for the facility [Shilpa Vyas, MD](#), and a team of other Roswell Park-trained experts. The center joins an established medical oncology center operated jointly by Roswell Park and Oneida Health under the medical direction of [Mohamed el-Naghy, MD, PhD](#). We will now offer access to radiation oncology, in addition to chemotherapy infusion, clinical trials, genetic counseling, supportive care and educational services.

### **Roswell Park Hematology Oncology Southtowns Opened**

The ribbon was cut in October at Roswell Park Hematology Oncology Southtowns, located at 3041 Orchard Park Road, Orchard Park. It brings expanded services to the Southtowns practice, which was relocated from West Seneca. A survivorship seminar and grand opening ceremony marked the official opening of the new location, which will feature the following additional services:

- Gynecologic oncology
- Breast surgery
- Dermatology
- Patient and Family Resource Center
- Survivorship offerings to support patients following active treatment

[Yasar Shad, MD, FACP](#), is the Medical Director of the practice, supported by a team of 15 nurses, medical assistants and administrative staff, and by the following Roswell Park physicians with specialty training and experience: [Adam Kotowski, MD](#), [Shashikant Lele, MD, FCOG](#), [Mariola Poss, MD, FACS](#) and [Ilene Rothman, MD](#). Radiation oncology services also are available nearby at Southtowns Radiation Oncology, a Roswell Park Care Network member site operated in collaboration with Buffalo Medical Group and Catholic Health.

### **Roswell Park Care Network Unveiled**

We were excited to unveil the Roswell Park Care Network, which builds on existing partnerships to expand the reach and impact of comprehensive cancer care across Western and Central New York, and extending into nearby communities in Northwest Pennsylvania. The network improves the quality of cancer care by expanding patient access to personalized cancer care plans that are based on national cancer care guidelines, prevention programs, cancer screening, clinical trials and genomic and genetic testing.

### **Intermediate Care Unit Unveiled**

The 8th floor of our main hospital underwent an exciting transformation over the past year. Construction began in early June to relocate the Intermediate Care Unit (IMCU) adjacent to the Intensive Care Unit. The relocation of the IMCU will offer us the opportunity to improve the quality of care delivered to our patients. Centralization of critical care services on the 8th floor will allow physicians, nurses and support staff to more efficiently access the resources they need.

### **Researchers Uncover New Role for Tamoxifen in Triple-Negative Breast Cancers**

A Roswell Park team identified the first known prognostic marker for an aggressive tumor responsible for some breast cancers. One of the mechanisms that makes so-called triple-negative breast cancer (TNBC) notoriously aggressive and hard to treat is its ability to disarm proteins that suppress tumors and mutate them into tumor drivers. Seeking to better understand this process, a team from Roswell Park decided to focus not on what these TNBC tumors lack — the estrogen receptor (ER-alpha), progesterone receptor (PR), and HER2 proteins — but something they possess: an alternate estrogen receptor, ER-beta. What they found, in collaboration with an international team of researchers, and reported in a new article in *JNCI: Journal of the National Cancer Institute*, is that a widely used breast cancer drug, tamoxifen, can turn the ER-beta protein into a double agent capable of disrupting the processes that typically make TNBC tumors so devastating.

Tamoxifen, approved for treatment and prevention of ER-alpha-positive breast cancers, was previously thought not to be effective against TNBC tumors because it targets ER-alpha, one of the proteins they lack. But this new work from a team led by Gokul Das, PhD, Associate Professor of Oncology in the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics and Co-Director of the Breast Disease Site Research

Group at Roswell Park, proposes a new role for this broadly studied and well-tolerated targeted agent: targeting ER-beta.

Mutation of an important tumor suppressor, the TP53 protein (also known as p53), is known to be the major mechanism behind most triple-negative breast tumors. In TNBC with normal TP53, ER-beta binds to normal TP53, disabling its tumor-suppressing capabilities and resulting in aggressive tumor behavior. But Dr. Das and colleagues show here that in TNBC with mutated TP53, ER-beta functions as a tumor suppressor by binding to mutated TP53, preventing it from functioning as a tumor driver.

### **In-Demand Dermatopathology Expert Promoted to Director of Surgical Pathology**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center has added a new leader to its Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine with the promotion of Paul Bogner, MD, to Director of Surgical Pathology.

In the Surgical Pathology Division, Dr. Bogner will now oversee 14 subspecialty pathologists who handle more than 25,000 cases per year. Armed with subspecialized training and experience, the team of pathologists is able to carefully distinguish between the many subtypes of cancers, a behind-the-scenes service that is essential to determining a treatment plan that will lead to the best possible outcome. Sought after for his expertise as a diagnostic consultant throughout Western New York, Dr. Bogner will expand outreach to community clients in various medical specialties.

Dr. Bogner first joined the department in 2005 as an Assistant Professor of Oncology and became an Associate Professor in 2013. His dedication and commitment to cancer research and mentorship led to a position as Program Director of Roswell Park's oncologic surgical pathology fellowship just two years later. Fellows have credited him with innovations such as social media-based education and a subspecialty focus during the second half of the fellowship year.

### **Donations to Roswell Park, 11 Day Power Play Launch New Cancer Research Studies**

Generous donations set in motion five groundbreaking new research projects at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center. The promising preliminary studies received a total of \$468,848 from the Roswell Park Alliance Foundation (RPAF), the 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that raises funds and manages all donations made to Roswell Park.

Twice a year, the RPAF's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) score grant applications from Roswell Park's research community, and select the projects that will receive funding based on potential to impact how we prevent, diagnose and treat cancer.

This process was developed to help our researchers explore innovative ideas at the ground level and produce data that will make them eligible for national grants. Every \$1 of donations supporting SAC projects generates an average of \$13 in additional new research grant funding.

Funding for this spring's review also came from contributions to the 11 Day Power Play's 2018 Community Shift, where more than 1,500 hockey players took to the ice in a 250-hour fundraising hockey marathon. 11 Day Co-Founder, Executive Director and cancer survivor Amy Lesakowski sat in on the committee's peer review process.

### **Patients' Own Cells Do the Work in New Roswell Park Immunotherapy Study**

A NYSTEM-funded clinical trial underway at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center will assess a brand-new immunotherapy approach in patients with cancer of the ovaries, fallopian tubes or peritoneum that has recurred despite earlier treatment. Enabled by a major grant from New York Stem Cell Science, or NYSTEM, the clinical trial reprograms blood stem cells and T-cells as treatment of patients with ovarian cancer and takes the new approach of reprogramming a patient's own blood stem cells, or hematopoietic stem cells, to serve as a "living drug" that can generate a lasting supply of two key types of immune cells: CD4+ and CD8+ T cells.

Led by Kunle Odunsi, MD, PhD, FRCOG, FACOG, Deputy Director of the Buffalo-based cancer center and Executive Director of its Center for Immunotherapy, the study is the centerpiece of an \$11.9 million competitive grant awarded by NYSTEM in 2015. One patient has received treatment as part of this early-phase clinical trial, which plans to enroll 15 patients and initially be available only at Roswell Park.

### **Tumor Expression Pattern May Predict Recurrence in Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer**

Roswell Park physicians Grace Dy, MD, Chief of Thoracic Oncology, and Maya Khalil, MD, Chief Hematology-Oncology Fellow, led an effort to identify whether the tumor microenvironment can predict risk of disease recurrence in patients with non-metastatic lung adenocarcinoma. Dr. Khalil presented their findings at the 55th annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in Chicago.

"Higher immunogenicity in lung cancer has been linked to improved survival, and this also has been shown in other tumor types," notes Dr. Khalil, first author on the work. "However, to our knowledge, this is the first study looking at this specific subtype of lung cancer — adenocarcinoma with the EGFR mutation — and this specific group of genes involved in the immune microenvironment in an attempt to find those linked to longer disease-free interval."

The research team, which includes scientists from OmniSeq Inc., an advanced-molecular-diagnostics company formed to develop technologies originating from Roswell Park, sought to determine whether lung cancer patients' tumor immune microenvironment can predict their cancer's recurrence. Using a Cancer Genome Atlas database of 877 cases of lung adenocarcinoma, they conducted gene-expression analysis on 33 patients, finding a collection of eight genes that are prognostic for disease recurrence.

### **OPTiM Study: T-VEC Shows Improved Survival Over Cytokine Therapy in Patients With Melanoma**

Igor Puzanov, MD, Director of the Early Phase Clinical Trials Program and Chief of Melanoma at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, led research on the immunotherapy T-VEC, or talimogene laherparepvec, that was presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in Chicago. Dr. Puzanov is senior author on the study, which is the first to report the ad hoc analysis of progression-free survival (PFS) for T-VEC compared to cytokine-based immunotherapy with granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating factor, or GM-CSF, in the pivotal OPTiM randomized phase III trial (NCT identifier no. 00769704). T-VEC (brand name Imlygic) is an injectable immunotherapy designed to kill melanoma cells in the skin and lymph nodes. An oncolytic virus, it targets cancer cells without affecting normal, nonmalignant cells.

Results show that single-agent T-VEC demonstrated an improvement in progression-free survival compared to GM-CSF in the overall intent-to-treat population, in whom 12-month progression-free survival was estimated to be 14.4% for T-VEC and 4.6% for GM-CSF. The finding was driven primarily by patients with advanced, stage 3b to stage 4M1a melanoma, in whom 12-month progression-free survival was estimated to be 19.9% for T-VEC and only 3.2% for GM-CSF.

### **Phase II Trial Shows Favorable Response for Patients Receiving Combination Therapy With SurVaxM**

With their phase II study in patients with aggressive brain cancer now completed, the developers of the cancer immunotherapy SurVaxM shared research results at the 55th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), reporting that combination therapy with the vaccine was more effective than standard therapy for nearly all patients. The meeting at McCormick Place in Chicago, Illinois, is the largest clinical cancer research meeting in the world.

SurVaxM was developed at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center by Robert Fenstermaker, MD, Chair of Neurosurgery, and Michael Ciesielski, PhD, Assistant Professor of Neurosurgery. The vaccine is a new and unique cancer immunotherapy designed to stimulate a multifaceted immune response targeting survivin, a tumor-survival antigen not generally present in nonmalignant cells.

In this five-center, single-arm phase II clinical trial (NCT identifier no. 024455557), 63 patients with newly diagnosed glioblastoma (nGBM), median age 60, were followed for safety, six-month progression-free survival, 12-month overall survival and immunologic response. All patients underwent standard treatment, involving craniotomy, radiation and treatment with temozolomide both before and after surgery. Immune response was assessed by detection of a survivin-specific antibody and CD8+ T-cell levels.

The team reports that, compared to a historical analysis of patients receiving standard therapy alone, combination therapy with SurVaxM generated encouraging efficacy and immunogenicity in patients with newly diagnosed glioblastoma, with minimal toxicity or side effects. The vast majority of patients — 96.8% — did not experience disease progression within six months of treatment, and 93.5% were alive a year after diagnosis, compared to expected 65% survival based on historical comparisons.

### **Roswell Park Teams Bring Research on New Cancer Therapies and Prognostic Tools to ASCO 2019**

Several Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center teams were invited to present their latest research or to share their expertise as discussion leaders at the 55th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), from May 31 to June 4 in Chicago, Illinois. The theme of this year's gathering, the world's largest clinical cancer research meeting, was "Caring for Every Patient, Learning from Every Patient."

Roswell Park's participation included presentations of new research on treatments and prognostic strategies for colorectal cancer, brain cancer, lung cancer and multiple myeloma and speaking opportunities for Roswell Park senior leaders recognized as thought leaders in their areas of specialty.

### **Roswell Park Physician Leads Development of New Multiple Myeloma Imaging Guidelines**

Just as newer drugs have significantly improved outcomes for patients with multiple myeloma in the past decade, newer imaging techniques are upgrading detection of the disease, leading to earlier treatment. But standards to help guide clinicians on the optimal use of advanced imaging have lagged behind. Until now.

Jens Hillengass, MD, Chief of Myeloma at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, led an International Myeloma Working Group (IMWG) effort to compile new recommendations — the first in 10 years — for imaging techniques that offer more sensitive and accurate diagnosis and monitoring for patients with multiple myeloma and other plasma-cell disorders. Multiple myeloma — the second most common type of blood cancer — occurs when white blood cells known as plasma cells multiply out of control.

### **Immunotherapy-Chemo Combo Based on Work of Roswell Park's Dr. Ben Seon Gets FDA Approval**

A cancer therapy based on the work of Ben Seon, PhD, at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center has been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for patients with an aggressive form of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. On June 10, the FDA granted accelerated approval to polatuzumab vedotin as part of a new chemotherapy/immunotherapy treatment combination for patients with relapsed or refractory diffuse large B-cell lymphoma.

Polatuzumab vedotin incorporates a form of immunotherapy known as a monoclonal antibody — a manufactured protein that can bind to and kill tumor cells. Roswell Park has played a role in many other FDA-approved innovations in cancer treatment and diagnostics, including the work of Dr. T. Ming Chu in developing the PSA test for prostate cancer, Dr. Thomas Dougherty's work establishing photodynamic therapy (PDT) as a treatment option for some cancers and work by Dr. Ravindra Pandey and others to develop photosensitizers used in PDT. The approval of polatuzumab vedotin marks the first time an immunotherapy from Roswell Park has been part of an FDA-approved treatment.

### **Roswell Park Team Develops New Method of Tracking Cellular Changes Associated with Cancer**

Researchers from Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center have developed a new bioinformatics-based approach for monitoring key changes in cancer cells. They describe their work to develop this data-driven method and how it can be used to enhance and personalize cancer treatment in a recent article in the journal Nature Communications.

Cancer cells reprogram their metabolism to redirect nutrient resources in ways that support their rapid proliferation and spread to other sites in the body. Cancer drugs that target these altered metabolic pathways are largely effective, but they can also be highly toxic and difficult to tolerate, and determining how an individual will respond to these drugs has proven challenging. A better understanding of how these metabolic pathways are changed in specific cancer types could help scientists design more effective and personalized therapies.

A research team led by Dominic Smiraglia, PhD, Associate Professor of Oncology in the Department of Cancer Genetics and Genomics at Roswell Park, examined the similarities and differences in cell metabolism among 10,704 tumors representing 26 major cancer types, including breast, prostate, colon, lung, liver and skin cancer. Using transcriptomic data from the Cancer Genome Atlas, a major public database of information about genes and cancer genetics, the researchers were able to distinguish cancerous tumors from healthy tissue based on the expression patterns of genes within 114 metabolic pathways regulating various aspects of cell metabolism. Further, they identified "master metabolic transcriptional regulators" (MMTRs) controlling groups of genes within the affected metabolic pathways that could explain why these metabolic differences exist and how they are similar or different among various cancer types.

### **Roswell Park Researchers Identify Immune Biomarker of Response in Patients With Advanced Liver Cancer**

Roswell Park immunology researchers have uncovered a biomarker that may help explain why some patients respond better than others to a common chemotherapy treatment for liver cancer. They hope that their analysis of immune responses among patients receiving sorafenib can lead to more individualized treatment options and better overall outcomes for patients diagnosed with the disease.



The four-year study, led by Department of Immunology scientist Yasmin Thanavala, PhD, was published online in JCI Insight, a peer-reviewed journal published by the American Society for Clinical Investigation, and also to be highlighted in the journal's JCI This Month digest for September 2019.

Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), which can arise from liver cirrhosis, is the most common form of liver cancer. The mainstay oral chemotherapy treatment for patients with advanced HCC is sorafenib — but side effects from this drug may cause many patients to miss doses or discontinue treatment.

The researchers, who included Renuka Iyer, MD, Section Chief for Gastrointestinal Oncology at Roswell Park, collected blood samples from 30 patients both before treatment and at two timepoints during treatment with sorafenib. They observed elevated levels of a subset of CD8+ cytotoxic T-cells (CD8+ Ki67+ T cells producing IFN $\gamma$ ) producing interferon type II, an important immune protein that destroys tumor cells and significantly reduces risk of death over time. Similarly, CD8+ cells showed an increase in granzyme B, an important enzyme that helps drive cell death.

### **Roswell Park Secures More Than \$15.4 Million in New Funding for Cancer Research**

Roswell Park researchers have received more than a dozen recent grant awards totaling more than \$15.4 million. These competitive awards from both government agencies and private funders will fuel research to overcome obstacles in treating diseases like prostate, breast, colon and lung cancer, as well as less-common cancers like multiple myeloma and esophageal cancer. They include the first National Institutes of Health funding to study a new electronic tobacco device, plus new state funds from Empire State Development supporting Roswell Park's role in the National Cancer Institute's Cancer Moonshot initiative.

"The announcement...of more than \$15 million in grants and awards to Roswell Park, including from the National Cancer Institute and National Institutes of Health, will help the cancer center continue the effort to make critical advancements in our understanding of the disease and develop new treatments to alleviate suffering and improve life quality," says Rep. Brian Higgins.

### **Roswell Park Team Develops New DNA-Mapping Tool**

A scientist at Roswell Park has developed the first dedicated tool for analyzing a DNA-mapping technology known as ATAC-seq, a technique that identifies the gene "switches" responsible for cancer development and progression. Developed in collaboration with the University at Buffalo, the innovative computational method, named HMMRATAC, could vastly improve current methods of cancer detection and treatment.

Each cell in the human body must pack more than six feet of DNA into a microscopic space only a few microns wide. To accomplish this enormous task, DNA is precisely arranged and tightly compacted into a structure called chromatin. This dense packaging system segregates DNA into areas that are tucked away and inaccessible and areas that are open and accessible to the cellular machinery that reads and translates genetic information. Although only a small fraction of the genome is exposed at a given point in time, these biologically active regions of DNA perform the essential function of transcription, the first step in protein synthesis.

### **Taking Baby Aspirin Improves Overall Survival for Patients With Head and Neck, Lung Cancer**

In companion presentations at the American Society for Therapeutic Radiation Oncology (ASTRO) Annual Meeting in Chicago, doctors from Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center report new

evidence that low-dose aspirin and other anti-inflammatories may improve survival in patients undergoing treatment for some head, neck and lung cancers.

The retrospective analyses are among the first to suggest a benefit in overall survival for patients with either head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC) or early-stage non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) who received non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) — most commonly, low-dose aspirin — alongside standard radiation therapy or chemoradiation therapy.

NSAIDs, which have anti-inflammatory and anti-platelet properties that help decrease the risk of cardiovascular events, are often prescribed to reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. Both research efforts were led by Anurag Singh, MD, Professor of Oncology and Director of Radiation Research in Roswell Park's Department of Radiation Medicine.

### **Roswell Park's Dr. Alan Hutson Named Chair of International Big-Data Task Force**

Alan Hutson, PhD, MA, Chair and Professor of Oncology within the Department of Biostatistics and Bioinformatics at Roswell Park, was named to a four-year term as Chair of the Society for Immunotherapy of Cancer (SITC) Data Sharing and Big Data Task Force.

The Task Force works to address hurdles related to the handling, accessibility and use of large data sets toward the goal of advancing development of immune-based therapies for cancer. Dr. Hutson has served as Chair of Biostatistics and Bioinformatics at Roswell Park since 2005. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in statistics from the University at Buffalo, and an additional master's degree and doctorate in statistics from the University of Rochester.

### **First Pediatric Bone Marrow Transplant for Sickle Cell Patient Performed by Roswell Park Oishei Children's Joint Program Team**

The clinical team from the Roswell Park Oishei Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Program has successfully performed the region's first pediatric bone marrow transplant for 19-year-old sickle cell patient Kayla Rushing, effectively curing her of the inherited blood disease.

The successful transplant, made possible through a joint program with Oishei Children's Hospital and Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, offers hope and more accessible treatment options for those suffering from the disease in Western New York and the surrounding regions.

### **Algorithm Reduces Need for Therapy in Children With Intermediate-Risk Neuroblastoma**

A Children's Oncology Group (COG) study identified a treatment algorithm that can help reduce therapy for some neuroblastoma patients with intermediate-risk disease, while maintaining good clinical outcomes. The study's findings are particularly significant because they suggest that many infants and young children with this disease may be spared unpleasant or lingering side effects of prolonged therapy, says lead researcher Clare Twist, MD, of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center.

The results of the study, which follows in the footsteps of previous risk-based clinical trials that led to substantial improvement for children with neuroblastoma, were published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*. Neuroblastoma is the most common extra-cranial malignant solid tumor of childhood. It primarily affects infants and children up to age 5 but can occur in older children and young adults. The disease is classified as high-risk or non-high-risk based on the patient's age at diagnosis, the extent of the disease and particular genetic features of the tumor cells. Treatment of high-risk neuroblastoma involves very intensive therapy, but for patients with non-high-risk neuroblastoma, recent clinical trials

have shown that therapy can often be reduced due to the generally excellent prognoses for these patients.

The prospective phase III study (ClinicalTrials.gov identifier NCT00499616) enrolled 404 children in three groups across North America with intermediate-risk neuroblastoma. The researchers developed and then tested an algorithm based on tumor biology and anticipated response to treatment, and designed to reduce therapy for patients without compromising overall survival rates. They focused on patients whose disease was determined to have favorable clinical and biologic features.

### **Stars of Cancer Research Align to Develop Ovarian Cancer Detection Test**

The vast majority of ovarian cancers, about 70%, don't become apparent until they are advanced, making the chance of successful treatment to control these tumors quite slim. Four top teams of ovarian cancer researchers are uniting efforts in an unprecedented collaboration aimed at enabling early detection and perhaps prevention of many ovarian cancers. Funded by a developmental grant from the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), the initiative will bring together researchers from both government and academic centers to apply emerging technologies to this pressing challenge to discover biomarkers for early detection of ovarian cancer.

The initiative, known as the DoD and SPORE Ovarian Cancer Omics Consortium, or DSOCOC, hinges on recent discoveries about the origins of ovarian cancers and on omics, an umbrella term for new sequencing-based approaches that enable the deep characterization of various types of molecules that play important roles in human biology.

### **Roswell Park Takes in New Research Funding Totaling Nearly \$22 Million**

Roswell Park received more than \$21.8 million in competitive grants and contracts to launch new investigations or continue major research efforts that have shown promise. This includes funding from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) Cancer Moonshot program as well as multimillion-dollar renewals for high-impact projects based at Roswell Park.

"Access to federal research dollars is highly competitive," says Rep. Brian Higgins. "Continued significant investment in the work happening right here at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center speaks to the confidence placed in Roswell's incredible research team. With each research project we take steps forward in the discovery of methods to prevent and treat cancer, and Western New York is proud to have Roswell Park leading the way."

### **Roswell Park Spinoff Company Advances Toward New Clinical Trial for Brain Cancer Immunotherapy SurVaxM**

The inventors of a new and unique cancer immunotherapy developed at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center have announced a major step forward with that therapy, known as SurVaxM. MimiVax LLC principals Robert Fenstermaker, MD, and Michael Ciesielski, PhD, have announced that the company, spun off from Roswell Park in 2012, has entered into a China-exclusive licensing agreement for SurVaxM with Shanghai Fosun Pharmaceutical (Group) Co. Ltd., based in Shanghai, China.

Under the terms of the agreement, Fosun Pharma and MimiVax will work to develop and commercialize SurVaxM for patients in the U.S. and specified territories in China. A \$10 million upfront payment made to MimiVax will enable and partially fund the upcoming pivotal clinical trials in both the U.S. and China. MimiVax is eligible to receive an additional \$28 million in developmental milestones and \$110 million in sales milestones.

SurVaxM, which MimiVax is developing based on technology licensed from Roswell Park, is an immunotherapy designed to stimulate the immune system to kill tumor cells that contain survivin, a protein that helps cancer cells to resist conventional treatments. The drug, which is manufactured in the United States, has been studied most extensively in patients with glioblastoma, an aggressive and hard-to-treat brain cancer, but the drug's target, survivin, is also present in many other types of cancer, including multiple myeloma, neuroendocrine, medulloblastoma, melanoma, kidney and breast tumors.

Based upon positive results from initial phase I and phase II studies, the team expects to advance to large, multicenter randomized phase II trials in the coming year both in China and in the U.S. A single-arm phase II study in 63 patients with newly diagnosed glioblastoma last year demonstrated significantly longer survival time for patients treated with SurVaxM, with 93.5% alive a year after diagnosis, compared to expected 65% survival based on historical studies.

### **Roswell Park Team Identifies New Tumor Suppressor Protein in Prostate Cancer**

A research team led by a scientist at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center has identified the molecule LRIG1 as an important endogenous tumor suppressor in prostate cancer. Writing in the journal *Nature Communications*, the team documents their findings from preclinical studies showing that overexpression of the LRIG1 protein inhibits prostate cancer development, while reducing naturally occurring LRIG1 promotes prostate tumor development.

Dean Tang, PhD, Professor and Chair of Pharmacology and Therapeutics at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, is the senior author of the study, whose findings, he says, have compelled researchers to look at how best to incorporate LRIG1, a protein naturally expressed in patient tumor cells, into treatment for prostate cancer patients.

### **Patients Access to Clinical Trials May Drive Differences in Outcome Among Childhood Hodgkin Lymphoma**

Research led by a pediatric oncologist at Roswell Park has confirmed what several earlier studies showed: that overall survival is significantly lower for non-white children and adolescents with Hodgkin lymphoma than for Caucasian patients with the same disease. The team set out to explain this long-known but little-understood disparity, reporting their findings in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

Kara Kelly, MD, the Waldemar J. Kaminski Endowed Chair of Pediatrics at Roswell Park and Chair of the Roswell Park Oishei Children's Cancer and Blood Disorders Program, was a senior advisor on the study, which updates earlier findings reported in 2017 at the American Society of Hematology Annual Meeting.

### **Roswell Park Deputy Director Elected to Lead AACR Immunology Working Group**

Chosen for his passion and leadership in immunotherapy research, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center Deputy Director Kunle Odunsi, MD, PhD, FRCOG, FACOG, was elected as the Cancer Immunology Working Group (CIMM) Chairperson-Elect for 2020-2021. CIMM is a scientific working group within the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR).

The CIMM works to promote the importance of immunology as it pertains to cancer research, spread information about cancer immunology to the scientific community and translate worthwhile concepts to clinic. Dr. Odunsi's goals for his tenure as Chairperson-Elect include making new alliances to pursue strategic objectives in immunology and encouraging the training and mentoring of the next generation of investigators.

### **Antioxidant Use During Chemotherapy Risky for Breast Cancer Patients**

Breast cancer patients who take dietary supplements known as antioxidants, as well as iron, vitamin B12 and omega-3 fatty acids, during chemotherapy may be at increased risk of disease recurrence and death, according to study results appearing in the Journal of Clinical Oncology.

Led by researchers at the SWOG Cancer Research Network, a cancer clinical trials network funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) through the National Institutes of Health, the study confirms previous medical guidance advising cautious use of any supplements, other than a multivitamin, for cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.

A small but growing body of research in the last 20 years shows that, despite their cancer-fighting reputation, antioxidants such as vitamin E, beta-carotene and selenium can actually increase risk of some cancers, cause some cancers to return after treatment, or interfere with the effects of chemotherapy. As part of the nation's oldest and largest publicly-funded cancer research network, SWOG has conducted some of this work. Its landmark Selenium and Vitamin E Cancer Prevention Trial (SELECT) showed that vitamin E supplementation increases the risk of prostate cancer in healthy men.

What's unique about the new study, led by Christine B. Ambrosone, PhD, of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, is that it is the first investigation of the effects of supplement use during breast cancer treatment and only the second to investigate the effects of supplement use during any kind of cancer treatment. The first was conducted by Charles Fuchs, MD, MPH, the director of Yale Cancer Center, who found that vitamin C may be helpful for people undergoing chemotherapy treatment for colorectal cancer.

### **Donations to Roswell Park Launch Eight New Cancer Research Studies**

Generous donations have set in motion eight groundbreaking new research projects at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center. The promising preliminary studies received a total of \$772,330 from the Roswell Park Alliance Foundation, the 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that raises funds and manages all donations made to Roswell Park.

Twice a year, Roswell Park's Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) announces a call for grant applications from Roswell Park's research community. Researchers submit their project proposals to the committee, consisting of an internal, objective group of scientists. The committee members then score the applications and select the projects that will receive funding based on potential to impact how we prevent, diagnose and treat cancer.

This process was developed to help Roswell Park's researchers explore innovative ideas at the ground level and produce data that could make them eligible for national grants. On average, every \$1 donated to the Roswell Park Alliance Foundation supporting research generates an average of \$13 in additional new research grant funding from external sources.

The fall 2019 request for applications received 37 submissions. After a thorough review, these eight research studies were selected by the SAC to receive grant awards:

- Understanding and overcoming protein-driven (HNF1A) drug resistance in pancreatic cancer, which could improve effectiveness of treating pancreatic cancer and potentially reduce its lethality, led by Ethan Abel, PhD, Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology.

- Selectively targeting breast and pancreatic cancers with genetic alteration in a tumor suppressor (p53), which can lead to new combination therapies improving patient outcomes, led by Andrei Bakin, PhD, Department of Cancer Genetics and Genomics.
- Dissecting new IMPDH2-dependent mechanisms that control the invasiveness of triple-negative breast cancer, which could ultimately result in the suppression of its metastatic progression, led by Anna Bianchi-Smiraglia, PhD, Department of Cell Stress Biology.
- Targeting a metabolic enzyme in triple-negative breast cancer, which could help identify new treatment options and explain the mechanisms that promote recurrence and metastasis, led by Subhamoy Dasgupta, PhD, Department of Cell Stress Biology.
- Mobilizing the immune system to reduce the need for chemotherapy and improve outcomes in triple-negative breast cancer, led by Shipra Gandhi, MD, Department of Medicine.
- Investigating the role of breastfeeding in preventing aggressive breast cancer, led by Michael Higgins, PhD, Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology.
- Investigating racial differences in the interactions between tumor cells and immune cells in breast cancer, which may lead to the design of treatment strategies specifically for African-American women, led by Angela Omilian, PhD, Department of Cancer Prevention and Control.
- Understanding the role of protein PEPD in tumor suppressor p53's abilities and finding ways to activate the protein's capabilities, possibly leading to a novel therapeutic strategy in treating cancers, led by Yuesheng Zhang, MD, PhD, Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics.

### **Roswell Park Team Helps Explain How Chronic Stress Weakens Immunity Against Cancer**

In 2013, researchers from Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center became one of the first teams to report that chronic stress can encourage the development and proliferation of tumor cells by suppressing natural immunity against cancer. In a new study published in the *Journal of Clinical Investigation*, the same laboratory revealed an important and previously unknown means through which chronic stress weakens immunity against cancer: through its effect on a specific cell type known as the myeloid-derived suppressor cell (MDSC).

The team, led by Elizabeth Repasky, PhD, Co-Leader of the Cell Stress and Biophysical Therapies Program and the Dr. William Huebsch Professor in Immunology at Roswell Park, has identified a new immunological mechanism through which chronic stress can increase the number of MDSCs in patients' blood and tumors, which are associated with more aggressive cancer growth. Based on these findings, a team of Roswell Park researchers are working together to develop and test the impact of several stress-reducing strategies, including exercise, meditation, yoga and reiki on immune activity. Offering a variety of options is important because it helps patients find the most enjoyable and useful strategies, based on their age and physical abilities.

### **MEAL Study: Eating More Produce Will Not Cure, Stop Prostate Cancer**

National guidelines recommend that men with prostate cancer eat a vegetable-rich diet, suggesting it might decrease cancer progression and death. But in a phase III randomized clinical trial, patients with prostate cancer assigned to eat seven or more servings of vegetables and fruits daily saw no extra protection from the increased consumption of micronutrients. The data indicates that, despite

prevailing scientific and public opinion, eating more vegetables will not alter the course of prostate cancer. It will not, to the best of our knowledge, suppress or cure it. However, while eating a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables and getting more exercise may not cure cancer, it may keep the body stronger and healthier, which may help patients tolerate cancer treatments.

The Men's Eating and Living (MEAL) study, published January 14, 2020, in the Journal of the American Medical Association and led by UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center and Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center investigators, enrolled 478 men between the ages of 50 to 80 at 91 sites in the United States. The patients had been diagnosed with early-stage prostate adenocarcinoma and enrolled in an active surveillance program in which patients defer immediate treatment until the disease advances.

Patients were randomized to a control group that received written information about diet and prostate cancer or to a telephone counseling behavioral intervention program that encouraged participants to eat foods high in carotenoids, such as leafy greens, carrots and tomatoes, and cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli and cabbage. Both groups were monitored for two years.

### **Alternative Pain-Control Strategy Reduces Need for Opioids in Patients with Head and Neck Cancer**

In a study led by Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, 42% of patients who received gabapentin for pain management required no narcotics. With nearly all patients who undergo treatment for cancers of the head and neck experiencing oral mucositis, or painful mouth sores, effective pain control is one of the main goals of physicians and care teams. Looking to provide more effective relief for patients while also reducing the need for opioid painkillers, a team from Roswell Park explored whether gabapentin, a drug used to relieve nerve pain and treat seizures, could be an effective alternative to narcotics in managing treatment-related symptoms for these patients. Their results, published in the journal Cancer, show that gabapentin is an effective alternative to standard pain-control drugs and that many patients with head and neck cancers had their pain and symptoms managed without any narcotics.

Anurag K. Singh, MD, Professor of Oncology and Director of Radiation Research at Roswell Park, led the study, in which 60 patients with squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck were randomly assigned to one of two treatment arms: high-dose gabapentin (2,700 mg daily), progressing successively to hydrocodone-acetaminophen and fentanyl when needed, or to a regimen of low-dose gabapentin (900 mg daily), progressing to methadone when needed.

The researchers, who include first author Gregory Hermann, MD, MPH, a resident physician in radiation medicine at Roswell Park, report two key findings: that high-dose prophylactic gabapentin increased the percentage of patients who required no opioid during treatment — from 7% among those receiving the low-dose regimen to 42% in the high-dose arm — and that methadone may improve quality of life compared to a regimen of short-acting opioids such as hydrocodone and fentanyl, a synthetic opioid.

### **Metabolic Pathway Can Be Effectively Targeted to Treat Prostate Cancer, Roswell Park Team Shows**

A Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center research team has identified a novel combination therapy that demonstrates a new approach to treating prostate cancer, reporting their findings in the journal Nature Communications. This new therapeutic strategy is the first to target metabolic processes uniquely important to prostate cancer — specifically, two enzymes in the connected polyamine catabolic pathway and the methionine salvage pathway.

Dominic Smiraglia, PhD, Associate Professor of Oncology in the Department of Cancer Genetics and Genomics at Roswell Park, led the team that identified this new strategy for treating castration-recurrent prostate cancer, a highly aggressive and therapy-resistant form of the disease.

The new approach is a two-part strategy involving inhibition of the rate-limiting enzyme methylthioadenosine phosphorylase (MTAP) with simultaneous upregulation of spermidine/spermine N1-acetyltransferase (SSAT). The research team hit upon this strategy after observing prostate cancer's high rate of flux through the polyamine biosynthetic and catabolic pathways. The new treatment takes advantage of the prostate's innate function of generating and secreting polyamines, key components in human reproduction.

### **Roswell Park Finds New Evidence That Inhaled Vitamin E Acetate Caused EVALI in Vapers**

In August 2019, the first cases of an unknown lung injury associated with vaping products were reported to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This initial cluster of cases would quickly grow to 2,807 cases across the country, leading to the deaths of 68 people, from e-cigarette, or vaping, product use-associated lung injury, or EVALI, by February 2020. A team of researchers from Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Environmental Health Laboratory in the CDC's National Center for Environmental Health have published new evidence expanding on the initial conclusions from CDC-led analyses, that inhalation of vitamin E acetate (VEA) is strongly linked to EVALI. The team, led by Yasmin Thanavala, PhD, Professor in Roswell Park's Department of Immunology, has published these timely and important findings as a research letter in the New England Journal of Medicine (NEJM).

### **Roswell Park Team Discovers New Mechanism Driving Pancreatic Cancer**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center researchers conducting the first large-scale analysis of a gene regulatory mechanism that, when altered, can lead to cancerous growth have found compelling evidence of the role it plays in the development of pancreatic cancer. They share these new findings in an article in the journal Genome Research.

Led by Michael Feigin, PhD, Assistant Professor of Oncology in the Department of Pharmacology and Therapeutics, the team studied a largely unexplored mechanism called alternative polyadenylation that recently has been found to play a significant role in regulating the expression of genes — particularly oncogenes, or genes known to be associated with cancer — in cells. Oncogenes' impact on cells is determined by how much protein they produce. The information encoded is transcribed to form a messenger RNA molecule, or mRNA, that forms the protein when translated.

Dr. Feigin, postdoctoral fellow Dr. Swati Venkat and colleagues set out to study what happens to the encoded information that doesn't get translated, a phenomenon that, Dr. Feigin says, "remains completely unexplored in the context of pancreatic cancer and can provide understanding of how we target oncogenes that drive this debilitating disease." The length of this sequence of information at the end of a molecule, known as a 3' prime untranslated region or 3' UTR, has been shown to influence the amount of protein produced: much shorter lengths cause increased protein production, leading to cancerous growth. The team mined data from tissues from hundreds of people with pancreatic cancer as well as normal pancreas samples, searching for oncogenes that showed difference in 3' UTR lengths between cancer and normal conditions.

### **Roswell Park's Dr. Pawel Kalinski to Lead \$14.5M NCI-Funded Immunotherapy Effort**

A team led by Pawel Kalinski, MD, PhD, of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, has earned a five-year, \$14.54 million award from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) to expand a promising



immunotherapy platform. Funded through the NCI's Program Project Grant program, this prestigious grant will fund five clinical trials, all focused on a strategy for making some of the most common immunotherapies work for more cancer patients. This grant continues a long tradition of groundbreaking immunotherapy research at Roswell Park.

### **Medical Staff Town Hall Meetings Keep Clinical Team Connected**

Clinical faculty, fellows, nurse practitioners and physician assistants were invited to Medical Staff Town Hall Meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic to discuss a variety of topics relating to the disease and cancer care. Topics ranging from resilience to respiratory therapy and infection control were discussed by expert staff members from Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center. Attendees were able to answer questions of the live presenters and hear the latest in the field.

## **Community Support & Advocacy**

### **Gift From Russell J. Salvatore Allows for Lobby Reconstruction**

On August 5, crews began renovations to our hospital lobby, including the relocation of the information and valet desks to the wall across from the Gift Shop. The project was designed by the Facilities Planning Team with construction management by our Capital Projects Team and was unveiled to the public in November.

- The project was designed to make the information and valet concierge areas more visible and accessible to patients as they enter our hospital.
- The project will include the replacement of flooring in the lobby, installed in stages. Employees and patients will be asked to follow directional signage as the project progresses.
- Additional seating and furnishings will be placed in the atrium.

### **Day of Giving Raises Over \$100,000 in 24 Hours**

In just 24 hours, the Roswell Park community came together and collectively raised nearly \$100,000 for research and patient-care programs. Eight-hundred people made donations to the areas that meant the most to them, making a difference in cancer research and patient-care programs.

### **Employee Campaign Raised Nearly \$150,000 for Cancer Research and Patient-Care Programs**

The Staff Appeal raised \$149,213 in personal gifts for cutting-edge cancer research and patient-care programs at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center. Supporters wore "2019 I'm In" pins around campus.

### **Roswell Park Marketing and Development Teams Share Best Practices With Elite Cancer Professionals**

Once a year, professionals who work in various communications, marketing and fundraising roles for the nation's top cancer centers gather to share best practices, professional development and collaboration. Several Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center team members were invited to share their expertise during the just-ended joint gathering of the National Association of Cancer Center Development Officers (NACCDO) and the Public Affairs and Marketing Network (PAMN). As the 2019 joint meeting wrapped up in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, these sister organizations look ahead to the next NACCDO-PAMN meeting hosted by Roswell Park (delayed until 2021 due to COVID-19). Nine different Roswell Park team members were invited to lead sessions at this year's meeting, hosted by Stephenson Cancer Center, which is among the elite group of National Cancer Institute-designated comprehensive cancer centers to

which Roswell Park belongs. They spoke on topics ranging from “Tech Talk: Choosing the Right Digital Tools” and “Visual Story Telling with Purpose,” to a plenary session on how to “Collaborate for a Cure”:

- Daniel Cave, Online Marketing Specialist
- Karen Cincotti, Assistant Director of Web IT Operations, Department of Development
- Laurel DiBrog, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer — PAMN Treasurer
- Cindy Eller, Vice President for Development and Executive Director of the Roswell Park Alliance Foundation — NACCDO Treasurer & Chair Emeritus
- Heidi Findlay, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications — PAMN Steering Committee member
- Jennifer Hickok, Director of Corporate Partnerships
- Gretchen LaRock, Manager of Annual Giving
- Ben Richey, Executive Director of Creative and Content Technology
- Ashley Snowden, Physician Relations Liaison

### **\$1 Million Anonymous Gift Brings Roswell Park and Oneida Healthcare Closer to \$12 Million Campaign Goal**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and Oneida Healthcare announced they received a \$1 million gift from an anonymous donor to their joint capital campaign. Along with other donations, this generous philanthropic gift will assist in the completion of a three-phase project that will provide expanded access to Roswell Park’s National Cancer Institute (NCI)-level cancer care to residents of Central New York.

As the first phase of the campaign, Oneida Healthcare and Roswell Park opened a new infusion center in Madison County in fall 2017, as part of a medical oncology affiliation with Roswell Park, which includes 12 infusion suites, four clinical exam rooms, a telemedicine conference center and a consultation room. In June of 2019 the second phase, the Dorothy G. Griffin Radiation Oncology Center, was completed as a joint effort between the two healthcare providers. The final phase will be the expansion of Oneida Healthcare’s imaging services with the installation of a new state-of-the-art 3 Tesla MRI, PET/CT and a second 3D Mammography unit at the Alice M. Gorman Imaging Center. All three services will be conveniently located on the Oneida Healthcare campus.

### **NOCO’s Jim Newman Named Chair of Roswell Park Alliance Foundation**

James D. Newman has been named the new Chair of the Roswell Park Alliance Foundation. The Foundation is the 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that raises funds and manages all donations made to Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center. Newman is president and CEO of NOCO Incorporated, a family-owned energy distribution business headquartered in Tonawanda, New York. He has been a member of the board of the Roswell Park Alliance Foundation since 2014.

### **Two Nursing Open Houses Held**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center held two Nursing Open Houses, one on May 13, 2019 and the other on January 9, 2020, where prospective team members could learn about oncology nursing and hear from those who work at Roswell Park.

### **Roswell Park and Partners Launch Most Expansive Community-Based Care Network in Region**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center joined with hospitals, health systems, physicians and supportive care teams from across the state, all committed to reducing the burden of cancer, to

announce the launch of the Roswell Park Care Network. Led by Roswell Park, the network is the most expansive community cancer, supportive and specialized care affiliation in the region — spanning Western New York, Central New York and beyond — and the only one to offer patients across those locations the distinct benefits of a National Cancer Institute (NCI)-designated comprehensive cancer center.

The Roswell Park Care Network builds on existing partnerships to expand the reach and impact of comprehensive cancer care across Western and Central New York and extending into nearby communities in Northwest Pennsylvania. The network improves the reach and impact of our comprehensive cancer services through pathway care plans developed with the expertise of Roswell Park's world-renowned physicians.

### **Simply Pierogi Is Helping Kids with Cancer and Blood Disorders at Roswell Park — One Pierogi at a Time**

Simply Pierogi, a new segment of Chrusciki Bakery — a family-owned business that has been a part of the Buffalo community for over 30 years— launched a three-year partnership with Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center to benefit the Courage of Carly Fund. After holding a special taste-testing session with Courage of Carly members and their families, Simply Pierogi was excited to announce that their popular potato onion flavor was the pierogi of choice to drive the partnership. Later, Simply Pierogi made a special visit to Roswell Park to provide samples of the pierogi to young patients at the cancer center. In the first year of the partnership, 15% of potato onion pierogi sales at retailers and restaurants will be donated back to the Courage of Carly Fund. Courage of Carly Fund will direct this funding toward pediatric cancer research and year-round programming for young Roswell Park patients with cancer and blood disorders.

### **Western New York Community Comes Together for 24th Annual Ride For Roswell**

*Event's largest turnout since 2015 leads to record-breaking fundraising for cancer research and patient care at Roswell Park*

The Ride For Roswell presented by the West Herr Automotive Group welcomed 7,940 riders and 2,200 volunteers in 2019, the event's largest turnout since 2015. After an emotional Celebration of Hope event on Friday night, celebrating patients and survivors while remembering those we've lost, riders embarked on 10 different routes from start lines at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and the University at Buffalo. Participants of all ages pedaled across 14 different municipalities in Western New York and Southern Ontario, through country roads and city streets, while raising critical funds for cancer research and the fight to end cancer.

### **Roswell Park Researcher Debuts Film Highlighting Opportunities for Improving Health in Indigenous Communities**

Continuing his work in indigenous health at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, Rodney Haring, PhD, MSW, a member of the Seneca Nation, was asked to share a short film at the 2019 Mid-Year Conference of the National Congress of American Indians, the oldest and largest organization of American Indians and Alaska Natives. At the general assembly in Reno, Nevada, Dr. Haring premiered "Translating the Interplay: Indigenous Knowledge and Modern Medicine" to a group of tribal presidents, chiefs, chairwomen and chairmen along with council members in attendance from over 550 Native Nations in the United States. Produced by Dr. Haring, a research faculty member in Cancer Prevention and Population Sciences, Paul Hage, Director, Health Communications Shared Resources, Department of Health Behavior, along with community partners from Seneca Nation Media and actor/director/producer Gary Sundown, the film emphasizes the importance of addressing health

disparities related to lung cancer, access to healthcare, screenings, prevention and education related to clinical trials. In hopes of linking Native Nations and indigenous knowledge to contemporary and Western-based medicine, the short film highlights a tour of Roswell Park's ATLAS facility. Mary Reid, MPSH, PhD, a collaborator interviewed in the film, strongly encouraged enhanced efforts to include Native communities in screening, prevention and clinical research.

### **On Solidarity Trip to Israel, Governor Cuomo Announces Establishment of Joint Program Uniting U.S. and Israeli Cancer Experts in Effort to Research and Develop New Cancer Therapies and Precision Diagnostic Tools**

Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo announced that Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center has forged agreements with both Maccabi Healthcare Services (Tel Aviv, Israel) and the Tauber Bioinformatic Center at the University of Haifa (Haifa, Israel) with the intention to establish joint programs for discovery, development and clinical implementation of innovative anti-cancer drugs and cancer diagnostic methods. Gov. Cuomo made the announcement during a solidarity trip to Israel.

The collaboration with Maccabi Healthcare, one of the largest health maintenance organizations (HMO) in the world, serving more than 2 million patients, centers around bringing emerging therapies in development at Roswell Park to patients at Maccabi through clinical research studies. Initial studies are expected to incorporate immunotherapies, targeted therapies and treatment vaccines for diseases including leukemia and lung, ovarian and brain cancers as well as strategies for improving radiation therapy and addressing age-associated immunological disorders.

Roswell Park's work with the Tauber Center at Haifa University will expand an existing research relationship between two centers that have been pioneers in the area of science focused on "intrinsic viruses" within human DNA. These efforts, which will also incorporate contributions from the University of Rochester, are aimed at developing next-generation diagnostic, prognostic and prevention tools through advanced bioinformatics.

### **Renamed Roswell Park Program Supports Patients of All Faiths, Spiritual Traditions**

For 20 years, the Department of Pastoral Care has supported the mission of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center through its integrative, interfaith approach to wellness and providing ministry and care for the spirit of patients of all faith traditions. Reaching such a milestone in 2019, the Department of Pastoral Care has been renamed the Department of Spiritual Care.

### **Retired Firefighters Donate Funds to Further the Fight Against Glioblastoma**

*Donation brings total given to Roswell Park to \$62,000*

A group of retired firefighters dedicated to raising funds for cancer research recently visited Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center to make a significant donation that will go toward brain cancer research. The firefighters are members of the Retired Professional Fire Fighters Cancer Fund, a nonprofit organization based in Binghamton, New York. Their \$15,000 donation will provide critically needed funding for continuing research involving the SurVaxM vaccine for the common and aggressive brain cancer called glioblastoma, which is very difficult to treat.

SurVaxM, developed by a Roswell Park team, works by stimulating the immune system to attack an antigen called survivin, which is present in the cells of glioblastoma and many other kinds of tumors. A phase II clinical trial of SurVaxM conducted with patients with newly diagnosed glioblastoma has just been completed at five cancer centers with very promising results.

### **Buffalo Bisons Teams Up With Roswell Park**

At Sahlen Field, life is like a box of Mystery Balls – you never know what you’re going to get! The Buffalo Bisons put on their popular Mystery Ball Night on August 27 at Sahlen Field, in partnership with Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, as a night of hope and support for patients, survivors and caregivers. The hometown team took on the Rochester Red Wings, all while taking part in the fun of this event and enjoying an inspirational evening honoring those who have and are battling cancer.

More than 500 baseballs were collected during the last year, featuring autographs from some of the biggest celebrities in sports and music – Vladimir Guerrero, Jr., Jack Eichel, Josh Allen, Jimmy Eat World, Blink 182 and more. Each ball is gift-wrapped to conceal the identity of the signer. Fans in attendance had the option to purchase one baseball for a \$25 donation and reveal the mystery behind their new autographed ball. Five dollars from every presale game ticket purchased at the special online ticket hub came directly back to Roswell Park to help fund innovative cancer research and life-saving treatments. Mystery Ball purchases and basket raffle proceeds from the night also supported the center’s mission.

### **My Special Aflac Duck® Flocks to Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center**

Aflac, the leader in voluntary insurance sales at U.S. worksites, brought My Special Aflac Ducks to Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center during the summer. My Special Aflac Duck, designed by Sproutel, is a social robot that uses medical play, lifelike movement and emotions to engage and help comfort kids during their cancer care. The first-ever delivery to Roswell Park follows more than 18 months of child-centered research conducted with children, parents and medical providers at the Aflac Cancer and Blood Disorders Center of Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta.

Attendees were treated to a demonstration, highlighting how My Special Aflac Duck can help bring comfort and joy to children as they go through their cancer care. After the demonstration, children and their parents went on a fun scavenger hunt, finding clues and visiting various locations at the hospital, eventually leading them to the discovery of their very own My Special Aflac Duck.

### **Sabres and Roswell Park Team Up For Free Prostate Cancer Early Detection Event**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Buffalo Sabres teamed up to offer free prostate cancer education and testing for eligible men. The One Team, One Goal: Together to Beat Cancer event on September 17, was part of an ongoing initiative to reduce cancer’s impact among the team’s fans through prevention, education and early detection.

An educational panel for current prostate cancer patients and survivors was followed by free prostate cancer testing and consultations. Roswell Park physicians conducted complete screenings for eligible men ages 40 and over, incorporating both PSA (prostate specific antigen) blood testing and a digital rectal exam (DRE). There were also behind-the-scenes tours of KeyBank Center, meet-and-greets with Sabres alumni, light refreshments and opportunities to talk to Roswell Park experts.

### **Newest & Largest Roswell Park Care Network Site Brings Expanded Services to Southtowns**

The Roswell Park Care Network hosted a grand opening for its newest and largest location: the 15,000-square-foot offices of Roswell Park Hematology Oncology Southtowns. The expanded and relocated practice brings specialty cancer care and supportive services to the community in and around Southern Erie county, provided by the region’s only National Cancer Institute-designated Comprehensive Cancer Center. Roswell Park Hematology Oncology Southtowns means the people of this community can access all that close to home, in a comfortable, convenient and welcoming environment.

### **Roswell Park Breast Surgery Chief Gives Keynote Talk on Immunotherapy for Breast Cancer**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Centers Chief of Breast Surgery, Kazuaki Takabe, MD, PhD, FACS, gave a keynote address on immunotherapy for breast cancer at the 57th Annual Meeting of the Japan Society of Clinical Oncology (JSCO) in October.

“Immunotherapy is becoming another major tool to fight many cancers, but breast cancer has been behind on this because it’s a cancer where we see very little lymphocyte infiltration, which is a major factor in whether these treatments will be effective,” noted Dr. Takabe, a surgeon-scientist who is also The Alfiero Foundation Endowed Chair in Breast Oncology and Professor of Oncology at the cancer center. “Currently, immunotherapies for breast cancer are effective in only about 3% of patients. But we have a lot of opportunity to apply what we know toward making immunotherapy work for a much larger share of patients with the disease.”

Dr. Takabe joined Roswell Park’s faculty in 2016. His background includes training in general surgery both at the University of California, San Diego, and in Japan; specialized training in surgical oncology and service as an attending surgical oncologist and faculty member at the Medical College of Virginia Hospital, Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine; and postdoctoral training at the Salk Institute in La Jolla, California.

### **Congressman Higgins Calls for Federal Action to Address Nationwide Pediatric Chemotherapy Drug Shortage**

Rep. Brian Higgins (NY-26) called for answers and action in response to nationwide pediatric cancer drug shortages that are resulting in the rationing of doses and in some cases delayed treatment for our youngest cancer patients. In a bipartisan letter to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar led by Higgins and signed by fellow House Cancer Caucus co-chairs Reps. Peter King (NY-02), Derek Kilmer (WA-06), and Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-01), they wrote, “Children with cancer and their families face too many challenges as it is; they should not also have to bear the worry, fear and frustration that comes with knowing a drug that could help their child exists, but it is inaccessible due to a shortage.”

Rep. Higgins, also a member of the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health and a member of the Pediatric Cancer Caucus, stepped in to help two pediatric patients in the Roswell Park Oishei Children’s Cancer and Blood Disorders Program diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) in need of doses of Erwinaze (also known as asparaginase *Erwinia chrysanthemi*). The chemotherapy drug is often a last resort, provided as a substitute for children who have suffered severe allergic reactions to the standard protocol chemo drug pegaspargase.

### **Tom Golisano Gives \$1.5 Million to Build New \$2 Million Medical Oncology Center at Niagara Falls Memorial to Improve Access to Cancer Treatment for People in Niagara Region**

Ann Costello, Director of the Golisano Foundation, announced that philanthropist and businessman Tom Golisano is committing \$1.5 million to support a new \$2 million medical oncology center at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center to improve access to cancer treatment for people in Niagara County. The new center will be operated by Memorial in affiliation with Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, one of the top cancer centers in the United States. It will be named the Golisano Medical Oncology Center in Golisano’s honor.

### **M&T Bank Creates New Leadership Chair With Additional \$500,000 Endowment Gift to Roswell Park**

Longstanding supporter M&T Bank made a gift of \$500,000 to create the M&T Bank Presidential Chair in Leadership, to be held by Candace S. Johnson, PhD, President and CEO of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, and future presidents and CEOs thereafter. This gift builds on the M&T Bank Endowed Chair in Cancer Research, which was established in 2008 in recognition of the high esteem in which M&T Bank and the late Robert G. Wilmers, then chair and CEO of M&T Bank, held President Emeritus Thomas B. Tomasi, MD, PhD, and Roswell Park. The M&T Bank Presidential Chair in Leadership endowment supports Roswell Park's highest priorities and administrative and faculty leadership development and marks the largest endowed chair in the cancer center's history.

### **Roswell Park Commended as Age-Friendly Health System**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center was recognized by the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) and The John A. Hartford Foundation as an Age-Friendly Health System. The nonprofit organizations determined that Roswell Park provides care in accordance with the "4Ms" they consider to be essential, evidence-based elements of care for older patients

### **Roswell Park Leaders Share Immunotherapy Expertise at International Bridge Meetings**

Some of the world's leading oncologists gathered in Naples, Italy, for a pair of meetings focused on the latest research in cancer immunotherapy and treatment of melanoma, a form of skin cancer. The tandem Immunotherapy Bridge and Melanoma Bridge meetings enable important exchanges led by some of the world's most esteemed experts in oncology and immunotherapy, said Igor Puzanov, MD, MSci, FACP, of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, a co-chair of both international meetings.

"The Immunotherapy and Melanoma Bridge meetings have quickly become one of the most important gatherings for cancer researchers. New therapies and clinical evidence are emerging so quickly, and these conversations are an incredible opportunity to bring together some of the best minds in our field to help raise and address the most pressing questions before us as clinicians," said Dr. Puzanov, Chief of Melanoma and Director of the Early-Phase Clinical Trials program at Roswell Park. "This is an incredible opportunity for oncologists around the world to hear directly from immunotherapy pioneers like my Roswell Park colleagues Dr. Kunle Odunsi and Dr. Marc Ernstoff."

### **Roswell Park Celebrates 25 Years of the Tree of Hope**

The 25th annual Tree of Hope lighting ceremony drew record numbers of cancer patients, survivors, caregivers and loved ones together for a holiday celebration on December 13 in Kaminski Park on the campus of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center. This free, family-friendly holiday celebration was held in honor of all who are touched by cancer. It included live music, carriage rides, visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus, face painting and a gingerbread house raffle.

The outdoor event is co-sponsored by WGRZ 2 On Your Side and the West Herr Automotive Group. The festivities were hosted by Channel 2's Maryalice Demler and Michael Wooten and culminated with the lighting of the Tree of Hope by 11-year-old Ella, a cancer survivor and member of the Courage of Carly Fund at Roswell Park. This year's event featured a new Tree of Hope — a 25-foot evergreen trucked in from Barb and Jerry Kittle's home in Westfield, N.Y., courtesy of Hohl Industrial Services. The Kittles donated the tree both in memory of a friend who passed away from cancer and to honor another who was in active treatment at Roswell Park.

The event featured a candle-lighting ceremony paying tribute to those lost to cancer, survivors and those still fighting the disease. Attendees had the opportunity to write personal and inspirational messages on wreath ornaments that were placed on a holiday tree in the Roswell Park main lobby.

Buildings across the city, including Roswell Park, will take part in the BuffaloLIT (Land Illumination Team) initiative, lighting up the skyline that evening in white in recognition of the ceremony. Additionally, the 97Rock Tour Bus was onsite with giveaways.

### **Cancer Researchers' Training at Roswell Park Stand Out on National Stage**

Three Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center researchers who are already highly accomplished early in their careers were honored during three major research meetings — the American Society of Hematology (ASH) 61st annual meeting in Orlando, Florida, the 2019 San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium (SABCS) in San Antonio, Texas, and the ASCO-SITC Clinical Immuno-Oncology Symposium in San Francisco, California.

Yara Abdou, MD, a hematology-oncology fellow with Roswell Park's Department of Medicine, received an AACR Associate Award during SABCS, presented to selected associate members of the American Association for Cancer Research. Dr. Abdou was recognized for her study "Racial Differences in Infiltration Of CD8+ T-Cells in Breast Tumors of Black and White Women" (abstract P2-10-02), presented at a SABCS poster session on December 12. Then in late February, she received a Merit Award at the ASCO-SITC Clinical Immuno-Oncology Symposium for her study "Prognostication Model Based on Genomic Expression in the Tumor Microenvironment of ER-Positive, HER2-Negative Stage III Breast Cancer via Machine Learning" (abstract 285305).

Dr. Abdou was also invited to give a podium presentation at the annual meeting of the European Society for Medical Oncology in early 2020, earning a merit award for that work as well. She is currently investigating how tumor mutation profiles can impact tumor biology and microenvironment and, for another project, studying outcomes in African-American women with breast cancer.

Maximilian Merz, MD, a postdoctoral research scholar with the multiple myeloma team within Roswell Park's Department of Medicine, received the 2019 Celgene Future Leaders Award for Clinical Research in Hematology in connection with the ASH meeting in recognition of "the tremendous impact and significant contributions he has made in the field of clinical hematology throughout his career." Celgene Corp. will provide a \$10,000 grant to Roswell Park in Dr. Merz's name in connection with this award. Just eight years out of medical school, Dr. Merz has already published more than 45 research articles in peer-reviewed journals and is a sought-after expert in imaging and genetics for patients with multiple myeloma.

Hemn Mohammadpour, PhD, DVM, a postdoctoral research affiliate with Roswell Park's Department of Immunology, was selected to receive a merit-based ASH Abstract Achievement Award for his study "β2-Adrenergic Signaling Regulates Graft Versus Host Disease after Allogeneic Transplantation While Preserving Graft Versus Leukemia Effect," presented in a poster session at ASH 2019 (abstract 1915). Dr. Mohammadpour was recognized with a similar award at SABCS, for his study "β2 Adrenergic Receptor-Mediated Signaling Regulates the Immunosuppressive Potential Of Myeloid-Derived Suppressor Cells" (abstract P3-01-02), presented in a poster session on December 12.

Dr. Mohammadpour's research on beta adrenergic signaling and the development of graft-versus-host disease may have important implications for the care of patients undergoing allogeneic hematopoietic cell transplant and is the basis of a clinical trial now in development.

### **New Center for Indigenous Cancer Research at Roswell Park Has Regional Focus, Global Reach**



An effort led by Seneca researcher Dr. Rodney Haring will address cancer health disparities through collaboration. Growing up on the Seneca Nation in Western New York, Rodney Haring, PhD, MSW, learned the concept of “The Good Mind” largely from the matrilineal voices in his community. He calls this philosophy, which is one of the shaping principles of the Haudenosaunee people, “a strength from awareness of purpose, thoughts and actions towards well-being.”

Now he is building that philosophy into the work of the Center for Indigenous Cancer Research at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center — the first initiative of its kind in the Northeast, dedicated to reducing cancer’s impact on Indigenous communities regionally, nationally and internationally. Working with partners across North America, center staff will coordinate educational events, host health screenings, conduct research and develop action plans to address not only health disparities but larger issues that impact wellness, such as humans’ relationship to the environment. Dr. Haring, who leads the new center as Director, highlights what can be gained from applying lessons from both academic medicine and Indigenous knowledge.

### **Univera Healthcare Grant to Roswell Park Will Support Colon Cancer Screening and Education Program**

Univera Healthcare made a \$110,000 grant to Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in support of colon cancer screening and education. Art Wingerter, President of Univera Healthcare, announced the gift at Roswell Park along with Candace S. Johnson, PhD, Roswell Park President and CEO; Mary Reid, MSPH, PhD, Director of Cancer Screening and Survivorship; and Joanne Haefner, Chief Executive Office of Neighborhood Health Center. The donation is part of Univera Healthcare’s Member and Community Health Improvement Initiative grant program. The funds will support a new navigator position at Neighborhood Health Center in Buffalo. This position provides underserved community members with education about colon cancer as well as assistance in the screening process through Roswell Park’s colon cancer screening and outreach program.

### **Touchless Doors and Enhanced Air Filtration Added During COVID-19**

As an added precaution to reduce the spread of infection, the Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center Facilities team installed touchless activation devices on 110 doors in the hospital and Clinical Sciences Center. The team has made improvements to the ventilation systems within the Roswell Park main hospital building, converting the entire system to 100% outside, non-recirculated air; adding several portable HEPA filtration systems; and expanding the number of negative-pressure rooms to prevent the spread of any pathogens outside of a patient’s room.

### **LGBTQ Committee Formed**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center formed a new LGBTQ Committee charged with advancing inclusion and community involvement. The diverse group has begun to review policies, plan events and work with departments across the organization to let both employees and patients know that they are welcome and supported at Roswell Park.

### **Employee Turkey Drive Benefits City of Buffalo Needy**

Employees of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion provided more than 100 turkeys for needy families in Buffalo. Teaming up with the Northland Workforce Training Center and radio station WUFO, frozen turkeys were distributed before Thanksgiving to those in need in the Buffalo community.

### **Local High School Students Explore Diverse Healthcare Field at Roswell Park**

Sixty-five local high school students from 29 schools participated in a unique career development program at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center last summer. The Buffalo Healthcare Exploration (BHE) program demonstrated to students that it takes a team of people to run a cancer center and that each professional plays an important role in the patient experience. During the three-week program, they learned from nurses, oncologists and researchers, as well as other experts in different fields such as dietetics, development and planning.

### **Minority-Owned, Women-Owned, Small Business, Disadvantaged and Veteran-Owned Enterprises**

Roswell Park encourages opportunities for Minority Business Enterprises (MBE), Woman-Owned Business Enterprises (WBE), Small Business Enterprises (SBE), Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE) and Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprises (SDVOB). 31.72% of qualifying expenditures in 2019 were awarded to certified Minority-and-Women-Owned Business Enterprises.

### **Education and Career Fair Offers Employees Advancement Support**

An Education and Career Fair was held in June for employees to explore career opportunities, certificate and degree programs, tuition support, trainings, resume building and interview support.

### **Team Roswell Participates in Community Events**

Team Roswell participated in the following events in our community:

- Lung Force Walk on Thursday, May 30, to support lung cancer patients and survivors. It was a fun evening walk down at the Buffalo Harbor State Park.
- Susan G. Komen MORE THAN PINK Walk on Saturday, June 8. The activities included a giant victory bell that on the course for cancer survivors to ring.
- Colorectal Cancer Alliance Undy RunWalk on July 30, led by our own Steven Nurkin, MD.
- Light The Night Walk – For the fourth year in a row, Dr. Francisco Hernandez-Ilizaliturri, Chief of Lymphoma, will lead Team Roswell in the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Light The Night Walk on Friday, September 20. This less than two-mile walk at Canalside showed support for our leukemia and lymphoma patients and survivors. All registered participants received illuminated lanterns to carry during this evening walk to honor all those affected by leukemia and lymphoma.
- PurpleStride Walk – The Pancreatic Cancer Action Network brought their PurpleStride Walk to Buffalo for the first time ever! Team captain Michael Feigin, PhD, and the Gastrointestinal Team showed their Roswell Park pride with other community members on Saturday, September 28, at Buffalo RiverWorks.

### **Chapter 2: A Cancer Survivor's Workshop**

Cancer patients and survivors were able to connect on September 14, during an educational, interactive day focused on healing the mind, soothing the body and learning to live their best life. New tools were introduced to help with emotional, spiritual and physical adjustment to a new normal as a cancer survivor. The event, hosted by Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, featured a range of topics that will benefit cancer patients still undergoing treatment, cancer patients who have completed treatment, long-term cancer survivors, young adult cancer patients and caregivers.

### **Team Roswell Joins PurpleStride Pancreatic Cancer Walk**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center was represented at PurpleStride walks, one of the largest sources of funding for the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network. Team Roswell joined this vibrant

community of survivors, impacted families, loved ones, researchers and advocates on September 28 as those committed to rewriting the future of this deadly disease.

### **Cruisin' for a Cure Car Show and Prostate Cancer Early Detection Clinic**

On September 28, Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center hosted Cruisin' for a Cure, a car show and free prostate cancer early detection clinic. Men over the age of 40 were offered free screening and one-on-one consultation.

### **Making Strides Against Breast Cancer - Team Roswell**

Forty-three Team Roswell participants joined Making Strides Against Breast Cancer on October 12. It is the largest network of breast cancer events in the nation, raising money to help the American Cancer Society fund groundbreaking breast cancer research and provide patient services that include free rides to chemo, free places to stay near treatment, and a live 24/7 cancer helpline.

### **NET Annual Patient Conference**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center hosted the 7th Annual Neuroendocrine Tumor Conference on October 19. Patients and caregivers joined for a day of networking and information sharing.

### **Upcycle Event Turns T-Shirts Into Bags for the Homeless**

Roswell Park was able to make over 150 reusable bags out of old T-shirts for the Salvation Army in the City of Buffalo. The bags were filled with groceries and necessities for the needy in the surrounding community.

### **Used Baby Clothing and Supplies Drive Held by Employees**

Roswell Park employees donated new and gently used baby clothing and supplies to the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County in April. Speakers from the organization were here to kick-off the event and discuss the importance of the effort in the Western New York community.

### **Proposals Requested for New Parking Ramp**

A Request for Proposals was released for a new parking ramp adjacent to our 901 Washington building were requested, with construction slated to begin in late 2020.

### **Roswell Park, Buffalo Sabres and New Era Cap Team Up for Cap of Hope**

Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center teamed up with New Era Cap and the Buffalo Sabres to create a limited-edition Cap of Hope. Designed with the creativity of Roswell Park patients and a doctor, the knit hat is a symbol of hope for patients, caregivers and those in the WNY community touched by cancer.

### **Hockey Fights Cancer Night in Buffalo Held on Nov. 16**

The Buffalo Sabres, in partnership with Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, again took part in the NHL's Hockey Fights Cancer™ program during the team's home game against the Ottawa Senators on November 16. As part of an NHL-wide initiative to raise money and awareness for cancer research, the Sabres hosted events throughout the night in support of local cancer patients and their charitable organizations. All fans attending the game received a Sabres Hockey Fights Cancer scarf.

**The Yroswell Street Team** brought the message of cancer awareness to the community, especially Western New York's young people, at 34 events in the community. Each Street Team member has been working on hosting their own fundraising event either at their school or in their community to raise

critical funds for cancer research and patient-care programs. Roswell Park also encouraged young people throughout the area to find out about the resources they need to become the next generation of cancer professionals and advocates. Events that the Street Team participated in and brought awareness information to, included: various events for The Ride For Roswell (including the Celebration of Hope and fundraising initiatives), WNY high school and middle school wellness fairs, Roswell Park's Employee Appreciation Day, Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk, Komen Run/Walk, Tree of Hope, Hockey Fights Cancer Night at KeyBank Center, Kissmas Bash, BNMC Student Open House and more.

#### **Roswell Park Presents Resume Training Workshops**

Roswell Park's Office of Diversity and Inclusion collaborated with the Buffalo Employment and Training Center to hold 12 resume workshops. The monthly sessions showed attendees how to showcase their best skills and seek additional training to successfully enter the workforce.

#### **Job Fairs and Resume Workshops Link Candidates to Resources and Potential Employers**

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion at Roswell Park participating in several community job fairs, including the Diversity Job Fair, Queen City Job Fair, LatPro job fairs in Charlotte, NC and Boston, MA, Department of Labor Resume Building Workshop, Clarence Job Fair with Senator Razenhofer, Department of Labor Career Development Fair, Belle Center Bilingual Resume Class, Black Job Fair with WUFO. Students from Hutchinson Technical Institute were also given a tour of the campus.

#### **Clean-A-Thon Supports Fruit Belt Community**

Employees from Roswell Park volunteered to clean streets and community areas of the City of Buffalo Fruitbelt community during the Spring as part of the annual Clean-A-Thon organized by the Fruitbelt Coalition.

#### **Cultural Awareness Days and Festivals Honor Many Traditions**

Celebrations and awareness activities were held at Roswell Park for various faith and cultural traditions, including Passover Seder, WUFO Mothers' Day Brunch, Ramadan Eid Festival, Hispanic Community Event, Puerto Rican Parade, Hispanic Community Event, DisABILITY Luncheon, Festival of Lights, Martin Luther King, Jr. Paint Night, Martin Luther King, Jr. Service Day, Black History Month Celebration, Indian Celebration and Christmas in the City.

#### **Education and Career Development Fair Held**

Roswell Park held an Education and Career Development Fair on June 12, for employees wishing to expand their skill sets or seek advanced training or education. Attendees were able to talk with colleges about degree programs and certifications; learn about tuition support; ask questions about career development at Roswell Park and in the community; and sign up for technical trainings and classes on resume building and interview skills.