Memorial Sloan Kettering is transforming our understanding and treatment of cancer in a myriad of ways.

Summary

Memorial Sloan Kettering's vision is nothing less than to revolutionize the treatment of cancer. Learn about some of the ways we're doing it.

The word "transformation" perfectly characterizes and captures the past year at Memorial Sloan Kettering. Indeed, it's the word we hear time and again on the lips of our clinicians, scientists, and other staff as they describe the progress we've made and what they know is to come.

The big, innovative ideas we've developed and the bold steps we've taken are transforming our understanding and treatment of cancer — and we recently have established programs and long-term approaches that develop these ideas and support these steps.

As July marks the end of one academic year and the start of the next, we thought this would be an ideal time to bring you up to date on some of our recent major accomplishments.

Dr. Paul Sabbatini leads the team optimizing our clinical trials process.

Streamlined and Accelerated Clinical Trials

In an effort to bring novel drugs and therapies to more patients in as timely a manner as possible, Deputy Physician-in-Chief for Clinical Research Paul Sabbatini led an extraordinary team in optimizing MSK's clinical trials process. We now have two Institutional Review Boards, doubling our capacity to do clinical trial reviews. We've seen a remarkable decrease in the time between the review and approval of trials and a significant increase in the number of trials, with more patients participating.

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Expansion in the Community

The Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Alliance , a unique new initiative established to improve the quality of cancer care and the lives of cancer patients beyond our own institution, was announced in 2013. Simultaneously, we introduced the Alliance's first member, Hartford HealthCare, a five-hospital system in Connecticut. The MSK Cancer Alliance will allow more patients access to our clinical trials. It will also offer them the benefits of precision medicine, as we translate molecular insights into innovations such as the latest diagnostic tests and targeted therapies. Clinical and administrative teams are now focusing on preparations to fully implement the program later this year.

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New Regional Sites

MSK's network of regional sites continues to develop, beginning with our new ambulatory care facility in Harrison , New York, slated to open this fall. Our regional facilities ensure that patients are able to receive Memorial Sloan Kettering's outstanding cancer care closer to home.

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Partnership with IBM Watson

Our Physician-in-Chief, José Baselga, has brought energy and innovation to many important areas, including molecular oncology. As part of this effort, he has participated in MSK's partnership with IBM in developing a powerful cancer resource, IBM Watson Oncology, built on the IBM Watson cognitive computing platform. It will provide medical professionals everywhere with improved access to current, comprehensive cancer data and practices.

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Naming of a New Sloan Kettering Institute Director

The year included the appointment of Joan Massagué as the Director of the Sloan Kettering Institute . An exemplary scientist whose research has produced results central to the understanding of cancer, Dr. Massagué has led SKI's Cancer Biology and Genetics Program since 2003 and has been part of the SKI community since 1989, when he joined us as the Alfred P. Sloan Chair of SKI's Cell Biology Program . His scientific acumen and invaluable expertise coupled with his ability to unite people will keep MSK at the forefront of cancer research.

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Launch of the Tri-Institutional Therapeutics Discovery Institute

In 2013, we established the Tri-Institutional Therapeutics Discovery Institute (Tri-I TDI) , a joint venture between MSK, Weill Cornell Medical College, and The Rockefeller University. The Tri-I TDI has entered into an initial partnership with Takeda Pharmaceuticals International, Japan's largest pharmaceutical company, to assist investigators at the three institutions in developing small-molecule therapeutic agents and molecular probes for the treatment and diagnosis of cancer and other human diseases.

VIDEO | 05:19

The Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis Center for Molecular Oncology Aims to Transform Genomic Medicine and Cancer Care

The Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis Center for Molecular Oncology at Memorial Sloan Kettering is a bold new initiative uniting clinical and scientific teams to analyze tumor DNA with the goal of treating cancer using the most precise therapies.
Video Details (https://www.mskcc.org/videos/marie-josee-and-henry-kravis-center-for-molecular-oncology-aims-to-transform-genomic-medicine-and-cancer-care)

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Founding of the Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis Center for Molecular Oncology

A $100 million gift from the Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis Foundation has allowed us to create the Marie-Josée and Henry R. Kravis Center for Molecular Oncology (CMO) . This new center will make it possible to realize the promise of precision oncology and support the development of new, individualized cancer therapies and diagnostic tools. Among the aims of the CMO are to analyze more than 10,000 patient tumors in the first year alone, with an eye toward offering molecular analysis for every type of cancer and for all MSK patients. Mrs. Kravis has been a member of MSK's Boards of Overseers and Managers since 2000 and is Chair of the Board of the Sloan Kettering Institute.

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Creation of the David M. Rubenstein Center for Pancreatic Cancer Research

With an initial commitment of $10 million, MSK Board member David M. Rubenstein paved the way for yet another ambitious initiative. Called the David M. Rubenstein Center for Pancreatic Cancer Research , it brings together MSK's outstanding physicians and an expanding group of scientists in an intensive program designed to speed progress in understanding and treating one of the deadliest types of cancer — and one that has been relatively understudied.

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Development of New Treatments and Improved Diagnoses

Also among MSK's many accomplishments in 2013 were the development of important new treatments for prostate cancer and improved ways to diagnose leukemia, endometrial cancer, and salivary gland cancer. Our scientists also determined the structure of a complex protein (mTOR) that plays a role in many forms of cancer.

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Immunotherapy for the Treatment of Cancer

While it is impossible to list all of MSK's scientific achievements, one in particular deserves special mention. In 2013, Science magazine identified the development of immunotherapy for the treatment of cancer as the most important scientific advance of the year — in all fields. The magazine cited the efforts of two groups of MSK investigators as exceptional.

Singled out by Science was the collaborative preclinical and clinical work of Jedd D. Wolchok, Chief of our Melanoma Service, and immunologist James P. Allison (formerly at MSK, now at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston), for their development of a drug called ipilimumab (Yervoy™), approved by the FDA in 2011 for the treatment of metastatic melanoma. The other work came from Michel Sadelain, Director of the Center for Cell Engineering , and his colleagues Renier J. Brentjens, Director of Cellular Therapeutics, and Isabelle Rivière, Director of the Cell Therapy and Cell Engineering Facility. These investigators played a seminal role in the development of a major area of research highlighted by the magazine: a cell-based targeted immunotherapy called chimeric antigen receptor, or CAR, therapy. Chimeric antigen receptors are a new class of drugs in oncology with the potential to be applied to many types of cancer.

We stand on the brink of opportunities in cancer research that are leading to discoveries inconceivable a mere decade ago. And today, the gifted men and women of Memorial Sloan Kettering are translating these discoveries into treatment realities.

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