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Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

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Clinical psychologist Christian Nelson (center) and psychiatrist Jimmie Holland (right) discuss their research with students.



MSK psychometrician Thomas Atkinson presenting "Techniques for Effective Collection of Patient Reported Outcomes," April 3, 2017



MSK clinical psychologist Wendy Lichtenthal, an Assistant Attending in the Counseling Center, at a Communication Skills Training event



MSK clinical psychologist Allison Applebaum

< Memorial Sloan Kettering's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences works to deepen understanding and expand treatment options for oncology patients around the globe through clinical trials, research, and other means. >

Today, we have an expanded understanding of the impact of a cancer diagnosis and treatment on psychological adjustment and other quality-of-life indicators. The prevalence, nature, and management of the major types of psychological distress and psychiatric disorders in cancer patients have been described by stage, site, and treatment.

Through numerous [clinical trials](#), we're expanding the scope of understanding and treatment options for oncology patients with psychological and behavioral issues.

Valid and reliable tools now exist to measure quality of life, psychological distress, and spiritual coping in cancer patients. Psychological interventions have proven effective against distress, anticipatory nausea, post-traumatic stress responses, and procedure-related pain.

Through the work of our team and others, we've also identified and addressed the physical rehabilitation and psychosocial needs of cancer survivors. Studies indicate that approximately 20 percent of long-term survivors experience clinically significant levels of psychological distress, with commensurate impairment in quality of life. Interventions to promote the adaptation of patients and family caregivers to the survivorship stage are actively being investigated.

Current Research

Investigations led by our faculty are addressing strategies related to cancer prevention, detection, and treatment. We're investigating novel strategies to promote the individual's contribution to his or her own health through behavioral, psychological, social, and community factors.

Initiatives include investigation into reducing cancer risk behaviors, increasing adherence to screening guidelines, promoting access to cancer care for ethnic minorities, and enhancing palliative care.

Other major research initiatives underway include:

- [Cancer Prevention & Health Promotion](#)
- [Genomics, Risk, and Health Decision-Making Laboratory](#)
- [Immigrant Health & Cancer Disparities Service](#)
- [Neurocognitive & Functional MRI Program](#)
- [Observational/Symptom Studies & Pharmacotherapy Program](#)
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