



## Newsletter of the Survivorship, Outcomes And Risk Program at MSK

### Bringing SOAR Studies to the Community Beyond Manhattan

Opportunities and Challenges in MSK's Expanding Regional Network

MSK's footprint is growing, and with it the Center's reach beyond Manhattan. The MSK regional network now includes five general oncology outpatient facilities in Somerset County (NJ), Westchester County, Nassau and Suffolk Counties (NY), and a skin cancer center in Suffolk County. A sixth outpatient clinic will open in Monmouth County (NJ) in 2016.

In 2014, the Center widened its regional presence with the formation of the MSK Cancer Alliance. Hartford Health-Care, a multihospital healthcare system in Connecticut, recently became the first certified member of the MSK Cancer Alliance with five cancer programs known collectively as the Hartford Health Care Cancer Institute (HHCCI). Through this mechanism, MSK aims to bring the latest advances in cancer care and research to patients treated in community settings.

A key goal of both the regional network and the Alliance is to increase cancer patients' access to research, especially therapeutic clinical trials. But growth of the regional network and new partnerships in the Alliance also expand research opportunities for SOAR investigators. Currently, at least 14 SOAR investigators have protocols open for accrual at one or more sites in the regional network. These protocols represent a range of research topics and methods, including genetic and genomic epidemiology studies, patient and tumor registries, behavioral intervention trials, and studies of quality of life and survivorship.

Each clinic in the MSK regional network has at least one research study assistant who receives the same training that RSAs throughout the institution receive from the Office of Clinical Research. MaryEllen Coglianese, Research Program Manager for the regional network, joined MSK in 2005 as a research nurse and now supervises research staff and protocol implementation at the regional sites. MSK policy requires a protocol start-up meeting with both primary research staff (from main campus) and the regional research staff prior to the accrual of regional network patients. Coglianese said that RSAs in the regional network have received training in methods specific to particular protocols, for example, in cognitive testing and other specialized assessment methods.

**Shari Goldfarb** (Medicine) has been recruiting patients from the regional network for her study, *Longitudinal Sexual and Reproductive Health of Women with Breast Cancer and Lymphoma*, since it opened in 2012. Of the 130 patients enrolled to date, almost 25% were recruited from MSK Basking Ridge, Rockville Centre, Commack or Sleepy Hollow. The study requires eight patient assessments over five years, completed in person at the time of a scheduled visit or online. Asked about the benefits of opening her study in the regional network, Goldfarb said that the sites "help to diversify the study sample. The regional sites reach a very different population than Manhattan in terms of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion and education." Goldfarb also noted that study implementation at the regional sites was fairly smooth, but that frequent communication with the regional research staff has been essential.

Goldfarb's study is a non-therapeutic protocol that in-

volves patient surveys and specimen collection. Studies that involve behavioral, educational or physical activity interventions may be more difficult to implement in the regional sites, which lack specialized personnel, facilities and equipment that may be necessary for these studies.

**Talia Zaider** (Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences) leads an interventional protocol that is open to patients throughout MSK. The study, *Intimacy-Enhancing Couples' Intervention for Localized Prostate Cancer*, involves randomization of prostate cancer patients and their partners to one of three arms, two of which require face-to-face sessions with a counseling professional or a dietician or nutritionist trained to deliver the study interventions. For couples recruited from the regional sites, traveling to Manhattan for the

intervention was an impediment to participation. To address this barrier, Zaider identified and trained a licensed social worker and a nutritionist who could deliver the interventions at MSK Basking Ridge (NJ). So far, two couples enrolled in the study have chosen this option.

For investigators specifically seeking racially and ethnically diverse populations, another avenue for patient recruitment is the Diversity Research Program (DRP) in the Office of Clinical Research. Staff in the DRP help MSK investigators implement protocols at Queens Cancer Center (QCC), SUNY Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, and the Ralph Lauren Center for Cancer Care and Prevention in Harlem. **Francesca Gany** (Immigrant Health & Cancer Disparities) has recruited patients from several of these sites. One of Gany's protocols, *Food: A Three-Arm Randomized Controlled Study Examining Food Insecurity Interventions*, enrolled 30 patients at QCC and is still open to accrual at the Ralph Lauren Center. Another of Gany's studies, evaluating an intervention to improve cancer treatment completion in underserved populations, is also recruiting patients at the Ralph Lauren Center. Gany and her staff worked closely with the DRP to open these protocols and continue to work with the DRP as the studies progress.

MSK Cancer Alliance member HHCCI represents the Center's first official partnership in Connecticut, and the newest potential opportunity for MSK investigators to bring their research to patients treated in community settings outside of New York City and its suburbs. **Talya Salz** (Health Outcomes) and **Shrujal Baxi** (Medicine) will open their study of a survivorship intervention for head and neck cancer patients at HHCCI. Salz and Baxi said that developing a collaborative relationship with clinicians and researchers at HHCCI was critical to implementation of their study there. Asked about their reasons for bringing the study to Hartford, Baxi said that the relationship between MSK and HHCCI offers an opportunity "to see if a tool developed from our experience here can be implemented and useful in a community setting, where the majority of survivorship care is delivered."



## SOAR Grants

**Shari Goldfarb** (Medicine) received the Zorziotti Grant from the International Society for Sexual Medicine for "Development of Clinician Sexual Health Communication Skills Training Modules for the Care of Female Cancer Patients."

**Lee Jones** (Medicine) received an award from the NCI for the study "Effect of Aerobic Exercise on Genomic Signatures of Prostate Cancer Prognosis."

**Jennifer Leng** (Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences) received a grant from the NCI for "Meaning-Centered Group Psychotherapy for Chinese Immigrant Patients with Cancer."

**Allison Lipitz-Snyderman** (Health Outcomes) was awarded a grant from the Institute for Health Care Management Research and Educational Foundation for "Physician Practice Styles and Overuse of Healthcare Services."

**Kenneth Offit** (Medicine) received an award from the Breast Cancer Research Foundation for "Breast Cancer Protective Alleles by Whole Genome Association Analysis."

**Kenneth Offit** (Medicine) and **Mark Robson** (Medicine) received an award from the Breast Cancer Research Foundation for "Genomic Susceptibility to Breast and Ovarian Cancer."

**Malcolm Pike** (Epidemiology) was awarded a R21 grant from the NCI for his study "Hormonal Effects on Fallopian Tube and Ovary Inclusion Cysts, and Ovarian Cancer."

## SOAR Seminars



**Thomas Burke**, Massachusetts General Hospital, presented *Health Transformation in Resource Limited Settings* on September 25<sup>th</sup>.



**David Goldgar**, University of Utah, presented *Characterizing the Genetic Architecture of Breast Cancer through Large-Scale Collaborative Studies and Assessing Its Potential for Clinical Translation* on October 16<sup>th</sup>.



**Romana Hasnain-Wynia**, Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), presented *PCORI's Role in Creating a Research Agenda to Reduce Disparities and Improve Health Outcomes* on November 11<sup>th</sup>.

## SOARNEWS EDITORIAL STAFF

Elena Elkin, PhD/Epidemiology and Biostatistics Val Pocus /Epidemiology and Biostatistics Nidha Mubdi, MPH/Medicine Meghan Woods, MPH/Epidemiology and Biostatistics Saidah Henderson, MA/Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

## Electronic Cigarette Use in Cancer Patients

### Study Finds No Benefit for Quitting

Electronic cigarette users are no more likely to successfully quit smoking than their peers who do not use e-cigarettes, according to a recent study by **Jamie Ostroff** (Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences) and her colleagues at the MSK Tobacco Treatment Program (TTP). The study was published online in September and appears in the November 15<sup>th</sup> issue of *Cancer*.

Ostroff and her colleagues studied more than 1,000 cancer patients who were referred to the TTP and accepted tobacco-dependence treatment in 2012 and 2013. Participants were surveyed at the start of their tobacco treatment and again 6-12 months later. At the time of study enrollment, just over one-fourth of patients reported use of e-cigarettes within the past 30 days. But there was a significant trend over time, with e-cigarette use increasing from 13% in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2012 to almost 30% in the last quarter of 2013, with a peak of 57% in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2013.

E-cigarette users and non-users were similar in age, sex, educational attainment, and type of cancer diagnosis, but users had greater nicotine dependence and were more likely to have tried quitting smoking in the past. At follow-up, e-cigarette users were just as likely as non-users to report that they had smoked within the past week. Using an intent-to-treat analytic approach, the researchers found that e-cigarette users were twice as likely as non-users to be smoking at follow-up, controlling for nicotine dependence, past quit attempts, and cancer diagnosis.

According to Ostroff, "the jury is still not in regarding the potential benefits and risks of e-cigarettes for individuals and public health." She noted that popular hype, strong consumer demand and the current lack of FDA regulation create a situation where patients, providers and policymakers need answers to important questions regarding the safety, efficacy and effectiveness of e-cigarettes.



## SOAR Honors

- ★ **William Breitbart** was appointed Chair of the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences and new incumbent of the Jimmie C. Holland Chair

## NYC Epidemiologists Gather Again

### Second Annual Meeting Planned for 2015

The New York City Epidemiology Forum will hold its second annual meeting in February 2015, bringing together epidemiologists from across the region to discuss topics and methods in epidemiology with a focus on health risks and diseases that affect New Yorkers. SOAR investigator **Sara Olson** (Epidemiology) is part of the scientific committee, and **Colin Begg** (Biostatistics) is a member of the steering committee.

The first NYCEF meeting was held in 2014, featuring a keynote address from Dr. Muin Khoury, Director of the Office of Public Health Genomics at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Scientific presentations addressed a wide range of topics, including cancer epidemiology, molecular epidemiology, environmental exposures, infectious diseases, nutrition and lifestyle influences on health, quality of life, and statistical methods in epidemiology.

NYCEF's goal is to provide a forum for regular communication between epidemiologists working in academic and other institutions in the NYC metropolitan area, with a special focus on junior investigators, including junior faculty, post-doctoral researchers, fellows, and doctoral students. In addition to MSK, participating institutions include Columbia, NYU, North Shore Long Island Jewish Health System, CUNY School of Public Health at Hunter College, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, SUNY Downstate Medical Center, Weill Cornell Medical College, Ichan Medical School at Mount Sinai, and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

The NYCEF also recognizes outstanding scientific accomplishments with four awards to be given for the best posters at the 2015 NYCEF meeting. Abstract submissions are due by December 15<sup>th</sup> (<http://nycef.org/abstract-submission/>).

## Mark your calendar

**November 15-19**

**American Public Health Association Annual Meeting**  
New Orleans, LA

**December 9**  
4:00 PM  
RRL-101

**SOAR Seminar**  
Stacie Dusetzina, PhD  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**January 13**  
4:00 PM  
M-107

**SOAR Seminar**  
Marsha Regenstein, PhD  
The George Washington University