WELCOME ANDY NI!

Andy Ni, PhD, recently joined the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics as an Assistant Attending Biostatistician. His methodological research interests are in the design and analysis of large-scale observational studies with survival outcomes. Andy is particularly interested in statistical methodologies related to case-cohort and nested case-control designs. His interests also lie in regularized variable selection in survival analysis with high-dimensional data. Andy is looking forward to collaborating with MSK clinical investigators in the Thoracic Oncology Service in the design and analysis of observational studies and clinical trials of different phases. Andy received his PhD from the Department of Biostatistics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Prior to his PhD study, Andy worked as a biostatistician at the Children’s Hospital of Eastern Ontario in Ottawa, Canada.

PUBLICATIONS

“Toxicity Attribution in Phase I Trials: Evaluating the Effect of Dose on the Frequency of Related and Unrelated Toxicities”

Anne Eaton and Alexia Iasonos co-authored a paper in Clinical Cancer Research with investigators from MSK and CTEP that used pooled data from 38 NCI-sponsored phase I trials to explore the relationship between dose and toxicity in order to identify evidence of physician misattribution. Specifically, if no attribution error is present, the rate of drug-related toxicity should increase as dose increases and the rate of unrelated toxicity should remain constant across doses. Reassuringly, the results confirmed these expectations, although this should not be taken to mean that no attribution error is present, as attribution couldn’t be directly assessed due to the lack of a gold standard. The results also support simplifying attribution from a 5-tier system to a binary system when standard phase I trial designs with a binary DLT endpoint are used.

“Correlating Surrogate Endpoints with Overall Survival at the Individual Patient Level in BRAFV600E-Mutated Metastatic Melanoma Patients Treated with Vemurafenib”

Emily Zabor and Glenn Heller co-authored a paper in Clinical Cancer Research that correlates tumor response and time to progression with overall survival in melanoma patients treated as part of a phase III trial. To progression defined as 25% increase in the sum of tumor diameters or appearance of new tumors was more strongly correlated with overall survival than early tumor response. Findings were validated using separate data from a phase II trial.

“Symptom Monitoring with Patient-Reported Outcomes During Routine Cancer Treatment: A Randomized Controlled Trial”

Ethan Basch, Lauren Rogak, Thomas Atkinson, and Joanne Chou co-authored a paper in the Journal of Clinical Oncology with their colleagues at MSK and several outside investigators reporting their work on symptom monitoring in routine cancer care using patient-reported outcomes in a large, single site, randomized trial. Participants were randomized to report 12 common symptomatic toxicities via tablet computers or to receive usual care consisting of symptom monitoring at the discretion of clinicians. This study showed that for adults who are receiving outpatient chemotherapy for advanced cancer, web-based symptom reporting with automated clinical e-mail alerts resulted in better Health-Related Quality of Life, improvements in health services outcomes, and survival.
NEW STAFF

Sergio Corrales Guerrero, Research Technician
Sergio is excited to join the department as a Research Technician for Dr. Irene Orlow’s group. He received a BS in Biology from the Universidad de Navarra (Spain) in 2014 and an MSc in Cancer Research and Molecular Biomedicine from The University of Manchester (UK) in 2015.

Bobak Hedayati, Research Technician
Bobak received his pre-medical diploma from Columbia University in 2015 and his BS in Business Administration before that. His past experiences in laboratory settings include assisting in research in the departments of neurosurgery and surgery at the University of Southern California. He has joined the Molecular Epidemiology Laboratory as a Research Technician in November 2015, and supports the laboratory research needs of Dr. Irene Orlow. He is involved in studies designed to identify genetic and phenotypic factors that increase the risk to develop cancer, or that are associated with cancer, or burden of cancer and cancer treatment.

Andrew Briggs, Visiting Investigator
Andrew Briggs (DPhil) is a Health Economist from University of Glasgow where he was responsible for the Health Economics and Health Technology Research Group. He has an interest in statistical methodology applied to health economic evaluation and in the relationship between individual patient data (clinical trial and real world) evidence and decision analytic modeling. He has particular interests in using statistical/epidemiological methods for capturing heterogeneity in cost-effectiveness evidence with application to stratified medicine. He is working with Dr. Peter Bach and the Health Policy Center, but is hoping to strike up other potential collaborations with interested colleagues at MSK and to learn more about the practical workings of the US health system.

STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS

On October 20, 2015, Emily Zabor and Anne Eaton hosted 20 Grinnell College undergraduates who were participating in an industry tour related to data, analysis, technology, and applications (DATA) over their fall break. As alumni of Grinnell College, Emily and Anne gave a tour of the office and talked to the students about how they came to work in a DATA field, the training and skills required to work in biostatistics, the work they now do as research biostatisticians, and what skills they gained as undergraduates at Grinnell that prepared them for a career in a DATA field.

Dr. Jonine Bernstein hosted the annual IMAGINE Study on November 17, 2015 and the semi-annual WECARE Study meeting on December 9-10, 2015. Over 35 MSK staff, faculty, and external collaborators from across the US and abroad participated in these meetings. With Meg Woods supervising the entire planning and logistics, Sami Noor and Tricia Neary were instrumental in making sure the meetings were a success from the initial stages to providing on-site support during the meeting. This was truly a team effort!

PRESENTATION

Liz Fortier presented a poster “Streamlining care for complex cancer survivors: A protocol” at the Cancer Survivorship Research Symposium. The poster describes the IRB Study #15-245 led by Talya Saltz and Shrujal Baxi, which aims at improving survivorship care for head and neck cancer survivors. They developed an online tool (HN-STAR) that synthesizes patient-reported outcomes, clinical details, and evidence-based guidelines to provide a personalized survivorship care plan for patients. They are currently testing the usability and feasibility of HN-STAR among head and neck cancer survivors at MSK and Hartford HealthCare.