Over the past year, the Department of Surgery (DoS) has continued its commitment towards the advancement of scientific research and surgical education. This report highlights the DoS’s engagement over the past year, listing the DoS’s diverse range of clinical trials, sponsored research activities and peer-reviewed publications authored by department faculty, staff and fellows.
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Letter from the Chair

The Department of Surgery at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center is one of the busiest cancer surgery programs in the world. Our results in terms of patient outcomes are exceptional, and yet every surgeon is painfully aware of the limitations of current cancer care – of our patients who have a state-of-the-art operation, get adjuvant chemotherapy, radiation and/or immunotherapy, and still have cancer recurrence. It is this reality that drives us to pursue research, in our effort to ensure that the cancer treatment available to our patients in the future is better than the treatment that we can offer today.

This book provides an overview of much of the research performed by Department of Surgery faculty, fellows and staff over the past year. It spans fundamental laboratory investigation, translational research, clinical trials, studies on patient outcomes and health services research. These pages list hundreds of publications written by our faculty this year that have advanced the understanding of cancer and cancer care throughout the scientific community. We also provide recognition of our academic surgeons who have received research funding from government and non-governmental agencies, as well as philanthropic sources, that enables our research mission. Finally, it also lists our research administration staff whom we owe our thanks, since without their hard work these efforts could not occur. In that spirit of gratitude I would be remiss to not acknowledge our research Vice-Chairs, Dr. Brett Carver (Basic), Dr. Valerie Rusch (Clinical) and Dr. Prasad Adusumilli (Translational) for their help in guiding the Department’s research efforts, and a particular thank you to Prasad for putting together this volume.

Jeffrey Drebin, MD, PhD
Chair, Department of Surgery; Murray F. Brennan Chair in Surgery
DoS: 2020 Snapshot

- **13** SERVICES
- **79** CLINICAL FELLOWS
- **65** RESEARCH FELLOWS
- **480** PUBLICATIONS
- **19%** PUBLICATIONS IN JOURNALS WITH AN IMPACT FACTOR ≥10
- **324** CLINICAL TRIALS/INVESTIGATIONS
- **44** FEDERAL GRANTS
- **38** FOUNDATION GRANTS
- **24** INDUSTRY GRANTS
Service Chiefs

David H. Abramson, MD  
Ophthalmic Oncology

Nadeem Abu-Rustum, MD  
Gynecology

Julio Garcia Aguilar, MD, PhD  
Colorectal

James A. Eastham, MD  
Urology

Justin Theodore (Ted) Gerstle, MD  
Pediatric Surgical

John H. Healey, MD  
Orthopaedic

Joseph M. Huryn, DDS  
Dental

William R. Jarnagin, MD  
Hepatopancreatobiliary

David R. Jones, MD  
Thoracic

Babak J. Mehrara, MD  
Plastic and Reconstructive Surgical

Monica Morrow, MD  
Breast

Samuel Singer, MD  
Gastric and Mixed Tumor

Richard J. Wong, MD  
Head and Neck
Research Fellows

Zachary M. Sethna  
Research Scholar

Annu Singh  
Research Associate

Maria Skamagki  
Senior Research Scientist

Hannah M. Thompson  
Research Associate

Vladislav Tsiperson  
Senior Research Scientist

Rajasekhar Vinagolu  
Senior Research Scientist

Joris Vos  
Research Fellow

Lynda Vuong  
Research Associate

Qi Wang  
Research Scholar

Jingming Wang  
Visiting Investigator

Chao Wu  
Senior Research Scientist

Yuquan Xiong  
Senior Research Scientist

Changhwan Yoon  
Senior Research Scientist

Jonathan B. Yuval  
Research Fellow

Abderrezak Zebboudj  
Research Fellow

Clinical Fellows

Ehab Alameer

Christian Ang

Haripriya Ayyala

Said Azoury

Nikolas Baksh
Clinical Fellows

Benjamin Beech  Jarrod Bogue  Anthony Bozzo  David Brauer  Carissa Chu
Matthew Clements  Colin Court  Amanda Dann  Kimberly Dessources  Alex Doudt
Trey Durdin  Brett Ecker  Sarah Ehmann  Ryan Ellis  Cecilia Ethun
Anthony Farmer  Yael Feferman  Jacqueline Feinberg  Olga Filippova  Conall Fitzgerald
Paolo Goffredo  Sushmita Gordhandas  Katherine Gray  Mohammad Hararah  Mautin Hundeyin
Clinical Fellows

Facundo Iriarte  Song Jiang  Ravinder Kang  Sari Khaleel  Ryan Khan
Sarah Kim  Michael LaQuaglia Jr.  Esther Lau  Jay Lee  Andrew Lenis
Helena Levyn  George Li  Joseph Lopez  Beryl Manning-Geist  Jose Miguel Flores Martinez
Cristina Valero Mayor  Caitlin McIntyre  Sophia McKinley  Kaitlin McLoughlin  Benjamin Medina
Matan Mekayten  Kathryn Miller  Lea Moukarzel  Timothy Murtha  Tamar Nobel
Clinical Fellows

Linda Pak  Emily Palmquist  Roheena Panni  Isabel Pennings  Marlon Perera

Aaron Praiss  Phillip Rappold  Peter Reisz  Tiffany Sia  Harrison Spatz

Marissa Srour  Kidane Tewolde  Daniel Thomas  Hong Truong  Grace Um

Gerardo Vitiello  Austin Williams  Jack Woods  Robbie Woods  Effi Yeoshoua

Caleb Yeung  Wesley Yip  Jonathan Yuval  William Zamarrelli
SCIENTISTS
**Prasad S. Adusumilli**
Attending

**Research Focus:** Investigation of the tumor immune microenvironment and the development of T-cell-mediated immunotherapy for thoracic malignancies and pleural-based diseases. His team has championed regional immunotherapy delivery strategies, resulting in translation of mesothelin-targeted CAR T-cell immunotherapy for malignant pleural mesothelioma, lung, and breast cancers.

**Charlotte E. Ariyan**
Associate Attending

**Research Focus:** New ways of allowing the immune system to fight cancer by utilizing chemotherapy or injectable viral therapy in combination with immunotherapy. In addition, the lab is focused on finding unique vulnerabilities for treatment, in rare melanoma subtypes, such as acral melanoma.

**Vinod P. Balachandran**
Assistant Attending

**Research Focus:** The goal of the Balachandran lab is to discover new ways to stimulate the immune system to treat cancer through careful study of rare cancer patients with exceptional outcomes. The lab believes that deep study of these remarkable patients will identify fundamental mechanisms of how the immune system controls cancers, and accelerate the discovery of new effective drugs. The laboratory uses this approach to study pancreatic cancer, a model deadly cancer that is refractory to all treatments including immunotherapy – and specifically focus on a rare subgroup of pancreatic cancer patients with exceptional long-term survival to discover new immunotherapeutic approaches. The long-term vision of the Balachandran lab is to use a similar approach of study of biological extremes to usher in the next generation of cancer immunotherapies.

**Matthew Bott**
Assistant Attending

**Research Focus:** Understanding how tumors form and investigate new ways to treat them. His lab is working on designing new models to study cancer and then use these experimental models to develop better treatments.

**Brett Carver**
Associate Attending

**Research Focus:** Studying the biology of the genetic and molecular drivers of prostate tumorigenesis, defining the therapeutic biology associated with inhibitors targeting the PI3K pathway in prostate cancer, determining mechanisms of response and resistance to PI3K and AR inhibitors in prostate cancer, developing therapeutic strategies based on our pre-clinical work for clinical trial translation in patients with high-risk localized and metastatic prostate cancer.

**Aimee M. Crago**
Associate Attending

**Research Focus:** The rarity of soft tissue sarcomas has historically made the definition of genomic drivers of their initiation and progression difficult. Through copy number, whole exome and transcriptome analyses, however, common events associated with these lesions have recently been defined. The focus of the laboratory is to understand how these events, in the context of a mesenchymal cell background, promote sarcomagenesis.
Jonathan Coleman
Attending

**Research Focus:** Using laparoscopic, robotic, and image-guided therapies, the goal of the lab is to provide appropriate curative therapeutic interventions through the organ-sparing approaches of less-invasive surgery. They are interested in the application and careful study of techniques such as robotic (da Vinci) prostatectomy, laparoscopic partial nephrectomy, partial adrenalectomy, cryo- and radiofrequency ablation, and MRI-guided prostate interventions using state-of-the-art instrumentation and imaging technology. They are also coupling these approaches with basic science research investigations of human cancers to discover optimal therapeutic strategies that can be tailored to each of their patients.

Julio Garcia Aguilar
Attending

**Research Focus:** Examining ways to improve outcomes for peoples with colon and rectal cancers. He has led National Cancer Institute–sponsored studies aimed at improving the quality of life of patients with rectal cancer by performing smaller operations and identifying individuals who might avoid surgery altogether through sufficient elimination of tumors with radiation therapy and chemotherapy. He also focuses on the identification of biomarkers that could predict rectal cancer response to radiation therapy and chemotherapy, and examination of racial disparities in outcomes for people with colorectal cancer.

Abraham A. Hakimi
Associate Attending

**Research Focus:** The study of genetic and metabolic determinant of immune response in renal cell carcinoma. The lab uses both human samples and mouse models to identify microenvironmental determinants of systemic therapy response and resistance.

David R. Jones
Attending

**Research Focus:** The Jones lab is investigating the underlying genomic, transcriptomic, and signal transduction mechanisms involved in lung cancer metastasis. The laboratory focuses on metastases suppressor genes and their role in biology of metastases using multiple model systems including transgenic mice, patient-derived organoids, and human biospecimens. The lab also has expertise in using tumor genomics and related bioinformatics to predict tumor recurrence following surgical resection in patients with lung adenocarcinoma. Finally, working collaboratively with the Leyden lab, the Jones lab is examining the role of exosomes and the tumor microenvironment in the development and organotropism of lung cancer metastases.

Babak Mehrara
Attending

**Research Focus:** The lab focuses on lymphedema and has developed a number of models to study lymphedema in the laboratory with a goal of understanding how it develops. Additionally, the Mehrara lab is studying the mechanisms that regulate lymphatic function in pathological and physiological settings. The long-term goal of the laboratory is to design novel methods including surgery and medical treatments to prevent and treat lymphedema.

Luc Morris
Associate Attending

**Research Focus:** The lab members work at the intersection of cancer genomics, molecular biology, animal models, and clinical data science, to discover new biomarkers and new genetic drivers. The Morris lab focuses mainly on head and neck cancer but also studies biomarkers across many cancer types. The lab has identified new cancer genes, developed new animal models, uncovered factors that cancers use to resist therapy or escape immune surveillance, and critically assessed genetic biomarkers that predict response to immunotherapy.
**Research Focus:** Their research focuses on the interface between cancer genomics, epigenetics, and immunotherapy as it pertains to urothelial cancers. A current major focus is to identify predictive biomarkers of treatment response and resistance to intravesical bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG) and to develop novel treatment combinations that could enhance BCG's effectiveness. Their long-term objective is to translate the laboratory findings into rationally designed investigator-initiated phase I/II trials of novel therapies for patients with bladder cancer.

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**Eugene J. Pietzak**
Assistant Attending

**George Plitas**
Associate Attending

**Sam Singer**
Attending

**Bhuvanesh Singh**
Attending

**Jesse Joshua Smith**
Associate Attending

**Brian Untch**
Assistant Attending

**Research Focus:** Understanding the molecular mechanisms governing the differentiation and function of CD4 T lymphocytes and their role in immunity and tolerance. Major areas of interest include: the molecular and cellular mechanisms governing the differentiation and function of regulatory T cells; the roles these cells play in control of autoimmunity, tumor immunity, and immunity to infections, and in the maintenance of immune homeostasis at environmental interfaces.

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**Research Focus:** Discovery of genetic and epigenetic alterations in sarcoma to gain insight into sarcoma biology and find new targets for therapy. Many sarcoma subtypes respond poorly to chemotherapy, so there is an urgent need for better treatment options for patients whose disease cannot be cured surgically.

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**Research Focus:** Delineating the role of ubiquitination in cancer pathogenesis.

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**Research Focus:** They developed the first relevant model of rectal cancer. Now in their NCI-funded laboratory, they are working to optimize this model to better study rectal cancer and to uncover targeted treatments for people with rectal cancer who do not respond to standard treatments. This type of research requires investigation of the chemotherapy and radiation resistance mechanisms and predictive markers that can be assessed in the tumors and models derived from patients. They seek to rapidly move findings from the lab into early phase clinical trials to improve outcomes for rectal cancer patients.

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**Research Focus:** Exploring the mechanisms of thyroid and gastrointestinal tumor progression and responses to therapy. Using genetically accurate models of cancer, the lab explores why certain tumors are more aggressive than others and how best to treat these with various interventions.
Research Focus: Study of endometrial cancers, the most common gynecologic cancer in developed countries. The aim is to identify biologically relevant subclasses of endometrial cancers and their driving molecular alterations. The goal of the lab research is to define how these molecular changes can be exploited to guide the delivery of optimal therapy for specific patients with endometrial cancer.

Britta Weigelt
Associate Attending

Research Focus: The laboratory focuses on elucidating interactions between cancers and nerves. They study the molecular and cellular mechanisms underlying perineural invasion, tumor innervation, and tumor neurogenesis. Ongoing projects examine the central role of the nerve microenvironment in supporting these processes and reveal how cancer cells co-opt normal nerve repair and nerve development programs to drive tumor progression. Characterizing the relationships between cancers and nerves reveals opportunities for novel therapeutic interventions.

Richard J. Wong
Attending
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<td>Ariyan, Charlotte</td>
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Department of Surgery
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<td>Single cell-sequencing of uveal melanoma and retinoblastoma</td>
<td>Francis, Jasmine, MD</td>
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<td>18-152</td>
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<td>20-078</td>
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<td>17-067</td>
<td>Investigation of Genetic Alterations and Chemotherapy Resistance in Osteogenic Sarcoma and Other Solid Tumors</td>
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<td>18-536</td>
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<td>16-1514</td>
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<td>17-636</td>
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<td>Adusumilli, Prasad, MD</td>
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<td>19-044</td>
<td>Imaging of Esophageal Precancerous and Cancerous Tissue Samples with PARP Tracers</td>
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<td>12-001</td>
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<td>20-313</td>
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<td>20-319</td>
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## DoS Protocol Review Committee

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<tr>
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<th>Service</th>
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<tr>
<td>Edmund K. Bartlett</td>
<td>Gastric and Mixed Tumor</td>
<td>Expedited Reviewer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timothy F. Donahue</td>
<td>Urology</td>
<td>Expedited Reviewer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nicola Fabbri</td>
<td>Orthopedics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Jewell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laurie J. Kirstein</td>
<td>Breast</td>
<td>Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audrey Mauguen</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luc G. T. Morris</td>
<td>Head and Neck</td>
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<td>Jonas A. Nelson</td>
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<td>George Plitas</td>
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<td>Gaetano Rocco</td>
<td>Thoracic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kara Long Roche</td>
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<td>Jaspreet S. Sandhu</td>
<td>Urology</td>
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Long Roche K, Chi DS. Practical guidelines for triage to neoadjuvant chemotherapy in advanced ovarian cancer: Big risk, big reward...or too much risk? Gynecol Oncol. 2020;157(3):561-562.


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**Abu-Rustum N**, Deasy JO, Snyder A, Miller ML, Brenton JD, Sala E. Integrated multi-tumor radio-genomic marker of outcomes in pa-

Bellezzo M, Paiva Fonseca G, Verhaegen F, Berbee M, Van Limbergen EJ. Microscopic intramural exten-
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toneal lymph node dissection in patients with urological malignancies: update of efficacy and predictors of com-


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# Conferences and Presentations

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