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Cancer Center

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▼ Letter from the Director – Thank You, Paula Traktman



As Paula Traktman, PhD and her husband, Stephen Duncan, DPhil, leave Milwaukee and MCW for the University of South Carolina, I wanted to take a few minutes to express the Cancer Center's gratitude for her strong leadership and tireless support of our efforts.

Paula was our Associate Director of Basic Science, and played a key role in the development and organization of our research programs. This was, at times, an arduous process and required creativity, passion, intelligence and what is sometimes called "advanced people skills." Paula brought all of these attributes to her leadership role and to her day to day interactions on behalf of the Cancer Center.

She was also instrumental in many key faculty appointments, and served on multiple recruitment committees. She played an active role in bringing in several strong cancer researchers to the MCW Cancer Center, and took the time to get to know each candidate and share the wonderful research environment that exists here. I know the time she spent with candidates was a major factor in their decision to join MCW.

Paula was also committed to developing the next generation of cancer researchers through mentoring, collaboration and encouragement. "Paula was my strongest advocate and was someone I could always go to for guidance and mentorship. I always value discussions with Paula as she has a clear vision and strategic thinking of the research not only within the MCW Cancer Center, but how that research aligned with the larger research goals of the entire MCW translational research community," shared Mike Dwinell, PhD, who worked with Paula for many years.

Most of all, Paula was an advocate and cheerleader for the MCW Cancer Center and our progress in building a world-class center. From helping us develop more powerful presentations for our ESAB, to traveling with me to the NCI to explain our basic research strengths, I could always count on her to help me present our Cancer Center in the very best light. She was an active fundraiser for the Cancer Center, and in particular worked closely with the organization [Ridin' for Research](#) that has raised over \$1.2 million to support cancer research at MCW.

We will miss Paula and her leadership, and wish her the best in her role as Dean of the College of Graduate Studies at the Medical University of South Carolina.

Sincerely,

Special Edition, Clinical Trials Office, August 2012
July 2011
MCW News Releases
Fundraising Events
Make A Gift
Patient Care
Cancer Center Contact Information

Ming You, MD, PhD

▼ **Cancer Research Excellence - New NCI Grants for Carol Williams, PhD and Mike Flister, PhD**

Congratulations to Carol Williams, PhD, who received a five-year, \$1.75 million grant from the NCI to study a new approach at limiting the spread of breast cancer.

Dr. Williams previously made a discovery that activation of a large family of molecules called G protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs) are key in the transformation, growth and spread of breast cancer cells. Inhibiting those GPCRs should shut down the signaling of a protein that drives the spread, or metastasis, of breast cancer tumor cells.

In this project, Dr. Williams and her co-investigators will work to develop an innovative strategy to inhibit breast cancer metastasis by repurposing existing medications that target GPCRs—but which are not currently used to treat cancers. The proposed research will provide significant benefits by developing an innovative strategy to inhibit breast cancer metastasis.

Dr. Williams is the co-leader of the Cancer Center's Cancer Biology research program and an active and essential leader in the process of achieving NCI designation. She is PI on one other NCI R01 and multiple Cancer Center pilot and private foundation grants.

Michael Flister, PhD, was also recently awarded an NCI R01 for his project, "Genetic Mapping of Breast Cancer Risk in the Tumor Microenvironment." This project will develop a novel tool (Consomic Xenograft Model) for understanding the causative risk variants of breast cancer in the tumor microenvironment – the majority of which are currently unstudied and unknown.

Dr. Flister completed his post-doctoral work with Dr. Howard Jacob in the Human and Molecular Genetics Center, and is now an Assistant Professor in the Department of Physiology at MCW. Dr. Flister was also recently awarded a Cancer Center Independent Research Seed Grant in Breast Cancer for his project, "Identifying Chemoresistance Mechanisms in the Tumor Microenvironment" and has been awarded two travel grants for his winner presentation and poster at the 2013 and 2014 Scientific Retreats.

▼ **Cancer Clinical Excellence - Doug Evans Named as one of the World's Top Five Pancreatic Cancer Experts**



Congratulations to Dr. Douglass Evans for being named the **fourth top expert in the world** in pancreatic cancer.

[Expertscape](#) ranks cancer experts and institutions using an objective, data-driven tool and then recognizes the top ten experts for their pre-eminent contributions to the understanding and treatment of pancreatic cancer.

The greater Milwaukee area is lucky to have such a strong leader to combat this terrible disease. While 5-year survival rates for many cancers have significantly increased in the past decades, pancreas cancer remains a virtual

death sentence, with only 6 in 100 patients alive five years after diagnosis. With ambiguous symptoms that result in late diagnosis, survival for many patients is measured in months instead of years.

Pancreatic cancer also disproportionately impacts communities in Southeastern Wisconsin. The NCI has designated Milwaukee County as a Priority Index 1 for pancreatic cancer, meaning mortality rates are higher than the national average, and are rising. Since 2009, the Froedtert & Medical College of Wisconsin Cancer Center has seen a 333% increase in unique patients with a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, most of which are treated by Dr. Evans.

The MCW Cancer Center is proud to be home to such a recognized and honored researcher and clinician.

▼ **Pilot Grant Awardees**

The MCW Cancer Center is pleased to announce the winners of the spring 2015 cycle of pilot grants. For this cycle, we awarded a total of \$698,355 in seed funding to support new ideas and emerging

investigators in cancer research. We are pleased to announce the following awards and congratulate these members on their creativity and scientific excellence.

Dr. Carmen Bergom, Thomas A. and Lorraine M. Rosenberg Award for Translational Cancer Research, *"Identifying Advanced Imaging Techniques and Gene Expression in the Tumor Microenvironment That Predicts Breast Cancer Treatment Sensitivity"* \$80,000 over two years.

Dr. Qing Miao, Kathy Duffey Fogarty Award for Breast Cancer Research, *"NgBR is a Potential Therapeutic Target for Increasing Susceptibility of ER Positive Breast Cancer to Chemotherapy"* \$50,000 over one year.

Dr. Albert Grotti, Award for Innovative Projects Leveraging Unique MCW Facilities or Resources, *"Negative Impact of NO on Photodynamic Therapy for Brain Cancer"* \$100,000 over one year.

Dr. Stuart Wong, Kurtis R. Froedtert Clinical Trials Seed Grant, *"Smartphone Pain App for Assessing Oral Mucositis Pain in Patients Receiving Head and Neck Radiation"* \$28,355 over two years.

Dr. Jill Gershan, Translational Research Program Seed Grant, *"Peripheral Immune Signature in Patients with Pancreatic Cancer"* \$50,000 over one year.

WBCS Independent Research Seed Grant in Breast Cancer, \$100,000 over two years:

Dr. Michael Flister, *"Identifying Chemoresistance Mechanisms in the Tumor Microenvironment"*

Dr. Mark McNally, *"Mechanisms of SmgGDS Alternative Splicing"*

Dr. Hyeonnam Jeong, *"The Role of TPL2 Activation in Androgen-Depletion Independent (ADI) Prostate Cancer Growth"*

State of Wisconsin Tax Checkoff Program, Independent Research Seed Grant in Breast Cancer, \$100,000 over two years:

Dr. Tina Yen, *"Understanding the Use of Advanced Practice Providers in Breast Cancer Care: A National Study"*

American Cancer Society Pilot Research Project Grants, \$30,000 for one year:

Dr. Kirsten Beyer, *"Nature Mentors: A Pilot Community-Based Program to Shift Time Use Toward Outdoor Physical Activity Among Children and Mentors for Cancer Prevention"*

Dr. John Neilson, *"Joint Kinetic Strategies in Oncology Patients with Femoral Endoprostheses"*

Dr. Brian Smith, *"Selective Inhibitors and Binding Targets of the BRD4 Bromodomains"*

▼ 2015 Retreat Wrap-Up



The focus of the 2015 MCW Cancer Center Scientific Retreat on Friday, March 20, 2015 was how Cancer Center researchers and physician scientists work together to move cancer research through the pipeline in order to inform patient care and outcomes and reduce mortality and cancer disparities. Specifically, cancer genomics and drug discovery were highlighted through presentations by two working groups newly formed at the Cancer Center. The 2015 retreat was also an opportunity to better understand how our collaborative work along the research

continuum continually moves us closer to becoming an NCI-Designated Cancer Center.

Dr. Mark Evers, Director of the recently NCI-designated Markey Cancer Center at the University of Kentucky, and Dr. Scott Weir, a Program Director at the University of Kansas Cancer Center, were the keynote speakers. Both speakers shared their designation experiences and provided feedback and advice to Cancer Center leaders and members.



From left: Peter LaViolette, Carmen Bergom and Liang Wang receive winning poster ribbons and certificates from Ming You. Not pictured, Amit Joshi and Gang Xin.

Learning from previous retreats and carefully considering feedback we received from attendees to the 2013 and 2014 events, the venue, agenda and approach was changed for 2015, and we received a lot of positive feedback about these changes. Almost 240 faculty and staff from MCW and our partner institutions registered for the event, and there were over 100 poster abstracts submitted.

The winning poster presenters were Peter LaViolette and Amit Joshi for cancer shared resource posters, Carmen Bergom for cancer population sciences posters, Liang Wang for the cancer translational science posters, and Gang Xin for the cancer basic science category. Each awardee received a \$500 travel grant from the MCW Cancer Center.

The 2015 award for Distinguished Service in Cancer Community Engagement was given to Mrs. Geneva Johnson. Mrs. Johnson has been a community leader and organizer for many years, and most recently co-chairs the Cancer Center Community Advisory Board. This award was a highlight of the day, with Mrs. Johnson sharing a bit of her long history with the Froedtert & MCW Cancer Center, including her role in moving radiation oncology from its former basement location.



Above: Mrs. Geneva Johnson, winner of the 2015 award for Distinguished Service in Cancer Community Engagement.

Thank you to everyone who made this year's retreat such a success! If you have additional feedback about this year's retreat, or suggestions for next year, please don't hesitate to contact Michele Ward at mward@mcw.edu.

▼ CTO Corner

Thank you, Phyllis Wattleworth

This month we say goodbye to Phyllis Wattleworth, who was integral to the formation of the Cancer Center Clinical Trials Office, and to the development of process and policies. Phyllis has worked with patients as a nurse and nurse manager since 1969, and at the CTO she managed the Solid Tumor - GI, GU, Breast team. Betty Oleson, the CTO Administrative Director had this to say about Phyllis, "*She has*

been our rock and yet provided us comic relief when it was most needed." We wish her the best on her well-deserved retirement, she will be missed.



Staff say goodbye to Phyllis at the recent staff appreciation luncheon.



Congratulations to Magdalisse Henderson, CRC on the breast team, on the birth of Jeremy Henderson, Jr. (aka J.J.) on June 7th.

Kudos to Becca Selle, CTO Education/Quality Assurance Manager, for joining and serving on the education committee at the upcoming January 2016 AACI-CRI annual meeting.

2015 SoCRA Prep & Exam a Success!

The Medical College of Wisconsin Cancer Clinical Trials Office sponsored the SoCRA (CCRP) Certification Preparation and GCP Review Course on May 15th, 2015 with an exam the following day.

The course aided participants in preparing for the Certified Clinical Research Professional (CCRP) certification exam through review of FDA and ICH Good Clinical Practice (GCP) guidelines. This is an International Certification Program developed to create an internationally-accepted standard of knowledge, education, and experience. The standards upon which this certification program is based have been set forth by this organization to promote recognition and continuing excellence in the ethical conduct of clinical trials. SoCRA developed the Certified Clinical Research Professional Certification program to evaluate a CRP's

knowledge, understanding, and application of the conduct of clinical investigations involving humans.

In addition to several clinical research professionals from the MCW CTO, the course and exam brought clinical research professionals from all over the country, including WI, IL, IN, MN, MO, NC, TN, VA, and Ontario. In total, 41 attended the prep course and 34 sat for the exam.

2015 Triumph Fund Dinner Scheduled for August 9th

CTO friend Janice Hovel has scheduled the third annual Triumph Fund dinner "Honoring the Lorax III," for Sunday, August 9th at the Wisconsin Club.

Last year, this event raised close to \$100,000 to help to support cancer clinical trials at the Medical College of Wisconsin/Froedtert Hospital Cancer Center.

Many MCW Cancer Center faculty and staff knew John Hovel, who passed away last August after being treated for Stage IV colon cancer. He was a patient at the MCW Cancer Center for four years. His family started the Triumph Fund in February 2013 to thank the outstanding medical team at the Cancer Center and to raise funds to support clinical trials. Information about purchasing tickets and other details will follow as the event draws near.

New CTO Hires for 2015

Please welcome the following new staff to the MCW Cancer Center Clinical Trials Office:

Donna Whitson-Jones Clinical Research Assistant – Hem, BMT Team

Sarah Phelps Clinical Research Coordinator – Hem, BMT Team

Rebekah Kroll	Clinical Research Assistant – Hem, BMT Team
Kirsten Jacobson, RN	Clinical Research Coordinator: H&N, Melanoma
Stacey Zindars, MS	Clinical Research Manager – Solid Tumor
Julie Bruno, MS	Clinical Research Assistant – Early Phase Trials
Jennifer Bollmer, PhD	Faculty Committee Coordinator
Carreen (Carrie) O'Connor	Scientific Writer (70% CTO)
Olivia Wenzel	Administrative Assistant (50% CTO)

Other Transitions:

- Hemavathy SunderRaj, QA Coordinator, left the CTO and MCW to pursue a career with an industry partner on April 24th.
- Barb Davies left the CTO on May 1st after 35 years as an MCW employee. She will stay in research, working in Carolyn Taylor's laboratory.
- On May 1st, Sandi Johnson transitioned to Enterprise Research System Administrator in IT to oversee the MCW-wide implementation of OnCore.
- Effective June 1, 2015, Kimberly Harris was promoted to Clinical Research Coordinator II.

▼ **Cancer Center Administration Team - New Staff and Promotions, FY15**

In fiscal year 2015, the MCW Cancer Center (MCWCC) has experienced a great deal of growth, adding new employees to the team, and expanding the roles and reach of other staff members.

Marilyn Larson started as the Associate Director of Administration in June 2014. Since this time, she has added or expanded the Cancer Center Administration team, including the promotion of **Anne Quimby Mathias** to Manager of Communications & Community Engagement Programs. In addition to ongoing cancer communications, Anne is working closely with **Melinda Stolley, PhD**, the Associate Director of Cancer Prevention & Control. Anne is helping Dr. Stolley develop new partnerships, programs and funding for community-engaged cancer research. Reporting to Anne and supporting her with cancer communications, events, and community engagement programs is new AA III **Sharon Brown** who started on June 15th. Sharon comes very highly recommended from the office of the Associate Dean of Business & Management at Cardinal Stritch University and brings internal communications, event planning and HR expertise.

New Administrative Assistant III **Erin Harmann** started on June 8th to support Dr. Melinda Stolley and Dr. Jim Thomas, both of who reside in the Cancer Center Administration space. Erin has been a part of the Froedtert and MCW family since 2008, working most recently as a new patient coordinator at the Clinical Cancer Center. Also providing executive support for MCWCC leadership is Administrative Assistant III **Michele Ward**, who is the executive assistant to director Ming You, PhD and associate director of administration Marilyn Larson, and provides office management services to the entire staff.

An area of significant growth is in our cancer research program management and coordination. Led by Research Program Manager **Kitty Marquardt**, the team grew to include **Maureen Bazelon** and **Stephanie Dhein**, who are both Research Program Coordinators. Maureen supports the Cancer Biology and Tumor Progression & Metastasis programs, and was the lead support staff for the recently submitted Pancreatic Cancer PPG. Stephanie supports the Hematologic Malignancy and Transplantation and Population Sciences programs, and recently organized the Population Sciences Retreat on June 12th. Also supporting the research program team, and helping with MCWCC social media, is part-time Clerk I **Rachel Italiano**, a student at Wisconsin Lutheran College. Rachel is the editor-in-chief of the college newspaper and comes to us with great experience in journalism and communications.

Business Manager **Brenda Brito's** area has grown as well, providing financial, billing and pre-award support to Cancer Center staff, members and the Clinical Trials Office. Of her staff, both **Chelsea VonRuden** and **Mike Anello** both received promotions, Chelsea to Financial Analyst I and Mike to Research Program Coordinator II. Chelsea plays a key role in developing the Cancer Center annual budget and drives receivable accounts for the CTO. Mike supports a number of large grants for center director Ming You, and oversees the Center's seed grants from announcements to review committees to notices of award. In addition to Mike and Chelsea, Brenda's team includes Budget Analyst **Wendy Wozney**, who recently celebrated over 20 years with MCW, and **Kathleen Schilz**, Administrative Assistant III, who is responsible for Cancer Center research space.

Betty Oleson, the Administrative Director of the Clinical Trials Office, has added several new positions in FY15. You can read about most of these in the [CTO Corner](#) section of this newsletter. These additions include Administrative Assistant II **Olivia Wenzel**, who will support Cancer Center administration managers for 50% of her time, and help with administrative support needs of the CTO for the other 50%. Betty also recently added **Carreen (Carrie) O'Connor** as the Scientific Writer for the CTO and MCW Cancer Center. Initially, Carrie will spend most of her time supporting Investigator Initiated Trials, helping to develop protocols and support investigators through regulatory processes, and will also help develop the Cancer Center Support Grant draft, the grant for NCI-designation.

Congratulations and welcome!

Milwaukee

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