- “Best retreat, ever”
- “The Cancer Center has arrived”
- “Phenomenal collaborative spirit”
- "Renewed energy as to why we do the hard work that we do.”

These were just some of the comments from the April 2019 Scientific Retreat. We couldn’t be more pleased about the event. It had high quality presentations, a wonderful venue on the lakefront, a terrific keynote speaker and of course all the conversation, questions, and excitement that each one of you brought. This is what makes the MCW Cancer Center so special – collaboration, creativity, and a dose of good old Milwaukee can-do spirit. It is this same spirit that we put towards our work together in the lab or the classroom. It exists from Grand Rounds events to our community engagement. It will hopefully be embodied in a new state-of-the-art cancer research building in the future. Because of all this, MCW Cancer Center enrolls more patients in cancer clinical trials than anyone else in Wisconsin.

We are uniquely positioned to lead cancer research and treatment in the region. This regional leadership was on full display at our Scientific Retreat. To all the Retreat speakers we express gratitude for taking the time and effort to prepare and rehearse thoughtful presentations. Your dedication to showcasing your work and how it plays into the larger mission of the MCW Cancer Center did a lot to impress our esteemed keynote speaker. But more importantly it allowed your fellow colleagues to glimpse some of the magic that is happening beyond their lab or research project. May this glimpse spark curiosity and excitement in growing new collaborative endeavors - impactful and innovative - that will draw upon the depth of our collective scientific proficiency, interdisciplinary diversity and clinical expertise.

Our quote for the Cancer Collaborative following the Retreat ties in perfectly – “If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” We are together and we are strong, and we will go the distance.

With Regards,
Hallgeir and Jim
MCW Cancer Center awarded top honor, among top 30 clinical research centers in U.S.

“The bravery and selflessness of these patients means that we are now recognized as one of the top 30 cancer centers in the country. Now, their friends and neighbors have access to even more cutting-edge cancer treatments – right here in their own backyard.”  
- Dr. Jim Thomas

“During our cancer clinical trial, we were thrilled to announce this honor, and I am especially thankful to the patients and families who trusted us to put them, or their loved ones, on a cancer clinical trial,” said Jim Thomas, MD, PhD, interim co-director of the MCW Cancer Center. For cancer patients treated throughout the Froedtert & MCW Cancer Network, the LAPS grant adds national recognition and resources to the institution’s renowned cancer research, clinical trials programs and disease-specific treatment teams rooted in academic medicine. This award would not have been possible without the hard work of the staff and leadership of the MCWCC Clinical Trials Office. As a top accruing center for clinical trials for several cooperative groups, they stand ready to assist with ongoing and future research. The grant also includes resources, funding and a network of collaboration, discovery and applications available to only the top cancer centers in the country that will greatly benefit Milwaukee and eastern Wisconsin.

“We have always been confident in our innovative and important cancer research and clinical care, but now we have that seal or stamp of approval from the NCI. It’s a very important milestone for us as a center,” said Hallgeir Rui, MD, PhD, interim co-director of the MCW Cancer Center.

The National Cancer Institute’s (NCI) National Clinical Trials Network (NCTN) recently designated the MCW Cancer Center as a Lead Academic Participating Site (LAPS) for the strength and innovation of its ongoing research and science and robust participation in its clinical trials. The MCW Cancer Center is one of only 30 institutions in the U.S. to achieve this designation, and the only institution in Milwaukee and the eastern Wisconsin region. With only 30 other LAPS institutions nationwide, this designation pushes an already outstanding and high-potential clinical research enterprise to the next level of scientific engagement, research driven treatments and outstanding clinical care. To earn this honor, the MCW Cancer Center met objective external measurements, including excellent scientific leadership in the design and conduct of research, and confirmation of robust participation in the National Clinical Trial Network and cooperative group trials.

WI LGBT Summit: Coming Out and HPV Workshops

On March 2, 2019 the MCW Cancer Center attended the WI LGBT Summit with two workshops focused on breaking disparities. “Coming Out To Your Provider: Cultural Humility in the Clinic” led by Malika Siker, MD and Ross Zeitlin, MD along with Annie Lakatos, APP Joanna Woodbury, CSW from the Inclusion Clinic. The other “What You Need to Know About HPV Vaccination & Screening” led by Alan Nyitray, PhD and Ross Zeitlin, MD along with Sarah Lundeen, RN & Annie Lakatos, APP. Both workshops were well attended and featured a wide ranging discussion during the Q&A.

Menthol Cigarettes and the African American Community

An estimated 45,000 African Americans die each year from tobacco-related illnesses, according to the National African American Tobacco Prevention Network. While this number is in itself staggering, African American smokers are more than 10 times as likely to smoke menthol cigarettes than their white counterparts.

The principal investigator of LAPS is Stuart Wong, MD, and his co-investigators are William Bradley, MD; Timothy Fenske, MD; Elizabeth Gore, MD; Mary Horowitz, MD, MS, Robert A. Uihlein, Jr., Professor of Hematologic Research; Brent Logan, PhD; Janet Rader, MD, Jack A. & Elaine D. Klieger Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology; Kathleen Schmainda, PhD, Robert C. Olson, MD, Professor in Radiology; James Thomas, MD, PhD, and Tina Yen, MD, MPH. Numerous other faculty, staff, patients and partners have contributed to make this LAPS grant possible for the MCW Cancer Center.

There is active research being conducted on the topic of menthol cigarettes and the African American community. Jeff Engelmann, PhD, was awarded a Medical Research Grant from the Greater Milwaukee Foundation to explore this from a neurobiological perspective. This study is important because it will provide more information about whether menthol is more than just a flavor added to tobacco products, but rather an addictive ingredient. This grant is an important step in addressing tobacco disparities in Milwaukee while further strengthening our community-academic partnership.

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Researchers launch MOMENTUM study with MR-Linac

Researchers and physicians from Froedtert & the Medical College of Wisconsin launched the MOMENTUM study (Multiple Outcome Evaluation of Radiation Therapy Using the MR-Linac) to generate and evaluate data to enable safe, fast and, above all, ‘evidence-based’ introduction of magnetic resonance radiation therapy (MR/RT) into clinical practice.

The study will collect data including treatment, tumor control rates, quality of life and other outcomes measures from patients being imaged and/or treated on Elekta Unity, the world’s only high-field MR/RT system. MCW physicians and researchers are one of the seven founding members of the originating MR-linac Consortium, a global consortium of cancer institutions. Consortium members are collaborating on the MOMENTUM study and together these institutions will collect data from about 6,000 patients over a five-year span.

“The MOMENTUM study takes a unique approach in that it is prospectively collecting data from this new piece of treatment technology, versus waiting until after the technology has been implemented into the clinic, which is usually the case,” said William A. Hall, MD, assistant professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology and Surgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin that he is fortunate to have access to this technology, versus waiting until after the technology has been implemented into the clinic, which is usually the case,” said William A. Hall, MD, assistant professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology and Surgery at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Dr. William A. Hall

The Unity MR-linac is the first high-field MR-linac technology in the world to simultaneously generate diagnostic quality magnetic resonance images and deliver high-dose radiation beams. It allows radiotherapy to be adjusted in real time and to be delivered more accurately than ever before. It is especially helpful for patients with tumors that are difficult to treat with radiation therapy, such as a tumor in the lung or upper abdomen that moves with each breath, or one close to radiation-sensitive organs such as the stomach, kidney, heart, spinal cord or brain.

Redox and Bioenergetics Shared Resource Helps MCW Investigators Understand Cancer Cell Behavior

In 2012, the MCW Cancer Center sought to develop the institution’s Cancer Biology Research Hub and enhance scientific discovery in the area of cancer treatment and therapeutics. The Redox and Bioenergetics Shared Resource (RBSR) was established to provide state-of-the-art instrumentation, cutting-edge techniques, and sophisticated expertise dedicated to investigating cancer cell metabolism and redox signaling. The mission of the RBSR is to enable researchers to assess cellular bioenergetics, metabolism, ROS generation, and intracellular redox status.

The RBSR provides an environment for education and training in research on oxy-radicals and redox bioenergetics. The resource supports and guides investigators in the development of anticancer treatments based on the redox profiling of cancer cell and bioenergetic status. Balararam Kalyanaraman, PhD, directs the RBSR with oversight by an advisory committee that reviews all services provided by the resource. The RBSR offers services and instrumentation to assess many aspects of redox signaling and metabolic function in cancer cells. The RBSR can help analyze cancer cells of different phenotypes including patient-derived cell lines, to determine their bioenergetic and redox profiles in order to develop effective therapies.

RBSR is an ideal resource for determining metabolic phenotypes and metabolic switching of cancer cells, and exploiting the difference in their metabolic needs, to develop new therapeutics. The RBSR has been and will continue to be an important resource for advancing studies in cancer biology. MCW investigators are fortunate to have access to this cutting-edge resource right here on campus.

Joint Finance Committee Approves $10M in State Budget for New Cancer Research Center at MCW

We are thrilled to announce that on Tuesday, June 11th, the Joint Finance Committee approved a $10M budget item for the new cancer research facility! Wisconsin faces very challenging cancer disparities, with a devastating prevalence in urban Milwaukee areas. Accelerating novel treatments and cures for cancer is a top research priority for MCW and our health system partners. This investment and partnership will be a catalyst to attract additional federal and private research funding, create new biotech startups, expand clinical trials, and most importantly improve the health of the kids and adults in Wisconsin. Today, MCW enrolls more patients in cancer clinical trials than anyone else in Wisconsin. “We believe in the health of our citizens, we believe that its necessary for us to invest dollars in research to bring cutting edge cures to the people of Wisconsin and we cannot do that without the researchers and partnership between MCW and the state of Wisconsin,” said Joseph E. Kerschner, MD, Dean, MCW School of Medicine, Provost and Executive Vice President. “This partnership will be the cornerstone for us to provide new resources and new research that will benefit all the citizens of Wisconsin.”

Cutting-Edge Research Underway at the MCW Cancer Center

Dr. Marcelo Bonni

Dr. Bonini and his lab received a grant from the Department of Defense Army Research Office aimed at studying mechanisms to target the oncometabolism for therapy in breast cancer. The laboratory is evolving to the concept of redox epigenetics. It is a highly innovative idea that proposes that changes to the electrical state of nucleus regulate the selective expression of specific genes by changing the epigenetic code. We propose that being able to detect these changes may inform about disease much before it actually manifests and that correcting these electrical changes may prevent or reverse disease processes.
Dr. Judith Kaur’s Grand Rounds lecture in the Bolger Auditorium

At the Share the Care conference, many MCWCC faculty members facilitated community dialogue and answered questions from conference attendees. The Talking Circles were a highlight of the conference and something that many attendees were excited to participate in with cancer clinicians and researchers.

Thanks to our Share the Care Talking Circle leaders who gave their time, knowledge and dinner hour to have casual, candid conversations with attendees, in a comfortable setting:

- Maraty Gray, BA, CCRP
- Sailaja Kamaraju, MD
- Dev Karan, PhD
- Sarah Lundeen, RN, MSN, APNP
- Alan Nyitray, PhD
- Rebecca Selle, BS, CCRP
- Malika Siker, MD
- Ryan Spellecy, PhD
- Melinda Stolley, PhD
- James Thomas, MD, PhD

Congratulations to MCWCC members Dr. Alan Nyitray and Dr. Malika Siker for recognition of their commitment to the LGBTQ+ community. Drs. Siker and Nyitray were featured in MCW News in April, and have been critical to the success of recent MCWCC community outreach and engagement work, and in particular, supporting our efforts to address cancer disparities in Milwaukee’s LGBTQ+ communities. Thank you both for your time, commitment and energy.
MCW Cancer Center Scientific Retreat
April 26, 2019
Together, Taking on Cancer’s Toughest Challenges.

On April 26th at the Discovery World Science and Technology Museum on the beautiful downtown lakefront of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the MCW Cancer Center retreat took place with almost 300 researchers, clinicians, and community members present. The keynote address was given by Douglas Lowy, Acting Director of the National Cancer Institute. Presentations were given by leaders and members of the Cancer Prevention and Outcomes, Cancer Biology, and Discovery & Developmental Therapeutics Programs. A poster session added to the day.

“This is the best scientific retreat that I’ve attended, at any cancer center.”
- Marja Nevalainen, MD, PhD

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- Marja Nevalainen, MD, PhD

“Today the MCW Cancer Center has really arrived!”
- Mary Horowitz, MD

“The Talks were engaging, facility was wonderful, food was great, content was very interesting.”

“Outstanding science, broad spectrum of research, polished and clear presentations, inspirational key note lecture, key sense of cancer centeredness, no technical glitches, organizers did a great job...”

“Renewed energy as to why we do the hard work that we do.”

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"Loved the personal notes with each talk about their 'why'."

"It gave me insight to more research going on at the Cancer Center."

"Attending as a Cancer Board Member, I was absolutely enthralled with the presentations and the scientific discoveries being made by the faculty and staff at MCW."

“Great learning opportunity and place to see the work done by the MCW Cancer Center.”

Special Congratulations
To everyone who presented at the 2019 Scientific Retreat.
To everyone who asked questions and engaged with the speakers and poster presenters.
To all those who submitted a poster or served as a judge.
To all those who attended, learned, and collaborated with their colleagues.
Thank You.
We would love to get your feedback about the event. Please click on the link below and complete the retreat survey. Your response will be anonymous.

https://mcwisc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9oyYPwlmYmrgp81

"Outstanding science, broad spectrum of research, polished and clear presentations, inspirational keynote lecture..."

"It was impressive to hear the NCI Director and his questions to our presenters."

"Loved the 'why' the speakers got involved in cancer research, I found that very impactful."

"Very informative & GREAT opportunity for networking."

"...impressed with engagement of Dr. Lowy."

"Level of expertise presented was incredible. Not only the speakers but the poster sessions were phenomenal."

"Very informative & GREAT opportunity for networking."
2019 SCIENTIFIC RETREAT POSTER AWARDS

BASIC SCIENCE

Shreya Roy Chowdhury, PhD
“SNRK-mediated metabolic reprogramming plays a crucial role in the initial stages of ovarian cancer metastasis”

TRANSLATIONAL SCIENCE

Gang Xin, PhD
“A Novel Immunotherapy Overcomes Antigen Escape and Prevents Relapse”

POPULATION SCIENCE

Jeffrey Engelmann, PhD
“Developing a Neural Biomarker of Smoking Cessation”

PILOT GRANTS

Michele Battle, PhD
“Novel roles for GATA4 in defining the squamocolumnar junction in the GI tract: Implications for Barrett’s esophagus”

THANK YOU to all those who submitted posters and participated in the poster session.

“The recognition of staff and other Cancer Center members (including clinicians and scientists) really contributed to the feeling that all of us have a role in moving the Cancer Center forward.”

“EXCELLENCE in BASIC SCIENCE RESEARCH”
Marcelo Bonini, PhD

“EXCELLENCE in POPULATION SCIENCE”
Jeffrey Engelmann, PhD

“EXCELLENCE in CLINICAL RESEARCH”
Paul Ritch, MD

“STAFF RECOGNITION AWARD”
Ashley Dunton
Operations Coordinator

“STAFF RECOGNITION AWARD”
Sharon Yim
Clinical Research Coordinator

“STAFF RECOGNITION AWARD”
Katy Schroeder
Early Phase Research Manager

CANCER COLLABORATIVE AWARDS

Directors’ Award for Highly Promising Peer Reviewed Cancer Research

“Developing a Neural Biomarker of Smoking Cessation”
Jeffrey Engelmann, PhD

“Novel Immunotherapy Overcomes Antigen Escape and Prevents Relapse”
Gang Xin, PhD

“Novel roles for GATA4 in defining the squamocolumnar junction in the GI tract: Implications for Barrett’s esophagus”
Michele Battle, PhD

“Screening and characterizing regulatory SNPs at prostate cancer risk loci”
Liang Wang

“Targeting metabolic reprogramming and OXPHOS as a viable anti-melanoma strategy”
Michael Dwinell & Balaraman Kalyanaraman
MCW Cancer Center

Coming Events

THANK YOU EVERYONE FOR A SUCCESSFUL

MCW CANCER CENTER
SCIENTIFIC RETREAT
2019

Grand Rounds
July 12 at Noon
CLCC, 3rd Floor, Conf Room M
*Precision Health Equity for Gastric Cancer in Latinos*
Luis Carvajal-Carmona, PhD from UC Davis

Grand Rounds
July 26, 2-3 pm
CLCC, 3rd Floor, Conf Room M
*Changing Paradigms in the Treatment of Endometrial Cancer*
Ann Klopp, MD, PhD from MD Anderson

Grand Rounds
Friday, August 2 at Noon
CLCC, 3rd Floor, Conf Room M
Michael Fiore, MD, MPH, MBA
Director, Center for Tobacco Research and Intervention
University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health

2nd Annual Cancer Disparities Symposium
Saturday, Sept 7, 8:00 am
Italian Community Center
Keynote Speakers: Rick Kittles, PhD and Curtis Pettaway, MD

Cancer Collaborative Event
Tuesday, Sept 10, 4:30-6:30 pm
HUB 9th Floor

Cancer Crush 2019
Saturday, Sept 28, 9:00 am
MCW Campus

3rd Annual Multiple Myeloma Patient and Caregiver Symposium
Saturday, Sept 28, 7:15 am
The Ingleside Hotel, 2810 Golf Road, Pewaukee, WI

THANK YOU EVERYONE FOR A SUCCESSFUL
MCW CANCER CENTER
SCIENTIFIC RETREAT
2019

SAVE THE DATE
CANCER CRUSH 2019
SEPTEMBER 28

Stay tuned for more information.