

Research Roundup

Ibrutinib Approval

Ibrutinib, a pill used to treat lymphoma and leukemia as well as chronic graft-versus-host disease (cGVHD) in adults, has been approved for cGVHD in pediatric patients. Dr. Paul Carpenter, clinical director of LTFU, led the multicenter study that reported a 60% response rate.

New studies of cGVHD treatments

LTFU continues to study new therapies for cGVHD. Look for other clinical trials of new agents for cGVHD that (a) just started and doesn't yet require steroid treatment; (b) first line therapy for cGVHD and (c) cGVHD that has not responded to other therapies.

New vaccination guidelines

Dr. Carpenter has been involved in developing updated guidelines for vaccinations. Look for some changes that we will be implementing in LTFU including combination preparations so there are fewer shots! Guidance about COVID vaccines will also follow expert recommendations.

Fear of relapse

Studies show that even many years after transplant, some survivors are very fearful of their original disease recurring. This year's module tries to understand these feelings better because we would like to develop ways to decrease their impact on survivors' lives.

Return to work and school

Dr. Rachel Salit and Dr. Neel Bhatt are studying ways to help transplant survivors return to work and school. Making this transition back to a more normal life is particularly challenging for survivors who worry about being out of the workforce or left behind, and who are still immunocompromised. Ongoing communication with employers or school administrators is key to helping ease the return to work or school.

LTFU Profiles

This year Fred Hutch Cancer Center welcomed two new faculty members, Dr. Rohtesh Mehta and Dr. Catherine Lee, who both have extensive experience in blood and bone marrow transplantation. Lina Lee ARNP is also new to the LTFU advanced practice provider clinical team.

Dr. Rohtesh Mehta

Dr. Mehta is a hematologist and blood and marrow transplant physician-scientist who previously worked at MD Anderson in Houston.

When did you first become aware of Fred Hutch?

"It was very early during my residency training when I decided that I wanted to be transplant physician. And of course, Fred Hutch is the name that is associated with transplants, as it all started here. I became much more aware of the advancements made by Fred Hutch in the field of transplant when I wrote a book chapter titled "History and current status of hematopoietic cell transplantation". Almost all of the early references in that chapter were related to the studies conducted at Fred Hutch. It was very fascinating to say the least. "

When did you join Fred Hutch and what has been your experience so far?

"I joined here in Jan 2023, and I love it so far. My experience with patient care has exceeded my expectations. We have a wonderful team of physicians, advanced practice providers, nurses and pharmDs, and it is truly a collaborative team-work (where everyone contributes equally in their capacities) rather than a hierarchical model of care."

What does your research focus on?

"I hope to expand on my research interests in the prevention and treatment of GVHD, which remains one of the leading causes of significant morbidity post-transplant."

LONG-TERM FOLLOW-UP NEWS

Dr. Catherine Lee

“I am a medical oncologist with clinical expertise in blood and marrow transplantation (BMT) and cellular therapy for the treatment of hematologic cancers in adults. My practice focus is on the survivorship experience and management of late complications of BMT, including chronic graft-versus-host disease (cGVHD). My research portfolio includes designing clinical trials for cGVHD, implementing interventions to improve access to high-quality transplant care, and optimizing the long-term health of survivors of BMT. I was previously at the Huntsman Cancer Institute in Salt Lake City.”

Do you remember when you first heard of Fred Hutch?

“I first knew of Fred Hutch when I was a fellow-in-training in the specialty of hematology and oncology. I took part in the Fred Hutch Visiting Physician Program in 2013 and spent a month taking care of patients undergoing bone marrow transplantation. I uncovered just the surface of the scientific activity that was ongoing at the center, and I was impressed by the excellent care that the team provided to their patients.”

When did you join the Fred Hutch and what are you looking forward to during your time here?

“I joined Fred Hutch in February 2023 because of the group’s commitment to advancing the science of cancer treatment while also providing complex and compassionate care to its patients. The Hutch has long led the field of BMT and has a rich history of researching late effects and survivorship issues in our transplant recipients so we can ultimately improve the lives of our patients, years after their transplant. I am excited to join the group’s effort in beating cancer and optimizing the

long-term health of cancer survivors. I look forward to meeting you and working as a team so that we can provide the best care that fits with you and your needs.”

Lina Lee ARNP

“I officially joined Fred Hutch in July 2015, but prior to that, I had been a nurse on the inpatient BMT unit at UW Medical Center for 5 years. In that time, I had the opportunity to see patients throughout their transplant journey starting with their pretransplant evaluations to while they were actively going through transplant. I continue to be impressed with the incredible team of doctors, ARNP/PA-Cs, nurses, pharmacists, nutritionists, social workers, etc., that I have the opportunity to work with, and now look forward to providing care for patients dealing with chronic GVHD in their lives as a transplant survivor.”

Use MyChart to link and share your medical records

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