



NORTHWESTERN
UNIVERSITY

Hematology/Oncology News



ROBERT H. LURIE
COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CENTER
OF NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

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Featured Faculty



Jessica Altman, M.D.
Assistant Professor

Dr. Altman graduated from Brown University in 1997 and then completed her degree in Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh in 2001. She conducted her Internship and Residency in Internal Medicine at the University of Chicago. Dr. Altman served as chief fellow during her hematology/oncology fellowship at Northwestern

University until joining the division in 2007.

Since becoming a faculty member, Dr. Altman's clinical and research have focused on leukemia. Her main research interest is signal transduction in acute leukemia with a specific interest in the mTOR (mammalian target of rapamycin) pathway. This interest developed as a fellow working with Dr. Leon Plataniias who continues to mentor her. Her goals are to identify drugs that work synergistically with chemotherapy and bring those drugs to clinical trial. More recently she's been working on the role of MNK (*MAPK (Mitogen-Activated Protein Kinase)-Interacting Kinase*) in the biology of acute leukemia and the effects of traditional chemotherapy used to treat acute leukemia on the MNK pathway. She is studying the effects of combinations of MNK inhibitors and chemotherapy in acute leukemia cell lines and patient samples.

With Dr. Martin Tallman's mentorship, Jessica has designed a clinical trial with a new retinoid and arsenic trioxide for the treatment of relapsed APL (acute promyelocytic leukemia). Because of the relative rarity of this clinical problem, they have developed a consortium of centers to join this study. In addition, she is developing a phase I clinical trial with an oral chemotherapeutic for maintenance therapy for older adults with acute myeloid leukemia. She is also working on a clinical trial for patients with untreated APL who are not able to or choose not to receive anthracycline chemotherapy. This trial is based directly on work from Dr. Leon Plataniias' laboratory.

Her interests, outside of work, include downhill skiing, reading, and spending time with her husband and children.

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Hematology/Oncology News

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Recent Publications

Agulnik M, Cohen EW, Cohen RB, Chen EX, Vokes EE, Hotte SJ, Winquist E, Laurie S, Hayes DN, Dancey JE, Brown S, Pond GR, Lorimer I, Daneshmand M, Ho J, Tsao MS, Siu LL. Phase II study of lapatinib in recurrent or metastatic epidermal growth factor receptor and/or erbB2 expressing adenoid cystic carcinoma and non adenoid cystic carcinoma malignant tumors of the salivary glands. *J Clin Oncol*. 2007 Sep 1;25(25):3978-84.

Stein E, **Aranha O**, **Agulnik M** New therapeutic options in gastrointestinal stromal tumors. *Oncology (Williston Park)*. 2008 Feb;22(2):206-11; discussion 215-6, 219. PMID: 18409663 [PubMed - in process]

McKoy JM, Stonecash RE, Cournoyer D, Rossert J, Nissenson AR, Raisch DW, Casadevall N, **Bennett CL**. Epoetin-associated pure red cell aplasia: past, present, and future considerations. *Transfusion*. 2008 May 14;. [Epub ahead of print]

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Shankaran V, **Wisinski KB**, **Mulcahy MF**, **Benson AB**. The role of molecular markers in predicting response to therapy in patients with colorectal cancer. *Mol Diagn Ther*. 2008;12(2):87-98 PMID: 18422373 [PubMed - in process]

McDermott MM, Guralnik JM, Ferrucci L, Tian L, Liu K, Liao Y, **Green D**, Sufit R, Hoff F, Nishida T, Sharma L, Pearce WH, Schneider JR, Criqui MH. Asymptomatic Peripheral Arterial Disease Is Associated With More Adverse Lower Extremity Characteristics Than Intermittent Claudication. *Circulation*. 2008 May 5;. [Epub ahead of print]

Grugan KD, Ma C, **Singhal S**, Krett NL, **Rosen ST**. Dual regulation of glucocorticoid-induced leucine zipper (GILZ) by the glucocorticoid receptor and the PI3-kinase/AKT pathways in multiple myeloma. *J Steroid Biochem Mol Biol*. 2008 Apr 20;. [Epub ahead of print]

Gerami P, Wickless SC, **Rosen S**, **Kuzel TM**, Ciurea A, Havey J, Guitart J. Applying the new TNM classification system for primary cutaneous lymphomas other than mycosis fungoides and SÅ©zary syndrome in primary cutaneous marginal zone lymphoma. *J Am Acad Dermatol*. 2008 May 15;. [Epub ahead of print]

Butt Z, Rosenbloom SK, Abernethy AP, Beaumont JL, Paul D, Hampton D, Jacobsen PB, Syrjala KL, **Von Roenn JH**, Cella D. Fatigue is the Most Important Symptom for Advanced Cancer Patients Who Have Had Chemotherapy. *J Natl Compr Canc Netw*. 2008 May;6(5):448-455.

Polo JM, Ci W, **Licht JD**, Melnick A. Reversible disruption of BCL6 repression complexes by CD40 signaling in normal and malignant B-cells. *Blood*. 2008 May 16;. [Epub ahead of print]

Featured Research



Paice Lab

The purpose of Dr. Paice's lab's current research is to describe the prevalence and characteristics of peripheral neuropathy in breast cancer patients who have been treated with paclitaxel. They are also examining the effect of this neuropathy on the patient's quality of life. To accomplish this they have included women who will receive adjuvant or neoadjuvant chemotherapy for breast cancer. Before beginning paclitaxel treatment, half way through treatment and two weeks after completing therapy, they ask a variety of questions using standardized instruments to measure pain and neuropathic sensations (these are feelings described as "tingling", "burning" and "painful numbness"). At these same time points they use a variety of tests (called quantitative sensory testing or QST) to evaluate changes in reaction time, sensation, and pain.

Although the literature implies that neuropathy is not a significant problem after paclitaxel, the clinical experience suggests that the prevalence, and its impact on patients, is much higher. This is of particular importance as breast cancer patients are often young, they constitute the largest group of long-term cancer survivors, and the effects of painful peripheral neuropathy can significantly impair function and quality of life. The results obtained from this study will allow better education of patients and others caring for these patients. Early identification can lead to immediate initiation of safety measures to prevent falls, burns or other trauma to the areas affected by neuropathy. Later, through the findings derived from this study and others, the mechanism of paclitaxel induced peripheral neuropathy will be more clearly described, leading to identification of agents that might prevent this toxicity.

Paice has a true translational research team and focus. The research team includes Jamie Von Roenn and Vania Apkarian, both of whom provide guidance regarding clinical and basic science issues, respectively. Craig Hudgins, the research study program coordinator, meets with subjects, obtains data regarding pain and neuropathy along with quality of life, and conducts the quantitative sensory testing.

They hope to correlate the findings derived from this study with those from animal models in the laboratory. If the animal models accurately reflect the experiences of women with breast cancer receiving paclitaxel, prevention studies can be more confidently conducted in the laboratory, sparing women from exposure to potentially ineffective, or worse, harmful agents. They plan to extend this work to include other chemotherapeutic agents that are known to cause neuropathy. And one day, with hopes of the study agents that can prevent the onset of chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy, while at the same time, not affecting the anti-tumor effects of these drugs.

In addition to this program focusing on side effects of chemotherapy, they are exploring the bioavailability of symptom management drugs when given by alternative routes. Recently the team discovered that topically administered morphine, sometimes used when people have trouble swallowing, does not reach the blood stream. As a result, it is unlikely to provide pain control.

News and Events

Faculty Meeting

Tuesday June 17th, 5:00 pm
Lurie 5-1333 Conference Room

Special Division Meeting

Friday June 20, 8:00-9:00 am
“A Day In The Life”
Lurie Baldwin Conference Room

Congratulations

Chonghui Cheng, MD, PhD, has been awarded the 2008 AACR-Genentech BioOncology Career Development Award for Cancer Research on the HER Family Pathway.

Chonghui Cheng, MD PhD, has also been awarded the BC075550 Dynamic Regulation of Alternative Splicing in Breast Cancer Development Award from the Department of Defense Breast Cancer Research Program (BCRP) of the Office of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) US Army.

Joseph Shega, MD, has been awarded the Junior Faculty Career Development Award from the National Palliative Care Research Center (NPCRC).

Ken Carson, MD, has been awarded the 2008 ASCO Foundation Merit Award.

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Newly Opened Clinical Studies

NU 07Q1 A Quality of Life Study for Patients with Primary or Metastatic Liver Cancer who are Treated with Radioembolization (Y90 Microspheres) or Transcatheter Arterial Embolization (TACE). (P.I. Gilbertsen)

DRUG CP12-0710: An Open Label, Multicenter, Phase 2 Study Evaluating the Safety and Efficacy of IMC-1121B as First-Line Monotherapy in Patients with Unresectable Hepatocellular Cancer (P.I. Mulcahy)

ECOG 5103 A Double-Blind Phase III Trial of Doxorubicin and Cyclophosphamide followed by Paclitaxel with Bevacizumab or Placebo in Patients with Lymph Node Positive and High Risk Lymph Node Negative Breast Cancer (P.I. Gradishar)

NU JH0711 Phase II Trial of Bevacizumab Combined with Transarterial Chemoembolization (TACE) for Hepatocellular Carcinoma (P.I. Mulcahy)

NU 07CC6 The Out-Of-Pocket Costs and Burden for Patients with Breast Cancer and Their Caregivers (P.I. Bennett)

NU 08CC1 Sexuality and Intimacy Perceived by Brain Tumor Patients and Their Partners (P.I. Grimm)

DRUG A6181078 A Treatment Protocol for Patients Continuing from a Prior SU011248 Protocol (P.I. Raizer)

DRUG INNO-507-P2-A1 A Phase II Study of Oral Tamibarotene in Acute Promyelocytic Leukemia Patients Who Have Received Prior Therapy with ATRA and Arsenic Trioxide (STAR-1) (P.I. Tallman)

GOG 0229F A Phase II Evaluation of VEGF-TRAP (Afilbercept, NSC #724770, IND # BB100137, NCI-Supplied Agent) in the Treatment of Recurrent or Persistent Endometrial Carcinoma (P.I. Schink)

GOG 238A Randomized Trial of Pelvic Irradiation with or without Concurrent Weekly Cisplatin in Patients with Pelvic-Only Recurrence of Carcinoma of the Uterine Corpus (P.I. Schink)

NU 08G2 Interaction of FOXO1 and Progesterone Receptor in Endometrial Cancer (P.I. Kim)