

SIDNEY KIMMEL CANCER CENTER | NCI-designated

2022 Update

Pancreatic Cancer and Related Diseases Programs



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Pancreatic Cancer and Related Diseases Multidisciplinary Team

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Babar Bashir, MD
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Steven J. Cohen, MD
Jennifer M. Johnson, MD, PhD
Christopher McNair, PhD
Daniel Lin, MD, MS
Edith P. Mitchell, MD
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Department of Medicine:

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Thomas E. Kowalski, MD

Department of Pathology:

Wei Jiang, MD, PhD

Department of Pharmacology, Physiology and Cancer Biology:

Adam Snook, PhD
Scott A. Waldman, MD, PhD

Department of Radiation Oncology:

P. Rani Anné, MD
Adam C. Mueller, MD, PhD

Department of Surgery:

Eika Barriera-Justiniano, NP
Wilbur B. Bowne, MD, FACS
Hien T. Dang, PhD (with joint SKCC
appointment)
Elda Grabocka, PhD
(with joint SKCC appointment)
Aditi Jain, PhD
Harish Lavu, MD, FACS
Avinoam Nevler, MD
Charles J. Yeo, MD, FACS
Theresa P. Yeo, PhD, MPH, MSN, AOCNP

SKCC Support and Welcome Center:

Rebecca Cammy, MSW, LCSW
Lisa Capparella, MSS, LCSW, OSW-C
Gregory Garber, MSW, LCSW
Molly Vocino, MSW, LCSW



A Message from Dr. Yeo:

Resilient, compassionate, and dedicated to improving lives—these are the traits that define Jefferson Health. Over the past year, the Pancreas, Biliary, and Related Cancer Center's impressive multidisciplinary team of specialists remained steadfast in their commitment to uncovering innovative scientific discoveries that promise to enhance the world-class care we provide to all of our patients fighting pancreatic cancer.

One new, exciting way we are advancing this bench-to-beside pipeline is through Jefferson's Molecular Profiling of Pancreatic Cancer, a research initiative (with real-time implications for patients as well!) that leverages the fact that we perform more pancreatic surgeries than any other center in the tri-state region to gather data about pancreatic tumors. By doing so, we will further develop and test hypotheses about treatments and predictions regarding recurrence and drug responses.

The number of patients that we care for is exemplified in the fact that this past year I performed the 1,800th Whipple of my career. Such surgeries are not performed alone, and I am so grateful for the support, expertise, and dedication of my team while reaching this incredible career achievement.

Yet, it was not just the faculty, fellows, residents, and students that remained committed to improving lives. I am so grateful to our dedicated community of patients, families, and friends who help make our work possible. With our benefactors' steadfast support, I am confident that my team's research will flourish more than it ever has before.

Sincerely,

Charles J. Yeo, MD, FACS

Samuel D. Gross Professor and Chair of Surgery
Senior Vice President and Chair,
Enterprise Surgery, Jefferson Health
Co-Director, Pancreas, Biliary and Related Cancer Center

A Destination Center for Pancreatic Care and Related Diseases

The Pancreas, Biliary, and Related Cancer Center continues to be a premier destination for patients and their loved ones seeking medical treatment. This multidisciplinary team of teams is comprised of experts in surgery, cancer biology, pathology, medical oncology, and radiation oncology, which enables our Center to provide a comprehensive treatment plan for all our patients. A variety of organizations and leaders in the field have recognized the first-rate work of the clinicians and researchers comprising the Center, including:

- *U.S. News & World Report*, which recognized Jefferson Health as one of the best hospital systems in the nation.
 - Jefferson Health is ranked 2nd in the Philadelphia Metro area and 3rd in Pennsylvania.
 - For cancer treatment, Jefferson Health is ranked 32nd in the nation.
 - For Gastroenterology and GI Surgery, Jefferson Health is ranked 26th in the nation.
- *Research.com*, which ranked Dr. Yeo as #330 among Top Scientists in the world, and #212 in the United States. More than 65,000 individuals were examined for this ranking, making Dr. Yeo an expert amongst experts.
- Notable publishers requesting our Jefferson experts to update textbook chapters in gold standard references including *Cancer: Principles & Practice in Oncology* and *The Pancreas: An Integrated Textbook of Basic Science, Medicine, and Surgery*.

Transforming Care through Innovative Research

Pancreatic cancer remains the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths. One of the strongest ways we are working to change this statistic is through our robust research profile, as our discoveries will lead to advancements in diagnosis and treatment at Jefferson and among our international community.

One large research undertaking that promises to drastically strengthen pancreatic cancer treatment is **Jefferson's Molecular Profiling of Pancreatic Cancer (JMP PaC)** initiative. Molecular profiling—where scientists examine an individual tumor's genetic structure to find patterns and/or signatures—will help our researchers identify biomarkers in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma tumors. Such work promises to have both an immediate and long-term impact on patient care. By examining an individual tumor, clinicians can help treat current patients through personalized oncologic care. By gathering at least 200 tumor profiles each year, Dr. Yeo's team can test hypotheses about pancreatic cancer and the ways to best treat it—work that will improve the lives of future patients. Philanthropy to this research priority is covering profiling for stage I and stage II pancreatic cancer patients—not just the stage III and stage IV patients covered by most insurance companies. By going beyond the standard of care, we hope to improve patient outcomes now and gain insights into recurrence and survival well into the future.



Jefferson's JMP PaC Team, comprised of researchers and clinicians in the Department of Surgery and the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center

In addition to this exciting project, our multidisciplinary team has made great strides in advancing our understanding of pancreatic cancer, which enables our Center to provide a comprehensive treatment plan for all our patients.

- **Babar Bashir, MD**, an assistant professor in the Department of Medical Oncology, is leading a clinical trial of a therapeutic cancer vaccine. Dr. Bashir and his team enroll pancreatic cancer patients who have completed chemotherapy to further reduce the risk of cancer recurrence. Additionally, Dr. Bashir is leading multiple clinical trials that investigate novel therapies that may improve outcomes for stage IV pancreatic cancer patients.
- **Hien T. Dang, PhD**, an assistant professor with a joint appointment in the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center and the Department of Surgery, was named Vice Chair for Surgical Research. Dr. Dang is a leader of Jefferson's Molecular Profiling of Pancreatic Cancer project with Drs. Jennifer Johnson and Christopher McNair. Dr. Dang also leads tumor banking and database optimization for pancreas and other cancers.
- **Elda Grabocka, PhD**, an assistant professor in the Department of Cancer Biology, was an author on "Stress Granules Determine the Development of Obesity-Associated Pancreatic Cancer," published in June 2022 by the extremely high-impact journal, *Cancer Discovery*.
- **Aditi Jain, PhD**, a research instructor in the Department of Surgery, led her laboratory in their examination of the role DNA repair proteins have in pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma progression and therapy resistance, with the aim of uncovering novel therapeutic strategies for this cancer. Furthermore, she published two articles and presented her work at the American Association for Cancer Research's conference.
- **Saed Khalilieh, MD**, the current Halinski Fellow, works with Drs. Nevler and Jain to further understand Pyrvinium Pamoate (PP), a novel, FDA-approved agent that promotes mitochondrial inhibition in pancreatic cancer cells. Dr. Khalilieh earned a Saligman Family Pilot Grant for his project, "Targeting Cellular Metabolism in Cholangiocarcinoma Using Repurposed Novel Mitochondrial Inhibitors."
- **Harish Lavu, MD, FACS**, a professor in the Department of Surgery, continues to lead WASH, the long-standing and most highly accrued trial at the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center. The early analysis of the first 250 patients (of now 600+) was published in the *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*. Dr. Lavu also serves as the principal investigator for an antibiotic trial, a protein study, and the PP trial—which now has six patients enrolled.
- **Adam C. Mueller, MD, PhD**, an assistant professor in the Department of Radiation Oncology, has preliminary data around an integral membrane protein from in vivo studies in mice, which prolongs their survival significantly. Interestingly, this effect is not seen in cancer cells in vitro (in glass), indicating it is dependent on the tumor microenvironment.
- **Avinoam Nevler, MD**, an assistant professor in the Department of Surgery, was awarded a W. Kim Foster Pancreatic Cancer Pilot Grant in 2021. His vision with this project is to uncover the impact of respiratory diseases on cancer progression and therapy resistance and target these resistance mechanisms to improve cancer therapy response and overall cancer care. Additionally, his collaboration with Dr. Lavu continues in the PP trial.

Our researchers published their exceptional work in many field-defining journals, such as *Cancer Discovery*, *Journal of Surgical Oncology*, *Molecular and Cellular Biology*, *World Journal of Gastroenterology*, and *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*.



Past and present Jefferson researchers unite at the Spring 2022 American Association for Cancer Research conference

Enhancing Patient Care

Our scientists' innovative research directly influences the way in which we are able to best treat our patients. Some examples of our care advancement include:

- The Jefferson Pancreas Tumor Registry, which now has over 1,050 patients who volunteered to provide data. This registry enables our scientists to better understand the frequency of pancreatic cancer in families with a history of the disease, as well as the link between molecular genetics, environment, and lifestyle.
- The programs at the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center Support and Welcome Center, which recognizes that we must take a holistic approach to effectively treat a patient. It offers a variety of programs—from nutritional counseling, yoga, massage, financial consultations, and more—for patients and their loved ones to more easily navigate their healthcare journey.
- The new "Preparing for Pancreas Surgery & Recovery" booklet for patients and families, created by **Theresa P. Yeo, PhD, MPH, ACNP-BC, AOCNP, FAANP** and collaborators, supported by last year's W. Kim Foster Pancreatic Cancer Pilot Grant.

Building a Community of Care

We have continued to support our larger community to advance pancreatic cancer research and patient care for all within the Philadelphia region. For example:

- Jefferson Health was a Premier Sponsor of Pancreatic Cancer Action Network's (PanCAN) PurpleStride Philadelphia 2022, an annual 5K that is held both locally and in cities nationwide. PanCAN raised over \$600,000 collectively toward our shared goal of increasing awareness for pancreatic cancer, as well as critical research dollars.
- We also were a Platinum Sponsor of the 8th annual Amy's Ride/Run/Walk in Quakertown, PA. Created in 2015 in memory of Amy Cygan Spier, a Jefferson patient who lost her battle with pancreatic cancer, the hosting Pancreatic Cancer Cure Foundation has given back to Jefferson and other health organizations through this event.
- The Wanda Bilec Foundation for Pancreatic Cancer Research is another community group inspired by the loss of loved ones. The proceeds from their final Designer Bag Bingo fundraiser will enable the establishment of an endowed research fund at Jefferson, creating a legacy for this group and an opportunity to remain linked to our pancreatic cancer community in perpetuity.



**Save the
Date**

17th Annual
PANCREATIC CANCER
AND RELATED DISEASES
PATIENT SYMPOSIUM

Saturday, November 12, 2022

To further enhance our own community of pancreatic cancer patients, survivors, caregivers, and experts, we will host our 17th Annual Pancreatic Cancer and Related Diseases Patient Symposium on Saturday, November 12, 2022 in Philadelphia, with an option to join virtually from the comfort of your home.

At this event, Jefferson experts will educate participants about the most innovative medical therapies and surgical options available to them, as well as provide advice about lifestyle considerations for people affected by these conditions. This symposium affords clinicians, researchers, patients, and families the opportunity to connect and share hope for a healthier future.

The symposium will include a patient testimonial, presentation of the Pancreatic Cancer Community Impact Award, and the impactful Survivor Photo, which captures our large cohort of pancreatic cancer and related diseases survivors. **For more information or to RSVP, contact Jefferson Events at events@jefferson.edu or 215-955-9100.**

Future Home of Surgical and Cancer Care

Our community will also find new hope at Jefferson's new outpatient center, which will open its doors in spring 2024. As the future home for the Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center and the Department of Surgery, this innovative space promises to transform the way we are able to best care for our patients.

This patient-centered building will make our expert care more accessible by consolidating many specialties into one space and incorporating the most advanced technologies. For instance, the new specialty tower will provide pancreatic cancer patients real-time locating systems and wayfinding technologies that will notify them about their appointment, provide step-by-step driving instructions, and help them navigate the building (as will in-person ambassadors). Moreover, the center will cater to neurodivergent populations (e.g., those with autism and other disabilities, and the elderly) with intentional spaces, architecture, and building materials. In short, we are designing a seamless and more comfortable journey for our patients and their families.

Many in our Jefferson community are supporting our philanthropic goals by naming exam rooms, educational spaces, and more after a loved one or care team member. Gifts to the outpatient center remind all who pass through our doors that we are a community built on care.

As of October 2022, the final steel beam is in place, the tower cranes have been dismantled, and the exterior façade is nearly complete. As each floor is built out, we are one step closer to transforming cancer care for the Philadelphia region.



To learn more and follow the building's progress, please visit specialtycare.jeffersonhealth.org

**For more information,
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