DF/HCC earns designation as comprehensive cancer center

In recognition of the breadth of cancer research conducted by investigators at Dana-Farber, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Children’s Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Harvard School of Public Health, and Massachusetts General Hospital, the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center (DF/HCC) has been officially designated a Comprehensive Cancer Center by the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

The designation follows an October announcement that the DF/HCC had been approved as a Cancer Center by the NCI. The awarding of Comprehensive Cancer Center status indicates that DF/HCC covers a full range of cancer research activities, including basic and clinical science, population studies, community outreach programs, and disease-prevention activities.

Dana-Farber has been a Comprehensive Cancer Center since the category was created 27 years ago. The new designation recognizes cancer research within the DF/HCC.

In announcing the renewed title, Faye Austin, Ph.D., who serves as the center’s associate director for administration and director for research at DFCI, thanked those who provided detailed documentation of DF/HCC’s extensive community outreach, education, and communication activities.

“The center has an impressive array of outreach and education activities,” Austin said. “As we further develop the capabilities of our center, we need to continue to build our interactions with the communities we serve and, to the extent possible, coordinate our activities among [see DF/HCC, page 7]

PIE winners display exceptional leadership, energy, compassion

In Las Vegas to receive the Cheers Award on behalf of Dana-Farber are (left to right) Judie Beaud, Robert Soiffer, Lynda Chin, M.D., and Kornelia Polyak, M.D., Ph.D. (Sam Ogden photo)

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院 receives national award for safety and patient advocacy

A handful of Dana-Farber staff and patients visited Las Vegas this month to accept a national award recognizing the Institute’s commitment to including patients in efforts to improve safety and quality of care.

The third annual “Cheers Award” was given by the Institute for Safe Medication Practices to honor individuals, organizations, and companies that have contributed significantly to the prevention of medication errors in the United States and abroad. Dana-Farber, which was among 12 recipients this year, was cited for its “exemplary patient advocacy model and for its comprehensive efforts to include patients in quality-improvement initiatives.”

“I was very touched by the event, seeing so many people who are working to improve pharmacy practices,” says cancer survivor Gori Malter, who spoke briefly at the Dec. 5 ceremony. “The organizers highlighted Dana-Farber as a unique institution for establishing the Patient and Family Advisory Council recently cited her as representing the ideal patient and family advocate. Ms. Ashton is one of five individuals and seven teams from Dana-Farber/Partners CancerCare who garnered PIE awards at a joint and jubilant Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Hospital ceremony on Dec. 14.

This year marks the fifth presentation of the Partners HealthCare System-sponsored honors. Individuals and teams who “go above and beyond the call of duty” are saluted in the areas of treatment and service, leadership and innovation. [see PIE, page 7]

Dunkin’ Donuts Discovery Program helps ‘rising stars’ of research reach the next level

The task of securing research support through grants and other means is one of the greatest challenges facing young physician-scientists. In an effort to give some of its most promising adult cancer investigators a “jump start” on their way to getting outside assistance, Dana-Farber’s Department of Adult Oncology has teamed with one of the Institute’s leading corporate partners to establish the Dunkin’ Donuts Discovery Program.

Now in its third year, the program is currently funding eight Institute researchers. Each recipient is either an assistant professor, a senior instructor slated for promotion to assistant professor, or a new faculty member in Adult Oncology. Their work (see page 6) covers a broad range of disease types and areas of concentration, including basic science, translational research, and population science.

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When asked to offer a few words at the celebration in his honor last week, Joe Nies — co-chair of the adult Patient and Family Advisory Council — glanced at the clock.

His gesture was characteristic of a man known for keeping meetings on schedule, and it drew a burst of laughter from the admiring crowd in a Shields Warren meeting room.

Nies is stepping down after three years as co-chair of the council, a body dedicated to enhancing the quality of adult cancer care at Dana-Farber and Brigham and Women’s Hospital.

On Dec. 12, council members saluted Nies as well as fellow Co-Chair Geri Malter, who created and edits the council’s newsletter, Side by Side. Colleagues lauded Nies, cancer survivor, for being an effective communicator, an open-minded thinker, and a passionate advocate for patients who spend an enormous amount of time on council business.

“Your contribution was extraordinary,” said council member Barbara Balboni. “You moved us with your words and with your heart.”

Whenever the Institute administration wandered off course from its agenda, “You always nudged us back in the right direction,” added Lawrence Shulman, M.D., vice chair for clinical services in Adult Oncology.

Malter, who will continue to lead the group next year with incoming Co-Chair Martie Carne, also elicited praise and applause for her devotion to the quarterly newsletter, which debuted in the winter of 1998-99. The Communications Department provides editorial assistance for the project, but Malter is its driving force.

Beverly Johnson, president of the national Institute for Family-Centered Care, calls the publication “inspiring to our staff and to others across the country. ... By publishing Side by Side and disseminating this newsletter broadly, Dana-Farber has made a strong statement for meaningful collaboration with patients and families.”

Although many had cautioned at the outset about the demands of producing a regular newsletter, “Geri said, ‘No, I really want to do this,’” recalled Cynthia Medeiros, LICSW, director of Patient and Family Support Services at DFCI.

Said Malter at the Dec. 12 festivities, “I’m so honored to have had the privilege.”

Office-supply ordering revised

Representatives from Staples and Roxbury Technology Corp. came to Dana-Farber on Dec. 13 to help educate staff about new systems for ordering office supplies, including laser toner cartridges.

To drive down processing costs for both DFCI and Staples, office-supply ordering is now limited to Tuesdays and Thursdays. All on-line requisitions will be printed in Purchasing at 10 a.m., and orders will arrive the next day, without shipping charges. “This consolidation will help lower overall costs for placing, tracking, distributing, and reconciling orders,” predicts Louise Forrest Bowes, director of Materials Management.

In another change, Dana-Farber and Staples have introduced a new recycling program through Roxbury Technology Corp., a local distributor of premium remanufactured laser toner cartridges. “These cartridges are compatible with selected laser toners from Hewlett Packard,” says Forrest Bowes. “Every cartridge is rebuilt — not just refilled — to the original standards and, in some cases, beyond. They are tested and re-tested for quality, reliability and capacity.”

The process of recycling used cartridges will remain the same: just put the used cartridge in its original box and place it outside your door. Receiving staff will pick it up. Please contact Purchasing at (617) 632-3042 with questions about these new programs.

Ames bestows gifts galore

Student volunteers from South Boston High School, along with Red Sox third baseman John Valentin, WGBH-TV Meteorologist Ed Carroll, Ames’ Chairman and CEO Joe Elliott, and Jimmy Fund Chairman Mike Andrews gathered at South Station Dec. 8 to wrap more than 1,000 toys donated by Ames Department Stores. The gifts were distributed at the Jimmy Fund Clinic’s holiday party the next day. Above (left to right), Elliott has a laugh with Andrews as Valentin wraps a gift. At left, hundreds of parcels form a giant Christmas tree at the South Station concourse. (Janet Haley photos)
Art class provided a respite for patients – and staff – this fall

Two days a week this fall, Carolyn Polk and Marco Desiderio turned a conference room on Dana 9 into a space where patients, family, and staff could join them in making art – even if just for a short while.

These Endicott College students volunteered with the Creative Arts Program, run through the Eleanor and Maxwell Blum Patient and Family Resource Center, from September until last week, when they finished their internships.

Amid paints, brushes, and papers one recent morning in Dana 908, participants worked on a variety of projects. Handmade boxes competed for space with birthday cards and paper flowers, while an unobtrusive stereo played placid piano music. Polk and Desiderio advertised their class with samples of their creations taped to the door; at times, they scoured the waiting rooms for people to join them. Sometimes they even brought the class to the patients.

“We went into all areas of the hospital,” explains Polk, “because it’s nice for patients to have something in their environment that’s different.”

Polk and Desiderio, both art students, feel the Creative Arts Program offers a respite from patients’ sometime-taxing situations. “A lot of it is the atmosphere of this room,” Desiderio says. “The music, the artwork, and even watching other people can take someone’s mind away from what’s troubling them.”

The young interns believe staff and family members can also benefit from the program. Polk says, “It’s hard to get away from work, but you can come in here, paint for 10 minutes, and feel better.”

“When staff members get involved,” adds Desiderio, “they’re more likely to encourage their patients to come.”

Artwork from the class is on display on the third floor connector between the Dana and Shields Warren buildings. The Creative Arts Program was launched in 1997 by the late M.L. O’Connor to give fellow patients an opportunity to use the arts to help cope with their illnesses. In the past, the program has featured poetry and dance-therapy workshops. Endicott College’s Provost, Shaun McNiff, is a nationally known leader in the field of art therapy and is keenly interested in the DFCI program.

“There is a sense of freedom in that art room,” says McNiff, author of Art as Medicine: Creating a Therapy of the Imagination. “It’s an energy that permeates the environment, and it can transform a patient or family member.”

However, Polk and Desiderio shy away from calling what they do “therapy.” “It is art,” Desiderio offers. “We just let it be that.”

Dana-Farber patients, families, and staff members ushered in the holiday season with parties on Dec. 8 and 9. Among the 600-plus who attended the staff bash at Le Meridien Hotel were (photo above left, from left to right) Jon Fournier, Kirsten Tunney, Alan and Elisa Caplan, Peggy Malumphy, and MaryBeth Burbank – most of them from Human Resources. Enjoying the party in the above right shot is Victor Coren of General Services and his sister, Collette Coren. In photo at far right are (left to right) Shelley Garraway of Pediatric Oncology, friend Emily So, and Joyce Su of the Quality Control Center.

Holiday party snapshots  
Photos by Steve Gilbert
Harvard basketball coach Kathy Delaney-Smith rebounds

A little more than a year after she was diagnosed with breast cancer, Kathy Delaney-Smith's hair is growing back.

It's short and curly where it used to be long and straight. But that's okay. The Harvard College women's basketball coach will tell you, just as long as she doesn't have to wear a wig.

With cold weather upon us, Delaney-Smith is back where she belongs, striking the sidelines of a basketball court instead of getting therapy at the Gillette Center for Women's Cancers at Dana-Farber. Though this season is off to a bumpy start, Delaney-Smith appreciates the talent of her young team and hopes this year will be a memorable one.

Even if they win an Ivy League championship, however, it will be difficult to top the drama of last season.

After her diagnosis, Delaney-Smith endured an unforgettable regimen of surgery to remove the lump, chemotherapy that weakened and sickened her, and radiation that sapped her strength.

That she coached her team into contention for the league title while undergoing treatment, missing no games and just a handful of practices along the way, is a measure of her dedication to the squad.

It's also a measure of her determination to teach others, through her own example, about the importance of cancer screening, positive thinking, and support for research into cancer treatments and cures.

Almost from the start, Delaney-Smith was open about her disease. She shared her experience with her players, even asking one - the unofficial "team hairdresser" - to cut her shoulder-length blonde hair before chemotherapy made it fall out.

She also let the media report on her off-court battle, becoming the subject of numerous print and broadcast stories.

Her players' respect for their coach soared as they watched her lead despite the numbing fatigue and nausea. And although the squad fell short of clinching the Ivy title, her players and assistant coaches helped give Delaney-Smith something much more precious than a trophy: strength.

"There's a part of me that will always be attached to last year's team because of their efforts on my part," she says.

Telling her story

Today, Delaney-Smith is determined to give back some of that strength. Outspoken by nature and used to the limelight, she has kept up a steady stream of appearances and lectures. She has taped a public service announcement for television, participated in events such as the American Cancer Society's Relay for Life, and even appeared at a Cancer Society fashion show in October.

"Whenever people ask, Delaney-Smith tells her story, encouraging cancer survivors and urging as many people as possible to work for cures. With so many advances in treatment, she speculates, it's just a matter of time before breast cancer is a memory.

"A year ago, I don't think I knew anyone who was found during a routine exam last December, she received a sentinel node dissection as part of her treatment. In this new procedure, the surgeon removes a single lymph node to ascertain the cancer's spread.

The technique offers an alternative to the more invasive axillary node dissection, which requires a larger incision to extract several under-arm nodes. Axillary node dissection has potential complications such as nerve injury and lymph-" (continued on next page)

Excitement mounts for the Nextel Jimmy Fund Stair Climb Feb. 8

Boston Celtics player Vitaly Potapenko will join hundreds of Bostonians in climbing one of Boston's tallest buildings this winter to raise money for the Jimmy Fund and support cancer research at Dana-Farber during the Nextel Jimmy Fund Stair Climb.

Sponsored this year by Nextel, a leading wireless communications company, the event is open to teams and individuals, and is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 8, beginning at 6 p.m. Check-in will be from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Great Hall at Old Faneuil Hall.

For the fourth consecutive year, participants will mount all or a portion of the buildings at 53 State Street (38 floors), 60 State Street (33 floors), and 75 State Street (28 floors) in the heart of the financial district. At least four people are required to establish a team. Last year, more than 500 climbers participated and helped generate more than $100,000 for the Jimmy Fund.

Potapenko, a 6-foot-10-inch center who has been with the Celtics since 1998, is chairing the 2001 climb. He will officially kick off the event, "high five" participants at the top of the last building, and sign autographs.

The Stair Climb is not a race; awards will be given to the top fundraisers, not the fastest climbers, so all have a chance to win.

The top fundraiser will receive four 600 Club tickets to a Boston Red Sox game, and those collecting $150 or more will receive prizes. A victory party featuring food, drink, music, and foot massages will be held after the climb. The entry fee is $50 per person ($15 after Jan. 19, 2001).

For more information and to register, call the Jimmy Fund at (800) 52-JIMMY or visit www.jimmyfund.org. (continued on next page)
“There are many new treatments on the horizon,” Shulman notes. “We’re looking at better and less toxic chemotherapy than she received. We’re also investigating new hormonal treatments and new biologic agents targeted specifically at cancer cells, which we hope will improve cure rates for our patients.”

That Delaney-Smith was able to carry on coaching during her therapy is an indication of the increased emphasis on incorporating treatment into patients’ lives, according to Shulman. Allowing patients to continue participating in meaningful activities is an important part of treatment planning today.

Out of the woodwork

After having no personal contact with breast cancer before her own diagnosis, Delaney-Smith now encounters the illness everywhere. Shortly after her radiation therapy ended, she found out her younger sister also had breast cancer. Annet’s situation required more radical treatment than did Delaney-Smith’s: six chemotherapy infusions instead of four, and a mastectomy.

The coach helped her sister in any way she could, sharing her own experiences, giving advice, and flying to Florida to visit. In some ways, Delaney-Smith says, Annet’s cancer was more difficult to handle than her own – because the battle was in someone else’s hands.

Make that several people’s hands.

Delaney-Smith’s sister-in-law was recently diagnosed with the disease as well, and there are regular telephone calls from friends and acquaintances who either have breast cancer or know someone who has.

“I can ease their fears. That brings me satisfaction,” Delaney-Smith reflects. “What is hard is that all these people I know are getting breast cancer.”

Judy Garber, M.D., M.P.H., of Population Sciences and Adult Oncology, is director of the Friends of Dana-Farber Cancer Risk and Prevention Clinic. She says it’s sometimes difficult to make sense of the cancer messages out there.

“Early detection and the right treatment are critical factors for cancer patients. Eating healthfully, exercising regularly, limiting weight gain, and having a positive attitude are all important for lowering cancer risk and maintaining overall health.”

Although not every patient can take on the challenge of coaching a collegiate basketball team during treatment, Garber says, it’s important that other people with cancer hear voices like Delaney-Smith’s.

“She shows the public that it’s possible to survive this and to triumph,” Garber comments. “She’s saying, in essence, ‘Look what you can do, even with cancer.’”

Text by Alvin Powell
Photos by Jon Chase

Annual research core facilities fair piques interest

For the second time in as many years, the Office of Research held a fair to educate the Dana-Farber community about the research core facilities and the services they provide. Held Nov. 29, this year’s fair drew more than 300 researchers, who posed questions of representatives from 17 Dana-Farber core facilities and other programs. Among the exhibitors were the Transgenic/Gene Targeting Core, Molecular Diagnostics Lab, Flow Cytometry, and the Baruj Benacerraf Library.

The event in Smith 308/9 attracted basic and clinical scientists from labs throughout the Institute who are studying causes of and treatments for cancer, AIDS, and related diseases. They encountered displays that included Web sites, pamphlets, and at least one mouse calendar. In addition to the bountiful information, researchers enjoyed a spread of sandwiches and sweets.

Organizing the fair were the offices of Faye Austin, Ph.D., director for Research, and William Corbett, director of Research Administration, with Donna Prestemon in Research Administration playing an instrumental coordinating role. The fair will continue to be held annually; the next one is scheduled for the fall of 2001.
Dunkin’ Donuts is helping support the effort with a gift of $2.5 million over five years, raised by customers and franchise owners across the Northeast through various promotions.

“This is a group of very talented people working on projects that are likely to have a significant impact on our understanding of the cause and treatment of cancer over the next few years,” says James Griffin, M.D., vice chair for research in Adult Oncology, who established criteria for the program and chose this year’s group — which includes several repeat selections. “These are some of our brightest stars, and we want to accelerate the pace of their research to take them to the next level. The infusion of funds from the Discovery Program is an investment in their future — and in ours as well. We are eager to jump-start their careers at a crucial moment.”

According to Adult Oncology Chair Lee Nadler, M.D., who helped begin the Discovery Program in 1998, “this is the most important way we can give departmental and institutional support to people who are doing truly outstanding investigative work.” Each of the eight current Discovery Fellows was asked how the money will help (or continue to support) their work in the coming year. Here are their answers:

Monica M. Bertagnoli, M.D.

Our laboratory focuses on understanding the nature of early cancer growth in the gastrointestinal tract, particularly growth affected by changes in the gene APC. We work on both animals and humans to document early changes in APC protein function and to determine how these changes relate to tumor formation. In addition, we have shown that early changes in APC protein function can be reversed by cancer-preventing drugs. We will use the Discovery Program funds to continue our work on developing effective gastrointestinal cancer-prevention therapies.

Lynda Chin, M.D.

We concentrate on the molecular genetics of cancer growth and progression — with particular emphasis on the development and characterization of mouse models of malignant melanomas. Our laboratory has developed cancer-prone mouse models that help us identify the genes and pathways that contribute to melanoma growth and viability. In the coming year, we hope to employ cutting-edge genomic methods to address such questions as how abnormal interactions between a tumor and a patient’s body affect the tumor’s ability to attract its own blood supply. Support from the Dunkin’ Donuts program will allow us to explore these new territories and obtain critical preliminary data for long-term financial support.

Craig Earle, M.D.

Over the past year, the Discovery Program has supported our research into the disparities of care given to different groups of patients with metastatic lung cancer. This laid the groundwork for us to obtain funding from the National Institutes of Health to look at ways to measure the quality of care we deliver to patients with advanced cancer. For example, in the coming months, we will conduct focus groups and interviews with patients, families, and physicians to solicit their ideas about the most important aspects of quality cancer care. We will also assess the reliability and validity of quality indicators that others have proposed — such as evidence of inadequately managed pain or continued aggressive treatment for a patient close to death — by analyzing a nationally representative sample of Medicare claims.

David Frank, M.D., Ph.D.

Our research group focuses on the signaling pathways which control the growth, survival, and differentiation of normal cells, and how these pathways go awry in malignant cells. We have concentrated our efforts on a group of molecules termed STATS, which are activated during normal cell growth. We have found that these proteins are frequently activated inappropriately in a wide variety of human cancers. While our lab focuses on many aspects of STAT signaling in normal and malignant cells, we plan to use Discovery Program funds to try to design molecules that can block the function of STATS and thus serve as a potential therapeutic strategy for cancer. This strategy aims to target a key difference between normal and cancerous cells, and we hope it will lead to more effective and less toxic therapies.

Matthew Kulke, M.D.

In the past year, thanks to the Discovery Program, we have been able to study the tumors of patients who have undergone chemotherapy and radiation for esophageal cancer. The molecular characteristics of these tumors appear to affect how well patients respond to treatment. Over the next year, we hope to extend and confirm these findings in a larger group of patients. Our goal is to eventually be able to select specific treatments for patients based on the molecular profile of their cancer.

Matthew Meyerson, M.D., Ph.D.

Our laboratory’s goal is to improve understanding of the genetics and biology of human lung cancers. The work supported by the Discovery Program will help us in three of these efforts. First, we are trying to find chromosomal regions that are deleted in human lung cancers. We will then check these regions in different tumor tissues to identify the genes that are deleted in this area. Second, we are analyzing the patterns of genes that are expressed in lung cancers to try to develop a biologically based classification system, particularly of lung adenocarcinoma. Third, we would like to use genes that are expressed in lung cancer cells to generate mouse models for lung cancer.

Sapna Syngal, M.D., M.P.H.

The Discovery Program has provided support for our group to continue examining the genetics and prevention of colorectal cancer. Over the past year, we completed a study on the role of a particular mutation in the APC gene, called △1347, in increasing the risk of colorectal cancer in Ashkenazi Jewish patients. We also evaluated the benefits and drawbacks of genetic testing for mutations in mismatch repair genes (a class of cancer-causing genes) in patients with hereditary nonpolyposis colorectal cancer.

In the coming year, we aim to expand our studies to include sporadic, nonhereditary colorectal cancer. Among the projects planned include: (1) an evaluation of the role of the mismatch repair gene, MSH6, in patients with colorectal cancer; (2) a multi-center study (as part of the National Cancer Institute’s Early Detection Research Network) to develop and evaluate novel biomarkers of risk for colorectal cancer; and (3) a study to evaluate whether patients at high risk for colorectal cancer comply with recommended cancer screenings.

Candidates sought for breast cancer research career development award

The Dana-Farber/Harvard Specialized Program of Research Excellence (SPORE) in breast cancer is now accepting nominations for its annual Career Development Award. Applications for this one-time award of $50,000 are due Jan. 31.

To be eligible, a candidate must be a junior faculty member within a Harvard-affiliated institution and either a clinician with an M.D. degree or a Ph.D. degree or a Ph.D. degree who is interested in translational research, or a scientist with a Ph.D. degree (or an equivalent degree) interested in the application of basic science to breast cancer study. Research can span the disciplines of basic biology, population studies, outcomes, or social science. Individuals from racial/ethnic minority groups, women, people with disabilities, and/or scientists conducting investigations in underserved populations are encouraged to apply.

Candidates will be judged on their quality of research; a willingness to participate in SPORE activities (retreats, meetings, research presentations); a nominating letter from the candidate’s department chair or research supervisor; and the relevance of their research to the problem of human breast cancer.

To apply or to nominate a candidate, please submit a complete curriculum vitae, a supporting letter from the department chair or research supervisor, and a brief summary of research to Wendy Conklin/Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, 44 Binney Street, Smith 822/Boston, MA 02115 by Jan. 31. For questions or additional information, please call (631)2-5178.
teamwork, operational efficiency, and community contributions.

"Thanks to you, Partners has accomplished amazing things," said Samuel Thier, M.D., president and CEO of Partners HealthCare System during the packed ceremony in the Cabot Atrium at Brigham and Women’s. Honorees received certificates and pins from Thier and BWH President Jeffrey Otten as they were cheered by their colleagues.

Ashton won in the Quality Treatment and Service category for her ability to make things work for patients and families. She appreciates the award but feels the real honor is in assisting patients and their families who struggle against cancer with dignity and bravery. "They give me a model to follow in my own life," Ashton states.

Other individual Dana-Farber winners were Zaher El-Assi, Sharon Lane, R.N., M.S., OCN, and Ursula Matulonis, M.D.

El-Assi, an Information Services team leader, was singled out for his excellence in dealing with technical issues and business processes, as well as for his personal skills. His nominator wrote that he not only exceeds expectations in performing his responsibilities, but he has helped other team members grow and develop. "I am very honored and grateful that people recognized some of the work I’ve done," says El-Assi.

Lane, director of Nursing Education and Clinical Practice at DFCI, earned a PIE award for being an innovative leader while serving as interim chief of Nursing and Patient Care Services and continuing to address nursing education and protocol issues.

Matulonis, a physician with the Women’s Cancers Program, was recognized for being kind, compassionate, knowledgeable, and supportive, and for taking an active role in helping her patients and their families. "She inspires us, and her high contributions.

The award-winning Chemotherapy Safety Committee includes: front row, left to right Lawrence Shulman, Elizabeth McColligan, Sylvia Bartel, and Lori Buswell; and (back row, left to right) Joanne Young-Hong, Diane Dahill, Jane Russell, Robert Soiffer, and Jeffrey Clark. (Rich Bonanno photo)

The chemotherapy safety system for DFCI, BWH, and Massachusetts General Hospital.

Team members are: Lawrence Shulman (team leader); Kelly Barnes, Sylvia Bartel, Lori Buswell, Michelle Chan, Margaret Clapp, Jeffrey Clark, Diane Dahill, Joan Gallahger, Carol Ghi lioni, William Hahn, Margaret Hill, Joanne Lafrancesca, Karen Lipsirates, Elizabeth McColligan, Kathleen McDermott, Eileen O’Connell, Patricia Reid Ponte, Jane Russell, Jennifer Schmiz, Robert Soiffer, Elizabeth Tracey, Joanne Young-Hong, and Jerry Younger.

The Protocol Office Leadership, which assures that regulatory requirements are met for review of clinical trials, informed-consent documents, adverse event reporting, and the continuing review of ongoing trials. The team leaders are Jane Russell of Dana-Farber and Glenn Siegmund of Mass General.

These staff members and teams connected with Dana-Farber/Partners CancerCare were also honored:

Emily Olson, R.N., a staff nurse on unit 5B at Brigham and Women’s, won an individual award for her work organizing the “pod” and collaborating with the hospital’s Materials Management Department to evaluate the unit’s needs and to improve the purchasing system.

The DXF/PCC Breast and Cervical Screening Collaborative, which provides free mammography and cervical cancer screening for low-income women in the Greater Boston area. The program is based at 14 community health centers licensed or affiliated with Partners HealthCare and is supported largely through a grant from the Department of Public Health. The program has grown dramatically, with over 1,200 women screened last year.

Team member Anne Levine describes the program as a “very effective collaboration among community health centers, Partners, and Dana-Farber that’s having a measurable impact on improving women’s health in the neighborhoods of Boston.” Levine praised team leaders Mary Naigle and Eileen Manning of the collaborative for their “outstanding” commitment.

The group also includes Fran Azzara, Lynn Basilio, Janette Baratignaya, Gloria Bowan-Daise, Maxine James, Pam Kinsman, Rachid Kulick, Wanda McClain, Rose Phillips, Lily Prek, Anne Richmond, Betzaida Rodriguez, and Cheryl Snyder.

The Gynecology Care Improvement Team, which has developed strategies to improve educational materials given to patients, both before admission and at discharge for those with benign conditions. The team also created materials and systems to help communicate patient information between the ambulatory and inpatient departments.

Team members are: Robert Barbieri and Janet O’Connor (team leaders); Dorothy Goulart, Judy Hayes, Wilma Frierson-Gaskin, Joan Sullivan, and Joelle Balas, Karen Burns White, Anne Kelly, and Kathleen Connors.

The Nurse Intern Team, which developed a nurse intern program for newly licensed nurses as a way to address the special needs of this group.

Team members are Diane Hanley and Catherine Saniuk (team leaders); Patricia Reid Ponte, Judy Hayes, Paulita Allinckas, Charlotte Messinger, Norma Gerton, Regina Cullen, and Yolanda Harmuth.

The Oncology Care Improvement Team, which worked on several projects aimed at improving the quality of clinical care and service for hematology, oncology, and bone marrow transplant patients. The group includes members of the adult Patient and Family Advisory Council. Team members are Karen Conley and Edwin Alyea (team leaders); Joseph Antin, Sylvia Bartel, Charles Borden, Karen Burns White, Barbara Fine, Janet Korman Parra, Cynthia Medeiros, Eileen Molina, Ruth Muller, Patricia Smith-Allen, Joe Nies, Judie Beard, Martie Carnie, and Rich Boyajian.

The Oncology Day-After-Discharge Call Team, which called every patient 48 hours after discharge to evaluate his/her satisfaction, significantly increasing the quality of patient care. Team members are Karen Conley (team leader); Sandra Ruland, Maura Povar, Lisa Oliver, Katie Casey, Lisa Berggren, Patti Smith-Allen, and Eileen Molina.

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The Oncology Day-After-Discharge Call Team, which called every patient 48 hours after discharge to evaluate his/her satisfaction, significantly increasing the quality of patient care. Team members are Karen Conley (team leader); Sandra Ruland, Maura Povar, Lisa Oliver, Katie Casey, Lisa Berggren, Patti Smith-Allen, and Eileen Molina.
Nursing video highlights safety lessons learned at Dana-Farber

A new training video for oncology nurses, designed to help prevent medication errors, features six Dana-Farber staff members discussing lessons learned and improvements made at the Institute over the past six years.

Produced by the Oncology Nursing Society (ONS), the video—called Preventing Medication Errors for the Oncology Nurse—is to be released this month as part of the society’s continuing education video series. More than 10,000 oncology nurses nationally and internationally subscribe to the series, according to Sharon Lane, R.N., M.S., OCN, director of Nursing Education and Clinical Practice at DFCI.

The video, expected to be screened at Dana-Farber in early 2001, was filmed here in August and includes interviews with Lane; Director of Pharmacy Sylvia Bartel, R.Ph., M.H.P.; Director of Risk Management Maureen Connor, R.N., M.P.H.; Risk Manager Deborah Duncombe, M.H.P.; Clinical Research Nurse Judith Prisby, R.N., OCN; and Robert Soiffer, M.D., of Adult Oncology and chair of the Institute’s Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee.

The six share insights gained from the tragic chemotherapy overdose in 1994 and describe how Dana-Farber has created an environment that permits errors to be identified and openly discussed.

“There has been a significant culture change at Dana-Farber since the 1994 incident,” notes Lane. “Error reporting is now highly encouraged. We try to take a non-punitive approach. We recognize that most errors are due to systems problems and not due to individual staff performance issues.”

Preventing Medication Errors offers a multifaceted approach to reducing medication errors, including identifying and preventing situations that may lead to mistakes, and discussing the role of protocol nurses in ensuring the safety of patients enrolled in clinical trials.

Systems must be designed to prevent, detect, and minimize hazards and the likelihood of error, the video stresses.

“Error occurs because something in the process allows it to occur,” Duncombe explains. “Everyone involved in medication administration—including the physician, the pharmacist, and the nurse—is part of this process. No one acts independently. Therefore, all of these disciplines need to be involved and collaborate in the analysis and design of an organization’s medication systems.”

This is the fourth and final program in the year 2000 Oncology Nursing Today™ continuing education video series, which (along with an accompanying lesson guide) is accredited for nursing contact hours. The series was produced in conjunction with the California-based Stratos Institute for Healthcare Performance, a video and media education company serving the needs of health-care professionals.

The Oncology Nursing Society is a national organization of more than 28,000 oncology nurses and other health-care professionals committed to promoting excellence in oncology nursing and quality cancer care.

Cheers, continued from page 1

and Family Advisory Council, and I was proud to be there.”

Maier, who co-chairs the advisory council for adult patients, accepted the award with Director of Pharmacy Sylvia Bartel, R.Ph., M.H.P., and Robert Soiffer, M.D., of Adult Oncology and chair of the Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee. Also representing DFCI were Patricia Reid Ponte, R.N., D.N.Sc., chief of Nursing and Patient Care Services; Judie Beard of the Patient and Family Advisory Council; and Reid Ponte’s predecessor, Susan Grant, R.N., M.S., OCN, chief of Nursing and Patient Care Services; Judie Beard of the Patient and Family Advisory Council; and Reid Ponte’s predecessor, Susan Grant, R.N., M.S., OCN.

She cited the work of Malter, Beard, and the other “pioneer” patient advisors who have devoted countless hours to the council, which works closely with doctors, nurses, and other health-care givers at DFCI and Brigham and Women’s Hospital. Grant also tipped her hat to Beverly Johnson of the Bethesda, Md.-based Institute for Family-Centered Care, who helped Dana-Farber launch the Patient and Family Advisory Council in early 1998.

More recently, a counterpart to the council has been established as “a voice of the patient” on the pediatric side; it is called the Pediatric Patient and Family Advisory Council.

The Institute has worked continuously to enhance patient safety and improve the quality of care, and it remains vigilant, according to Chief Operations Officer Jim Conway.

“People have tremendous respect for the leadership we have provided in this area,” he remarks. “We should be very proud. I’m delighted that the work of our trustees, staff, patients and families, and volunteers has garnered a Cheers Award.”

Based in Pennsylvania, the Institute for Safe Medication Practices is a nonprofit organization that collaborates with health-care practitioners and institutions, regulatory agencies, professional organizations, and the pharmaceutical industry to provide education about adverse drug events and how they can be prevented.