



FROM RESEARCH TO DISCOVERY

Ask Peter Van Veldhuizen, MD, why he chose to practice in the fields of hematology and oncology and he will tell you about the opportunities he saw to improve patient care and conduct research. “As we learn more about the biology of each cancer, the number of new treatment options has increased dramatically,” he said. “Although these are still small steps in the right direction, they are hopefully a step closer to a cure.”

Basic Science Research: The Division of Hematology and Oncology has added new investigators, whose work in the laboratory will provide the basis for these new treatment options.

- Sushanta Banerjee, PhD is investigating novel gene targets in Breast and Pancreatic Cancer
- Snigdha Banerjee, PhD is investigating new therapeutic options and potential biomarkers in Pancreatic Cancer
- Bhaskar Das, PhD has expertise in drug design and is developing new agents for testing in multiple tumor types
- Emma Borrego-Diaz Reyes, PhD, MS is evaluating potential new drug targets in Prostate Cancer
- Inamul Haque, PhD works closely with Banerjee on multiple projects
- Rama Garimella, PhD, MS, MSc is studying the biology of osteosarcomas
- Brian Petroff, DVM, PhD is investigating breast cancer and fertility issues as related to treatment
- Ramesh Balusu, PhD and Rekha Rao Manepalli, PhD are both evaluating novel mechanisms and potential treatment targets in lymphomas and leukemias
- Faris Farassati, PhD, Pharm D is investigating novel pathways leading to cancer. We are working to translate these laboratory findings into the clinic and directly impact patient care with the help of our Site Specific Teams.

Site Teams and Leadership: The Division continues to grow and develop Site Specific Teams that reach out to the medical and patient community by enriching education, increasing the number of CME events and symposiums, enhancing research and improving fellow curriculum. These teams are led by:

- BMT/Acute Leukemia: Joseph McGuirk, DO
- Breast: Qamar Khan, MD

- Fellowship: Sarah Taylor, MD
- Gastrointestinal: Joaquina Baranda, MD
- Genitourinary: Peter Van Veldhuizen, MD
- Head and Neck: Prakash Neupane, MD
- Hospitalist: Allan Fleming, MD
- Lung: Chao Huang, MD
- Lymphoma/Myeloma: Siddhartha Ganguly, MD
- MDS/Elderly Leukemia: Suman Kambhampati, MD
- Melanoma/Sarcoma: Gary Doolittle, MD
- Prevention: Carol Fabian, MD
- Survivorship: Jennifer Klemp, PhD

Education: Teaching and mentoring medical students, residents, and fellows play a major role for our physicians. Dr. Sarah Taylor, Fellowship Director was nominated and won the Rainbow Award for her “exceptional student mentoring.”

Taylor also volunteers her time at the JayDoc Free Clinic and travels with the students on their summer mission trip.

Peter Van Veldhuizen, MD, and Emma Borrego-Diaz Reyes, PhD, mentored KU medical student Bradley Chapman. Chapman presented his research on “MicroRNAs as potential biomarkers in prostate cancer” at the KU Student Forum.

The Fellowship program added a new six-month rotation dedicated to Hematology Malignancies. Fellows will spend an equal amount of time on a research project and on clinical rotations.

The division also offers many CME events and symposiums to the community for doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals. These programs promote education on all levels, and collaboration for current and future research projects.

Bridge: Since the merge with the Kansas City Cancer Center, the Division of Hematology and Oncology has become an even larger and busier division. Our community partners, Community Cancer Physicians (CCP) and our Academic Cancer Physicians (ACP) are working together in achieving the best patient experience. A divisional newsletter was started which allows our faculty and staff the opportunity to see how much is being done from presentations at local and national events to fundraisers, and even simple reminders about trainings.

A major project this year was to update the website www.kumc.edu/hemonc for easy access for the patients

and health care community. In addition to providing highlights of these areas, the website also focuses on patient care, research, and education.

Mentorship: Mentorship of young faculty both in academic settings and in the community is extremely important for the future success of the division. Thanks to great mentoring, Dr. Tara Lin was successful in obtaining an NIH funded career development award and Dr. Priyanka Sharma and Dr. Omar Aljittawi will continue their work with the Department of Internal Medicine’s OSARM career development awards.

Clinical: Led by Mark Myron, MD, our community physicians continue to provide excellent patient care with convenient locations throughout Kansas City. Thanks to the efforts of Sarah Taylor, MD, we are the newest member of the Brain Tumor Trials Collaborative (BTTC), a 10-year-old national organization based in Houston. The BTTC comprises clinicians from multiple institutions who work together to devise clinical trials investigating new drugs, or new combinations of existing drugs, against brain tumors. Collaboratives like BTTC apply the critical thinking skills of multiple experts toward tackling a seemingly intractable problem. In addition, future projects for the coming year include the development of a Cellular Therapeutics Program (Joel McGuirk, DO, and Sunil Abhyankar, MD) and a Center of Excellence for Myelodysplasia (Suman Kambhampati, MD).



Peter Van Veldhuizen, MD