



Department of Radiation Oncology



A Dedication to Our Staff and a Message from the Chair

Kenneth Rosenzweig, MD, Professor and Chair, Department of Radiation Oncology

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a seismic shift in how our nation operates and especially how health care is delivered. The Mount Sinai Health System was at the center of the pandemic and set the standard for the country on how to respond to and treat this disease. During the peak of the crisis, the Department of Radiation Oncology redeployed many members of our team to the front lines in the Emergency Department, inpatient floors, outpatient COVID clinics, and more. Within the Department, we quickly reorganized our workflow to keep our patients and staff safe with great success. Many people rearranged their lives, changed their work schedules and made other sacrifices for one common goal: helping our patients during the most vulnerable time in their lives. We remained busy throughout the surge and never stopped delivering high-quality cancer care to our patients in need. It was an amazing accomplishment and our finest hour as we responded to a humanitarian crisis unlike any we had ever seen; we remain prepared in case there is a new spike in cases in our community. I would like to personally thank everyone in the Department for their commitment and caring. You are truly an inspiration.

In this newsletter you will be able to read about some of our specific responses to COVID, but also learn about some of the exciting accomplishments of our Department. Additionally, I encourage everyone to read the interview with Claude Bloch, MD, FACR, and learn what radiation oncology was like at Mount Sinai more than 50 years ago.

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Publications on Mount Sinai Radiation Oncology's COVID-19 Response

Experiencing the Surge

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted all aspects of life and has changed the practice of medicine. The Department of Radiation Oncology at the Mount Sinai Health System made aggressive efforts to reduce the number of patients on treatment to protect patients and staff, as well as reallocate staff and space for more acute clinical needs. These efforts were recognized in the article “Experiencing the Surge: Report from a Large New York Radiation Oncology Department During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” a collaborative effort of physicians, nursing, radiation therapy, and administration. The piece provides an example to help other departments manage expectations and draft their own policies.

The article, co-authored by Michael Buckstein, MD, PhD, Samantha Skubish, MS, RT(R)(T), Kimberly Smith, MPHA, Irene Braccia, RN, Sheryl Green, MBBCh, and Kenneth Rosenzweig, MD, was published in *Advances in Radiation Oncology*.

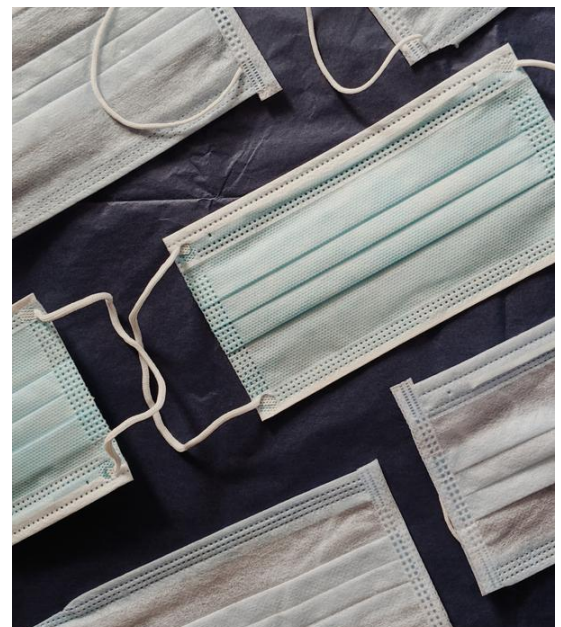
Find the full article here: [https://www.advancesradonc.org/article/S2452-1094\(20\)30090-7/fulltext](https://www.advancesradonc.org/article/S2452-1094(20)30090-7/fulltext)

Fear in the Age of COVID-19

In April 2020, Kunal Sindhu, MD, and Vishal Gupta, MD, co-authored the article “Fear in the Age of COVID-19”, published in *Advances in Radiation Oncology*. The article shares the perspective of physicians guiding patients starting their cancer treatment during the pandemic. The opinion piece responds to the question, “Should we still start my cancer treatment with all of this going on?”

Find the full article here:

[https://www.advancesradonc.org/article/S2452-1094\(20\)30080-4/fulltext](https://www.advancesradonc.org/article/S2452-1094(20)30080-4/fulltext)





Radiation Oncology

COVID-19

Keeping you and your families safe throughout your radiation treatment

- ✓ All patients are screened upon entry
- ✓ All patients and staff are required to wear a face mask at all times
- ✓ Visitors and family members are currently not permitted
- ✓ Caregivers (when necessary) are limited to 1 and will be screened prior to entry
- ✓ Our waiting rooms are set up to respect social distancing
- ✓ We are staggering visits to keep our volumes at appropriate levels to avoid overcrowding
- ✓ We are extending our hours to give you more options
- ✓ We are providing a text messaging process if you would like to participate in a virtual waiting room for your visits
- ✓ We clean our exam rooms between every patient
- ✓ We clean our treatment rooms consistently throughout the day and disinfect our treatment tables after every patient
- ✓ We clean all touch surfaces multiple times throughout the day
- ✓ Our Palm Scanner is disinfected after every patient
- ✓ We follow strict isolation protocols to separate COVID-19 patients from others
- ✓ We have proper personal protective equipment for our health care workers, and we follow the latest best practices

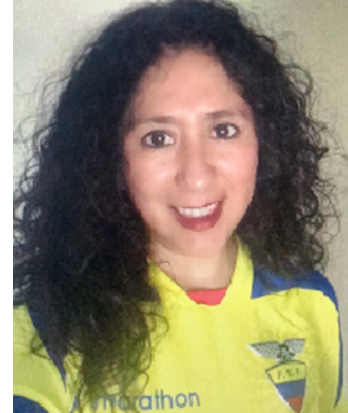
www.mountsinai.org/about/safety-hub/patients

Celebrating Our Diversity

The Department of Radiation Oncology at Mount Sinai is committed to fostering a strong sense of community based on diversity and inclusion. Our department is composed of a team of employees that speak over 21 languages and is from more than 18 countries. In an effort to celebrate our diversity, a key strength in our department, we will highlight various cultures and staff in future newsletters. We look forward to experiencing our colleagues in new ways, learning from each other and growing as a department.

Cultural highlight with Lorena Pesantez-Mihov, Associate Director of Radiation Oncology

I was born in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador. My country is located in the North West part of South America; there are four very distinct regions: Pacific coast, Andean highlands, Amazonian rainforest and the Galapagos Islands. Spanish is the official language, but Quechua, the language of the Incan Empire, is spoken by the Indian population. Ecuadorian society is divided by a class system, based on which, people are treated differently; classes usually don't mix. It is important to understand these realities of the social structure of Ecuador.



Are there traditions, celebrations or rituals your family participates in?

Ecuadorians still abide by the siesta hours of 1:00pm to 3:00pm. This is a tradition inherited from the Spanish during the colonial times. Many businesses and stores close during those hours, and also on Sundays. It is a tradition for families to eat together; my family frequently has lunch together if we are not working, and almost always eat dinner together. Sundays are for church followed by a large family lunch that includes extended family members. Ecuadorians are very affectionate people, so physical contact is an important factor in informal greetings. When addressing someone over 50, we always add Don or Doña as a sign of respect. Futbol (soccer) is the king of sports for us! During the world championship, which is played every four years, expect to see businesses closed when Ecuador's futbol team, or any South-American country plays.



What is your favorite cultural celebration or something that makes your culture unique?

My favorite holiday is New Year's, because my whole family gets together to party and welcome the new year. It is tradition to make "El Año Viejo" (Old Year), which is a figure stuffed with hay or paper and dressed as whatever character you want to portray. The Año Viejo represents the things we wish to leave behind with the past year. Around midnight, the Año Viejo is tossed into the bonfire! We are very superstitious people. It is not surprising to see my uncle running with a suitcase at midnight hoping the new year will bring travels. Wearing new, yellow underwear is supposed to bring luck, money and happiness in the new year. Another custom to receive the new year is to make a wish for each month as you eat 12 grapes.



Are there religious or spiritual beliefs in your culture that influence your daily life?

In Ecuador family is extremely important; we base all our interactions on mutual respect. All life activities are centered around benefiting the family unit. We are really close and I think the sense of community and not individualism influences my personal and professional life. Knowing that whatever I do will impact everyone in my family, makes me always think twice before making important decisions. I view this same perspective in the work environment; we are part of a team and any personal achievements come from shared knowledge, common values and mutual support.



Faculty Updates



Welcoming Robert Press, MD

Robert Press, MD, is a radiation oncologist at the New York Proton Center and Assistant Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. He specializes in treating CNS and head and neck malignancies. Dr. Press is originally from Knoxville, Tennessee, and earned a bachelor's of science degree in neuroscience and behavioral biology from Emory University. He graduated from Emory University School of Medicine and completed his residency training in radiation oncology at Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University. During residency, he was selected as Chief Resident and was named the Andrew W. Pippas Resident in Radiation Oncology, an honor given by the faculty for a resident who exemplifies professional and compassionate patient care. Dr. Press has won several awards, including the ASCO Conquering Cancer Foundation Merit Award and the RSNA Roentgen Resident/Fellow Research Award.

Robert Press, MD

His research interests include the development of clinical trials to better define the role of proton therapy in the definitive and reirradiation setting in order to improve outcomes and reduce treatment-related toxicities. In his free time, he enjoys traveling, hiking, and sailing.

Kavita Dharmarajan, MD, MSc, Appointed Associate Professor

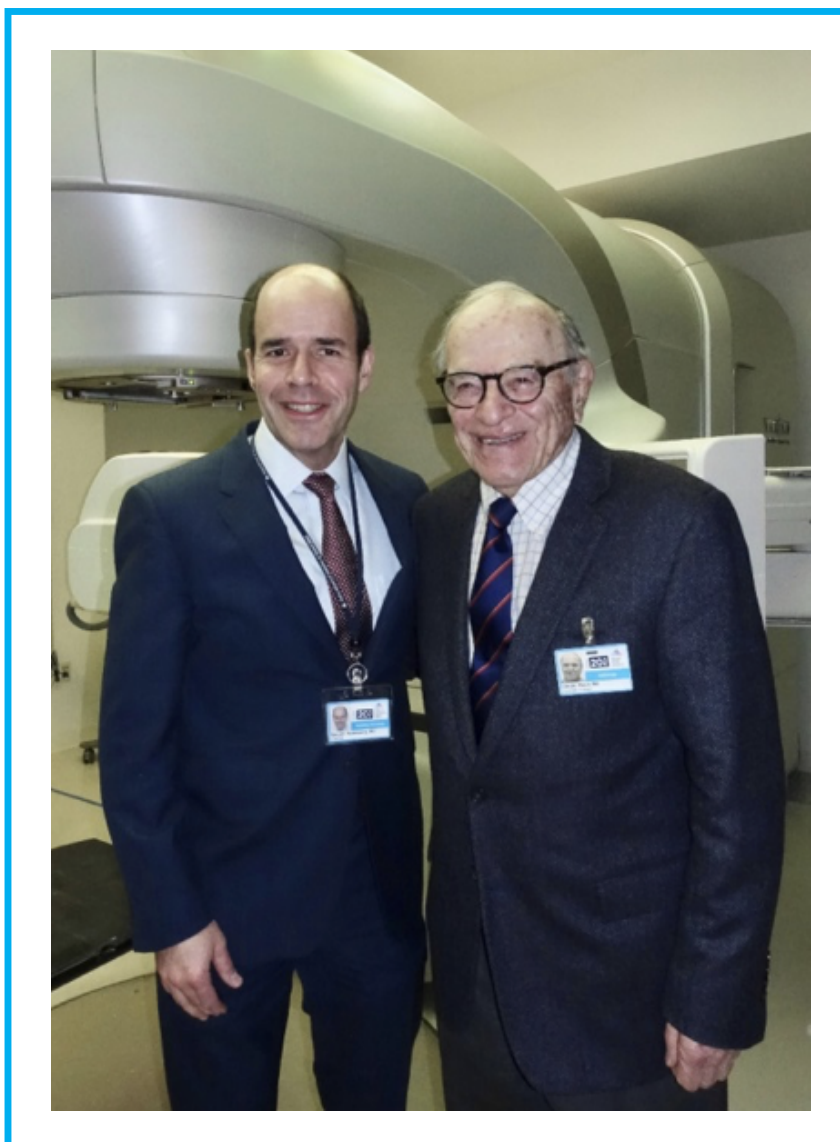
Kavita Dharmarajan, MD, MSc, has been promoted to Associate Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Dr. Dharmarajan completed her residency in Radiation Oncology at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center and joined Mount Sinai in 2013 with dual appointments in the Department of Radiation Oncology and the Brookdale Department of Geriatrics and Palliative Care. She has quickly become prominent in the field of Palliative Radiation Oncology both nationally and internationally.

She has received career development awards from the National Palliative Care Research Center and Claude D. Pepper Older Americans Independence Center for her research. Her published research findings have shown that palliative radiotherapy service models lead to increased use of short-course treatments, fewer prematurely terminated radiation treatment courses, earlier and increased utilization of palliative care, and cost-savings for inpatients undergoing palliative radiotherapy. Her work earned her one of seven Association of Community Cancer Centers Innovator Awards in 2018 and the American Geriatrics Society Jeffrey H. Silverstein Memorial Award in 2020. In addition, Dr. Dharmarajan has been instrumental in the partnership between the Visiting Nurses Association and Mount Sinai Radiation Oncology, allowing cancer patients on hospice to receive palliative radiation. She directed the Palliative Radiation Symposium in 2018 and is currently planning the second Palliative Radiation Symposium at Mount Sinai.



Kavita Dharmarajan, MD, MSc

From the Archives, Mount Sinai Radiation Oncology



Kenneth Rosenzweig, MD, FACR, FASTRO, left, and Claude Bloch, MD, FACR

Celebrating Claude Bloch, MD, FACR

Claude Bloch, MD, FACR, is a board certified radiologist who has been practicing for more than 65 years. Dr. Bloch earned his medical degree at Yale University in 1953 and later completed his fellowship and residency at Mount Sinai. Dr. Bloch was the first radiation oncology resident at Mount Sinai. Over the duration of his professional career, he has seen monumental advancement in the field and in health care, including the introduction of computed tomography (CT) and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

Dr. Bloch received the Mount Sinai Alumni Award for Achievement in Medical Education in 2018. This award honors a physician who has made major contributions to the field of medical education. At 90 years old, Dr. Bloch is an active member of the medical community and attends Mount Sinai Thoracic Oncology Tumor Board bi-weekly, where he shares his perspective and insight on challenging cases.

Kenneth Rosenzweig, MD, and Maria Dimopoulos, MBA, RT(T), interviewed Dr. Bloch to share his experience and advice to health care professionals today.

Q. Radiation Oncology was not a separate specialty until approximately 1969. Tell us how you became interested in the field.

In 1959, radiotherapy was a part of the Department of Radiology. There were four residents in radiology and one of us would rotate one year in radiotherapy. We were trained in diagnostic radiology and therapeutic radiotherapy at the same time, we earned our training for both. From 1959-1960, I did my radiotherapy residency for one year. I was the first resident in radiotherapy!

Q. Tell us about your residency experience.

John Boland was the new chief, he was from Manchester, England. I remember him saying “Claude, you know Mount Sinai I, don’t. And I know radiotherapy and you don’t. So I’ll teach you one and you teach me the other.” He taught me a great deal, he was very advanced in retrospect. He was already doing plaster casts to immobilize the patient, and I don’t think too many people were doing that at the time.

After residency, I started my practice in 1960 and treated patients for 20 years at Mount Sinai, for a long time both radiology and radiotherapy. Over time we had a diagnostic machine, a betatron, a cobalt unit, and later on a linac. At one point, the volume was just too high. This was in the late 1970s, and radiotherapy had really come to be known as its own department. I was the first one to do radiation training here, and the last one to do it alongside diagnostic. There was no one else beside me doing both. Eventually I had to choose one, and I chose diagnostic. I chose diagnostic as it kept me very, very busy.

Q. The CT scanner was introduced in 1972 and MRI in 1977. Tell us what it was like working in the field during these monumental advancements in health care.

In the 1980s, a venture capitalist reached out to me, a connection I had made while at Mount Sinai. They came to me and explained they wanted a foothold in the Big Apple, and they knew me. They said “instead of us as the venture capitalist buying the horse and the jockey, we have the jockey, we know you, and we’ll buy the horse.” They gave me a turnkey operation. They bought a building and the new GE equipment, it was fantastic. The advanced equipment was a beautiful thing.

Q. Obviously, there have been tremendous gains in medicine from the incorporation of new technology. Do you feel anything has been lost along the way?

Yes and no. Before CT scans, when we did a GI series, we could diagnose pancreatic cancer and it was a coup. Now when you do a CT scan, the technologist does the scan and can see the diagnosis, you don’t have to be a maven. In that way, the art of diagnostic radiology has been lost due to very accurate machines. I’m not saying that’s bad, it was a challenge previously and that challenge does not exist anymore.

Q. What one piece of advice would you give health care professionals today?

I went into medicine because I was a scientist at heart and I love people. I was known as an accurate diagnostician who took care of my patients. Always talk to your patients before, during and after any procedure, this is very important.

Today, young people are going into medicine with lot of new horizons that didn’t exist in my days. This is a good thing. When I came to Mount Sinai and became an intern, I didn’t know what I wanted to be. I liked everything but surgery. I took a year of pathology and then was drafted into the Air Force. When I returned, I went to radiology and I liked that it was always a challenge. You have to be 100 percent correct 100 percent of the time.



Mount Sinai Archives: 1959. A 'patient' in the changing room area of the new Radiotherapy Center at The Mount Sinai Hospital.



Mount Sinai Archives: 1959. A 'patient' being treated by a rotating cobalt unit in the Radiotherapy Center at The Mount Sinai Hospital.

Education Updates

Welcoming Radiation Oncology Residents



Julie Bloom, MD

Julie Bloom, MD

Julie Bloom, MD, attended Northwestern University for her undergraduate degree in neuroscience and environmental policy. She then attended Rush Medical School and developed an interest in radiation oncology and interdisciplinary oncology care. Dr. Bloom’s research interests are constantly evolving, however they include brain metastases, head and neck cancer, medical ethics, and communications skills in oncology. Outside of the hospital, Dr. Bloom enjoys exploring national parks, hiking, picnics in Central Park, and beekeeping.



Alex Hotca-Cho, MD

Alex Hotca-Cho, MD

Alexandra “Alex” Hotca-Cho, MD, is originally from Romania. She moved to France for high school and then relocated to New York where she received her undergraduate degree in biology from CUNY Hunter College. Dr. Hotca-Cho completed her medical education at Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia. During that time, she also conducted research on heart toxicity following radiation therapy in non-small cell lung cancer at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. After medical school, Dr. Hotca-Cho returned to New York to complete her internal medicine internship at Lenox Hill Hospital. In her free time, Dr. Hotca-Cho enjoys running, traveling, exploring new places, and good food.



Carlos Rodriguez-Russo, MD

Carlos Rodriguez-Russo, MD

Carlos Rodriguez-Russo, MD, completed his undergraduate degree in regenerative biology at Harvard University and his medical degree from the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. He then completed his internal medicine internship at George Washington University Hospital. Dr. Rodriguez-Russo is interested in exploring the scope of palliative care within radiation oncology, improving the treatment of rare cancers, and widening access to oncology services for underserved communities. Outside of the clinic, he enjoys playing the piano, cooking new recipes with his wife, or wandering off on a day trip to a local hiking spot.

Medical Physics Residency Program Achieves CAMPEP Accreditation

In January 2019, the Clinical Medical Physics Residency Program at Mount Sinai was established. Under the leadership of program director, Junyi Xia, PhD, and program coordinator, Yading Yuan, PhD, the physics residency is a two-year physics training program consisting of 12 clinical rotations, mentored by the Department's 15 board certified medical physicists. In December, 2019, the Clinical Medical Physics Residency Program obtained provisional accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Medical Physics Education Programs, Inc (CAMPEP). The mission of CAMPEP is to promote consistent quality education of medical physicists by evaluating and accrediting Graduate, Residency, Professional Doctorate in Medical Physics, Certificate and Continuing Education programs that meet high standards established by CAMPEP in collaboration with its sponsoring institutions. The program prepares for and anticipates full accreditation following a CAMPEP site visit.

Matthew Schelin, MS, is the program's second physics resident. He received a Bachelor of Science in bioengineering from the University of Maryland at College Park and a Master of Science in medical physics from Thomas Jefferson University. Matthew is originally from Long Island, New York, and is excited to be back in New York City.

Congratulations to all!



Matthew Schelin, MS

Center for Radiation Therapy Education

The Mount Sinai Center for Radiation Therapy Education at Stony Brook University is proud to announce the graduation and RT(T) credentialing of its second class of radiation therapy students. Under the leadership of Maria Dimopoulos, MBA, RT(T), Program Director, the Center is now at an exciting time of transition as the Class of 2021 progresses to treatment unit internships across the Mount Sinai Health System. The Class of 2021 will complete monthly treatment rotations as well as specialty rotations with radiation oncologists, in dosimetry and in brachy therapy.

We welcome our third class of Mount Sinai radiation therapy students to the Department.



From left: Michelle Arguello, BS, Samantha Cariello, BS, Ajay Ramdeholl, BS, Kayla Ulloa, BS, Shafira Subedi, BS, Kennedy Dorset, BS

Cancer Support Services

Members of the Cancer Support Services Team are available to help patients manage the physical symptoms, emotional concerns, and spiritual issues they may experience during treatment. Mount Sinai social workers, dieticians, chaplains, peer-support specialists, pain and palliative experts, music therapists, integrative therapists, artists in residence, and psychiatrists form a dedicated group of clinicians specialized in supportive care.



Mount Sinai Radiation Oncology patients during a creative workshop

In May 2020, Janet Pfeffer, a writing teacher and Mount Sinai volunteer, led a narrative writing workshop. These workshops give patients an opportunity to explore therapeutic and creative aspects of writing and share their experiences in a nurturing environment. After the most recent workshop, one participant shared, “I enjoy going to the Writing Workshop group because it allows me to convey what I’m going through in my life through a short story. I enjoy hearing others in the group sharing their stories, too. I also use the feedback as a tool, which helps me be a better writer. I look forward to the Writing Workshop because it gives me a reason to express and feel good about myself.”

Virtual Offerings

Due to COVID-19, Cancer Support Services have gone virtual, offering free support and wellness programs through Zoom. Zoom is an online platform which is accessible via phone, laptop, desktop, and tablet. Staff remains committed to providing patients with safe support. Cancer support programming includes: weekly yoga, meditation, knitting and journaling/writing workshops, and more. Cancer Support Services brochures are available across our departments. In addition, visit <https://www.mountsinai.org/care/cancer/about/support> for updates on upcoming programs or search the handle @mshscancersupportservices on Instagram.

ONS Annual Congress 2020

Although the 45th annual Oncology Nursing Society (ONS) Congress canceled the in-person gathering, the Department of Radiation Oncology continued to have a significant presence at the virtual meeting. We congratulate our team on their achievements:

- The nurse’s role in improving the completion of advance care planning in the ambulatory setting – Kathleen Hines, MBA, BSN, RN; Boris Bakanov, RN, MPH, OCN; Catherine Cadore, RN, MSN/NED; Toby Bressler, PhD, RN, OCN
- Creating the next generation of oncology nurses through professional development of the oncology ancillary workforce – Kathleen Hines, MBA, BSN, RN; Veronica Arellano, MOA
- Keeping our ducks in a row; care coordination of combined multi modal treatment – Karen DeVries, RN, OCN, CBCN; Kathleen Hines, MBA, BSN, RN; Yun Jeong Seo, NP; Catherine Cadore, RN, MSN/NED; Jonathan Rockfeld, MSN, ANP-BC; Toby Bressler, PhD, RN, OCN
- Creating a path of resilience; challenges when caring for a young adult in an adult ambulatory setting – Kathleen Hines, MBA, BSN, RN

Professional Development and Achievement

A Service Story Highlighting Elise Watson

In January 2020, the Mount Sinai Health System acknowledged Elise Watson in a service story, “Everything is better together.” When a colleague was struggling with ordering scrubs for her team, she offered support and guidance in reviewing each and every line of the order. The next day, she followed up to confirm if her colleague needed any additional support. When thanked for her time, she simply responded “That’s what we do here. Everything is better together.”



Elise Watson

Castle Connolly Recognizes Mount Sinai Radiation Oncologists

Castle Connolly is a leading research and information resource for patients looking to find and connect with quality health care. New York Magazine recognizes these physicians annually in its Top Doctors article. Congratulations to Mount Sinai radiation oncologists for being recognized by Castle Connolly as 2020 Top Doctors in Radiation Oncology:

- Manjeet Chadha, MD
- Paul Gliedman, MD
- Sheryl Green, MBBCh
- Kenneth Rosenzweig, MD
- Richard Stock, MD

To see the article, visit: <https://nymag.com/bestdoctors/>



Celebrating 20 Years at Mount Sinai

Congratulations Cynthia Vivians and Ryan Whirley for celebrating 20 years of employment at the Mount Sinai Health System.

Emerging Leaders Graduates

Emerging Leaders is a six-month professional development program for aspiring leaders across the Mount Sinai Health System who have strong leadership potential as well as a desire to learn and grow within the Health System. This program offers a pathway for professional growth by building key skills and sharpening leadership-related competencies through project-based, experiential learning.

Congratulations to two of our senior radiation therapists and Emerging Leaders Graduates Vincent Gazzara, RT(T), and Rodney Michel, RT(T).



Vincent Gazzara, RT(T), left, and Rodney Michel, RT(T)



Lazina Lorick and Jake Matranga, RT(R)(T)

Jake Matranga, RT(R)(T), Graduates SHARP Internship

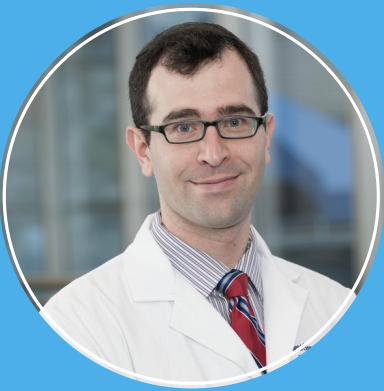
In January, Jake Matranga, RT(R)(T), radiation therapist, completed his Mount Sinai SHARP Internship. For 16 weeks, he was paired with preceptor Lazina Lorick, Director of Pediatric Ambulatory Care Operations, and the Department of Pediatrics. The duo’s goal was to help new parents with the process of registering their newborn babies with the state and with insurance providers to limit the Department’s denial claim. By raising patient transparency and making floor visits, the team was able to lower the amount of denials by more than 5 percent and reduce the registration process from 20 minutes to 5-7 minutes. This allowed each patient more time with their provider and a less stressful transition into outpatient care.



Natosha Houston, RT(T), LPN

Natosha Houston, RT(T), LPN, Awarded Safety Champion

In December 2019, Natosha Houston, RT(T), LPN, Technical Supervisor of Radiation Oncology at Mount Sinai West, received a Mount Sinai Safety Champion award in recognition of her hard work implementing the near miss data base and encouraging all staff members to report any near miss entries. Near miss reporting is one of the key tools used across the Department of Radiation Oncology to prevent errors from occurring while fostering a positive and safe environment for patient care.



Robert Samstein, MD, PhD

Robert Samstein, MD, PhD, Awarded Solomon Silver Award

In June 2020, Robert Samstein, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, was awarded the Solomon Silver Award in Clinical Medicine. The Solomon Silver Award is established by the Richard and Hinda Rosenthal Foundation and honors an assistant professor at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai who applies advances in scientific and laboratory medicine to the practice of medicine at the patient level.



Samantha Skubish, MS, RT(R)(T)

Samantha Skubish, MS, RT(R)(T), Awarded ARRT,

I am the Gold Standard Award

In March 2020, Samantha Skubish, MS, RT(R)(T), System Chief Technical Administrator for the Mount Sinai Department of Radiation Oncology, was awarded the 2020 I am the Gold Standard Award from the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists (ARRT). The ARRT is the credentialing organization that certifies and advocates for all radiologic technologists. Each year, the ARRT recognizes three individuals who have made a substantial commitment to the profession by leading and achieving significant accomplishments relative to quality, safety, and patient experience. The award is across radiation therapy and the 14 other radiologic technology disciplines across the United States.

Residents Complete Leadership Development Program

Four residents in the Department, (Jalal Ahmed, MD, PhD, Jared Rowley, MD, Kunal Sindhu, MD, and William Smith, MD), have completed the Leadership Development Program for residents and fellows at The Mount Sinai Hospital. Over the course of the twelve-month program, the residents developed and refined their management skills in order to improve their abilities to work in team settings and their leadership capacities. Through a mix of lectures, discussions, and projects, the residents explored a number of topics, including skill building around leadership and team effectiveness, managing change and conflict, improving team communication, motivating improved performance, time and stress management. Additionally, they learned about population health strategies, IT innovations, data analysis



Kunal Sindhu, MD, left

approaches for driving quality, and the Affordable Care Act and payment reform. The residents also benefitted from hearing from numerous in-person speakers, including David J. Shulkin, MD, former U.S. Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The residents hope to use their experiences in this program to improve their performance in clinic and beyond.

Yun Jeong Seo, NP, Achieves Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse Practitioner

Congratulations to Yun Jeong Seo, NP, for achieving Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse Practitioner (AOCNP). This certification recognizes nurse practitioners for their specialty knowledge and advanced practice role in oncology nursing.



Recent Publications

Kimberly Smith, MPHA, Published in *Oncology Issues*

In January 2020, Kimberly Smith, MPHA, Vice Chair of Radiation Oncology at the Mount Sinai Health System, authored the article, “Can You Hear Me Now?” published in *Oncology Issues*. The article focuses on improving physician wellness with voice recognition software.

When Mount Sinai asked its physicians in 2017 to rank their top dissatisfiers at work, excessive time spent documenting patient interactions came out on top. In response, in 2018 Mount Sinai’s Department of Radiation Oncology committed to addressing the extent to which patient documentation was overburdening physicians. Leadership recognized this issue had become a factor in maintaining physician wellness and a multidisciplinary team was assembled to determine how to best enhance the current system.

The collaborative effort and integration of the voice enabled Palabra system led to significant benefits including time savings, continuity of care, ease of use, fewer missed documents and enhanced compliance.



Kimberly Smith, MPHA

Find the full article here:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10463356.2019.1692518>

Maria Dimopoulos, MBA, RT(T), Published in ASRT *Scanner*

In December 2019, Maria Dimopoulos, MBA, RT(T), program director of the Center for Radiation Therapy Education, was published in American Society of Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) *Scanner* for her article titled “Finding My Chi.” The article highlights a relaxation program to improve morale and alleviate stress. Chi Time, a program run by the chaplains of the Mount Sinai Health System Center for Spirituality and Health, supports hard-working employees and facilitates relaxing gatherings. The article encourages departments to offer similar resources, or at the very least, to reach out to co-workers who seem overwhelmed. These efforts can decrease staff burnout and offer a resource of support.



Maria Dimopoulos, MBA, RT(T)

Find the full article here:

https://media.asrt.org/pdf/publications/SCAN/SCAN_Vol52_No2.pdf

Research Corner

Radiation Oncology Winter 2020 Research Retreat

On February 5, 2020, the Department of Radiation Oncology at Mount Sinai gathered for a Winter Research Retreat. The event was hosted by Karyn Aalami Goodman, MD, MS, Professor and Vice Chair for Research and Quality in the Department of Radiation Oncology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, and Associate Director for Clinical Research at The Tisch Cancer Institute. Dr. Goodman is responsible for developing the infrastructure and resources to support cancer clinical trials across the Health System. With support from Lynda Rath, BFA, and Rebecca Speyer, BA, the retreat focused on summarizing current research while providing a platform for future research collaboration.



Kenneth Rosenzweig, MD



Karyn Aalami Goodman, MD, MS, and Richard Bakst, MD



From left: Zahra Ghiassi-Nejad, MD, PhD, Pinaki Dutta, MD, PhD, Jerry Liu, MD, and Vishal Gupta, MD



Radiation Oncology Staff at the Winter 2020 Research Retreat

Holman Reserach Pathway

The Mount Sinai Radiation Oncology Residency program is honored to have two residents in the Leonard B. Holman Research Pathway, a program from the American Board of Radiology which allows well selected residents to do intensive research training during residency. The Holman Pathway is designed for the exceptional trainee who has both strong clinical abilities and a background in research. Deborah Marshall, MD, MAS, is doing her research on treatment-related toxicity in priority cancer populations with a particular focus on late sexual toxicity in women after radiation. Dr. Marshall has been awarded a T32 training grant, Patty Brisbane Foundation for Women’s Sexual Health Grant, an NRG Oncology NCORP PILOT Grant, an ACRO resident seed grant, and an ASCO Young Investigator Award. Jalal Ahmed, MD, PhD, is in the laboratory targeting the tumor microenvironment to Advance CAR T cell therapy for lung cancer. Dr. Ahmed has been awarded a Lung Cancer Research Foundation Scientific Award, Varian FLASH Forward Consortium Grant, and also an ASCO Young Investigator Award. Drs. Marshall and Ahmed are rapidly on their way to becoming leaders in radiation oncology.

Kavita Dharmarajan, MD, MSc, Granted Jeffrey H. Silverstein Memorial Award

In February 2020, Kavita Dharmarajan, MD, MSc, Associate Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, received the Jeffrey H. Silverstein Memorial Award for Emerging Investigators in the Surgical and Related Medical Specialties from the American Geriatrics Society (AGS). The AGS honors Dr. Dharmarajan’s research and commitment to a career in research on aging, highlighting her work “Palliative radiation treatment in older adults with brain metastases: benefit or burden?” Dr. Dharmarajan and colleagues from across the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai looked at whether a certain form of palliative radiation therapy was associated with more benefits or burdens for older adults with certain types of cancer. The team looked at data from more than 28,000 patients with breast, lung, or gastrointestinal cancer and a diagnosis of brain metastases. Of those patients, 20 percent were 75 years old or older, and more than 52 percent received whole brain radiation therapy (WBRT).

More than 80 percent of patients receiving WBRT completed treatment. Compared with younger patients, those 75-years-old and older were less likely to be offered palliative WBRT and more likely to stop WBRT prematurely. People over age 75 also experienced a higher rate of mortality within six months of completing radiation therapy. According to Dr. Dharmarajan and her colleagues, results suggest that WBRT as a palliative option frequently goes unfinished and can be associated with worse outcomes in older adults with cancer that has spread to the brain. More research is needed to identify patients likely to benefit from this type of a palliative option.



Kavita Dharmarajan, MD, MSc



Ching-Ling Teng, PhD Awarded ANRP Pilot Grant

In February 2020, the Advanced Neuroimaging Research Program (ANRP) awarded Ching-Ling Teng, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, the ANRP Pilot Grant for Junior Investigators. The grant will allow Dr. Teng to utilize the Advanced Image Facility in Mount Sinai for her project, “Mitigating radiation-induced cognitive impairment with personalized functional brain network analysis.”

Cling-Ling Teng, PhD

Deborah Marshall, MD, MAS, Awarded Conquer Cancer Foundation Merit Award

Deborah Marshall, MD, MAS, received a Conquer Cancer Merit Award at the 2019 American Society of Clinical Oncology Annual Meeting. “Merit Awards are critical to support the research of early-career oncologists,” Suzanne George, MD, chair of ASCO’s scientific program committee, stated in a press release. Dr. Marshall is recognized for submitting high-quality research whose findings are improving the quality of care for people with cancer.



Deborah Marshall, MD, MAS

Departmental Updates



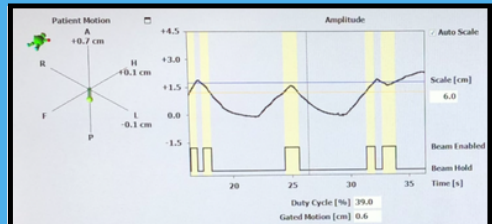
Danielle McDonagh, MS, RT(T) Joins Mount Sinai Union Square

Danielle McDonagh, MS, RT(T), joins Mount Sinai Downtown: Union Square as the Technical Supervisor of Radiation Oncology. She received her radiation therapy education at Manhattan College, her master’s degree in Management from Colorado Technical University, and is currently earning her Doctorate in Health Science from the University of Bridgeport. Previously the lead radiation therapist at Mount Sinai West, Danielle joins the Mount Sinai Downtown team with experience presenting at the American Society for Radiologic Technologists (ASRT) Radiation Therapy Conference and with published work in the ASRT *Radiation Therapist* journal.

Danielle McDonagh, MS, RT(T)

DIBH Launched at Mount Sinai West

Congratulations to Mount Sinai West for the integration of deep inspiration breath hold (DIBH). DIBH is a radiation therapy technique that limits radiation exposure to the heart and lungs. The technique involves a patient holding their breath during treatment, which fills the lungs with air and moves the heart away from the chest wall. DIBH is often used for left sided breast treatment and is dependent upon unique patient anatomy. The technique may not be necessary for each patient and is reviewed as a possibility during the simulation process.



DIBH Breathing Gate



Vishal Gupta, MD, Site Director (center) during successful go-live with department staff

The Blavatnik Family – Chelsea Medical Center

Phase I is complete at The Blavatnik Family – Chelsea Medical Center. On January 28, 2020, the Department treated its first patient using the new TrueBeam. The treatment machine will deliver radiotherapy to a wide range of treatment sites with advanced imaging techniques. Phases II and III will bring a new CT simulator and will share the space with the Department of Radiology for the installation of an MRI. Congratulations to all!

In the News

CBS New York Interviews Michael Buckstein, MD, PhD

On March 5, 2020, CBS New York interviewed Michael Buckstein, MD, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Radiation Oncology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, on the rise of colon and rectal cancer cases in young adults. The American Cancer Society notes colorectal cancer among people under 50 has increased 51 percent since 1994. The reasons for the increase are unclear. Dr. Buckstein explained, “There are multiple hypotheses floating around as to what it is, whether it has to do with diet, exercise, antibiotic use. There are multiple theories, but no one has really found the holy grail as to what’s actually causing this increase in young people. Every person should be a little more aware of him or herself, to see a doctor if something doesn’t feel quite right with their bowel movements or if they’re seeing blood or black in their stool.” Dr. Buckstein closed by further encouraging primary care providers to be more aware that what they might be seeing, what they think is perhaps hemorrhoids, is in fact an early stage cancer.

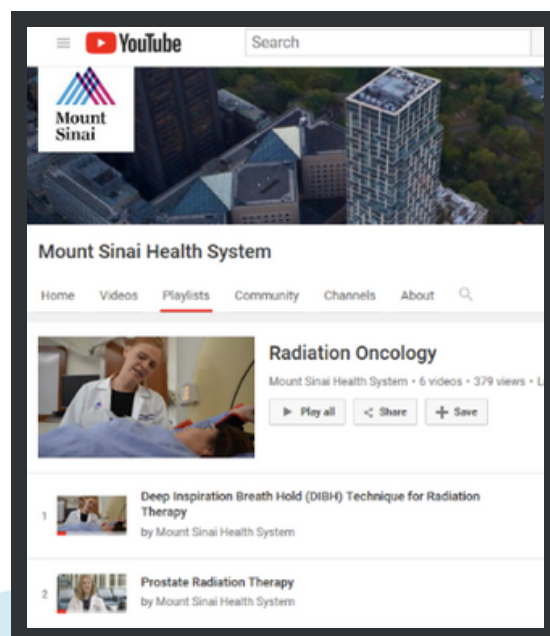
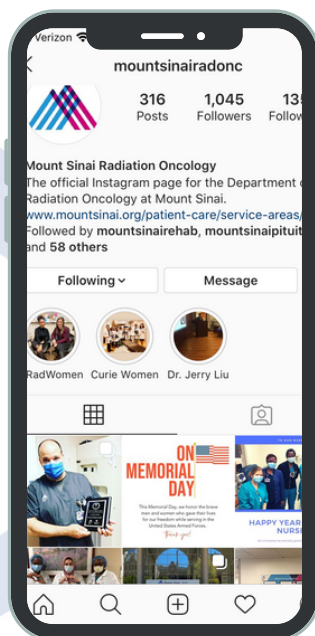


Michael Buckstein, MD, PhD

Mount Sinai Radiation Oncology Social Media

Interested in joining our social media committee? Take a picture we should post?

Please contact Samantha Skubish at samantha.skubish@moutnsinai.org Thank you!



Follow us on Instagram
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To learn more about the radiation oncology simulation and treatment process, view our educational video playlist on YouTube by searching “Mount Sinai Radiation Oncology”