The Hem/Onc Herald

Message from the Director

I would like to introduce you to the first issue of The Hem/Onc Herald, which will be a quarterly newsletter highlighting the UAB Division of Hematology/Oncology. Special thanks to Kelly Adamson and La Verne Croom for producing this issue.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all individuals involved in the care of patients with cancer and related disorders who have been treated by Hematology/Oncology physicians. I am equally thankful for the remarkable work conducted by the Hematology/Oncology research faculty and their team.

Update on Clinical Activity

I am excited to report that we have witnessed significant growth in our clinical activity. I would like to congratulate and thank you for the hard and productive clinical work you have accomplished within the past year. As you know, the Department of Medicine’s goal is to increase its patient volume by 5% this year. I am very pleased to inform you that our Division has already exceeded these goals as our total volume has increased by 6.1% as compared with 2011. Furthermore, during the same period, patient visits for infusion therapy have increased by 11.3% and 9.6% at Acton Road and The Kirklin Clinic, respectively.

Faculty Recruitment

I am thrilled to announce the addition of some outstanding clinical/research faculty to the UAB Division of Hematology/Oncology. We are fortunate to have attracted leaders in hematologic malignancies, bone marrow and stem cell transplantation and genitourinary malignancies. Please join me in welcoming them to UAB.

Harry Erba, MD, PhD from the University of Michigan is the new Director of the Hematologic Malignancy Program and the holder of the Albert F. LoBuglio Chair for Translational Research.

Dr. Erba received his M.D. and Ph.D. degrees from Stanford University. He did his internship and residency in Internal Medicine at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Harvard Medical School. Following a fellowship in Hematology/Oncology at the same institution, he joined the Harvard Medical School faculty for 3 years until he moved to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor where he rose to the rank of Associate Professor.

Over the past decade, Dr. Erba has become a highly respected leader in the field of hematologic malignancies, especially with respect to the assessment of novel therapies in acute myeloid leukemia, chronic myeloid leukemia and myelodysplastic syndromes.

UAB Medicine—Hematology/Oncology West Clinic Now Open

We are expanding into the western section of town with the new UAB Medicine Hematology/Oncology West clinic at Medical West.

In September 2012, we began offering patients the opportunity to be treated by either Susmitha Nimmagadda, MD or Guru Sonpavde, MD in the outpatient clinic at UAB Med West in Bessemer. Patients will also be able to receive chemotherapy and blood products on site and receive the same great care we are known for at UAB and The Kirklin Clinic.
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He is an executive officer of SWOG (formerly, Southwest Oncology Group), working closely with the leadership of the SWOG leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma and bone marrow transplant committees. He is an active member in the SWOG leukemia committee and will become chair next month.

He has served on the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) Practice Guidelines Committees for acute myeloid leukemia, chronic myeloid leukemia, myelodysplastic syndromes and myeloid growth factors. He was given Special Recognition and Appointment to the NCCN Board of Producers in 2007 and 2008. He has been involved in numerous clinical trials in hematologic malignancies, led many national trials as a chair or co-chair, and played major roles in the development of several new drugs. He was named Teacher of the Year in the Division of Hematology/Oncology for four consecutive years at the University of Michigan. In 2004, he was given the Outstanding Clinician Award by the Dean of the University of Michigan Medical School, and this year was appointed as an inaugural member of the League of Clinical Excellence at the University of Michigan.

His work has been published in high-impact journals such as Nature, Cell, Journal of Clinical Oncology, Blood, Cancer Research and British Journal of Haematology. In addition to 47 peer-reviewed publications, he has authored five book chapters and has lectured extensively in the US, Canada, Europe and Japan.

Shin Mineishi, M.D. from the University of Michigan is the new Director of the Bone Marrow Transplantation and Cell Therapy Program.

Dr. Mineishi received his M.D. degree from the University of Tokyo in Japan. Following a residency in Internal Medicine at St. Luke International Hospital in Tokyo, he did a postdoctoral fellowship in Medical Oncology and Pharmacology at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. He received his training in Internal Medicine at Long Island Jewish Medical Center in New York. He received his training in Medical Oncology and Bone Marrow Transplantation at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center where he was subsequently appointed Instructor of Medicine.

He then moved to the University of Wisconsin at Madison as Assistant Professor. In 1999, he moved back to Japan to become Chief of the Allogeneic Stem Cell Transplant Service at the National Cancer Center Hospital in Tokyo.

He returned to the U.S. in 2003 and held faculty positions as Associate Professor at Vanderbilt until 2005 when he became the Clinical Director of Adult Blood and Marrow Transplant Program and Associate Professor with tenure at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

Over the past decade, Dr. Mineishi rose to national and international prominence with his work in bone marrow transplantation, especially in the conditioning regimens for aggressive AML.

Additionally, he has focused on graft versus host disease, complications after stem cell transplantation, reduced intensity stem cell transplantation, and HLA-mismatch stem cell transplantation.

His work has been published in high impact journals such as JAMA, Blood, Cancer Research, Clinical Cancer Research and the British Journal of Haematology. In addition to more than 86 peer-reviewed articles, he has published five book chapters and reviews. He has been invited to present his work and has chaired sessions at numerous bone marrow transplantation and hematology meetings throughout the world.

The arrival of Drs. Erba and Mineishi will further expand the Division’s expertise in hematologic malignancies and bone marrow transplantation and will firmly establish UAB as the leading center of excellence in bone marrow transplantation and hematologic malignancies in the South.

In addition, we are delighted to welcome several other exceptional physicians and scientists into our
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Guru Sonpavde, MD joined UAB as an Associate Professor of Medicine and Director of the Genitourinary Malignancy Program in August. He sees patients at the UAB Medical Center campus as well as at the UAB Medicine—Hematology/Oncology West Clinic and the TKC at Acton Road clinic.

He will also see patients in the Birmingham Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Over the past eight years, he has been working in a Texas Oncology practice in Houston, Texas as well as at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center and Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas.

He completed his medical training in India followed by Internal Medicine residency in New York and Hematology/Oncology Fellowship at Indiana University. He has been extensively involved in research in the area of urologic cancers (prostate, bladder and kidney cancers).

Dr. Sonpavde has published 121 articles in the field of genitourinary malignancies. 32 of them in 2012. His original research spans prospective clinical and preclinical studies as well as retrospective hypothesis-generating and validation studies. His focus has been drug development for urologic cancers as well as the development of prognostic and predictive biomarkers across urologic cancers.

He is bringing to Birmingham access to cutting-edge clinical trials and novel promising anti-cancer drugs to patients with urologic cancers.

Susmitha Nimmagadda, MD joined as an Assistant Professor of Medicine this month. She joins Dr. Sonpavde at the UAB Medicine—Hematology/Oncology West Clinic. She will be a strong asset to our Hematology/Oncology outpatient clinic.

Dr. Nimmagadda received her medical degree at Osmania Medical College in India and did her internal medicine residency at the University of Illinois at Urbana. She also received a Masters of Public Health from Georgia Southern University. She received her training in hematology/oncology at UAB and distinguished herself as an outstanding fellow.

Another welcome addition to our Division is Ayman Saad, MD who joined the Division in July. Dr. Saad will add significant strength in the areas of bone marrow transplantation and hematologic malignancies.

In 1994, Dr. Saad received his medical degree from Ain Shams Medical School, Cairo, Egypt. Dr. Saad completed his Internal Medicine residency at the University of Maryland Medical System in Baltimore. After that, he moved to West Virginia University where he received his training in hematology/oncology.

Prior to joining UAB, Dr. Saad was Assistant Professor at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. He has published nine articles in the fields of oncology and bone marrow transplantation.

In addition, Rita Paschal, MD joined as an Assistant Professor of Medicine this month. Dr. Paschal focuses on benign hematology including coagulation and sickle cell disease.

Dr. Paschal received her medical degree from the University of South Florida in Tampa. She completed her Internal Medicine residency and her Hematology/Oncology Fellowship training at Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville.

Pran K. Datta, MS, PhD who was an Associate Professor at Vanderbilt University, joined as Director of Research in July. He is the leader for the “Colon and Lung Cancer Basic Research Program” at the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center. Dr. Datta is a leader in TGF-β signaling in cancer and the current recipient of a RO1 award from the NCI and a VA merit award. He is an outstanding investigator, and we are very fortunate that he made the decision to join us at UAB.

I am delighted to have taken part in their recruitment, and I am looking forward to working with them and reporting on their continued success.

I also take this opportunity to thank my assistant, La Verne Croom; Larry Thomas, Director of Administrative and Fiscal Affairs; and Nicole Temple, Business Officer I for their crucial roles in the recruiting process.
Division Party 2011
Mark Your Calendar!

The next Hem/Onc Division party will take place on Saturday, October 13, 2012 at the home of Drs. Boris and Valerie Pasche.

Invitations will be sent via e-mail, but mark your calendar now so that you don’t miss out on the festivities.
Fellowship Update

It’s a busy time of year for the Hem/Onc Fellowship Program.

Site Visit

We just underwent a program site visit by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). This is a very intensive review of our fellows, faculty, curriculum, administration and commitment to education that occurs roughly every five years.

Thanks to all of you who participated, whether you supplied documentation, caught up on evaluations or met directly with our site visitor on August 9th. The ACGME will notify us of our continued accreditation status in January 2013.

Interview Season

As most of you are aware, Match Day for fellowships was moved from June to December beginning this year. That means we will be interviewing in September and October for fellows who will start with us on July 1, 2013.

We received 284 applications for 4 fellowship positions. Needless to say, the competition is fierce. We are fortunate to attract some very talented applicants who want to be a part of UAB and train here.

We will interview 20-25 applicants, and we will be calling on some of you to help us with the interview process.

Hematology/Oncology Research Seminars

The Hematology/Oncology Research Seminars resumed this month. This seminar series provides a venue for UAB basic scientists and clinicians to present their research to a broad audience with the goal of fostering collaborations. Our recent email survey determined that the overwhelming choice was for the seminars to be held on Mondays at noon. The venue will be NP2532, the Comprehensive Cancer Center Boardroom. Lunch will be provided whenever a sponsor is available.

If you would like to present a seminar, please contact Susan Ruppert, Ph.D. (sruppert@uabmc.edu; Tel: 975 0556) or Gwen Marshall (gwenmarshall@uabmc.edu; Tel: 934 0439).

Special points of interest:
- 284 fellowship applicants for 2013
- Research Seminars Resume
- Hem/Onc Grand Rounds Resumes
- ASH and ASCO review conferences to be led by UAB physicians.
Congratulations to Dr. Stefan Grant who has been appointed Medical Director of Acton Road Hematology/Oncology. Dr. Grant’s clinical interests include thoracic oncology, including non-small cell lung cancer, small cell lung cancer, thymoma, and thymic carcinoma. He sees patients at Acton Road and The Kirklin Clinic.

Congratulations to Dr. Mollie deShazo who has been promoted to Associate Professor. Dr. deShazo serves as the Medical Director of the inpatient service at UAB, overseeing the daily operations of the Hematology/Oncology floor.

Congratulations to Dr. Andres Forero who has been appointed Director of the UAB Breast Cancer Program. Dr. Forero is the O’Neal-Sokol Breast Cancer Research Foundation of Alabama Endowed Professor in the Division of Hematology/Oncology. He is also Director of Clinical Protocols and Data Management Shared Facility at the UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Congratulations to Dr. Naresh Bellam who has been appointed Associate Director of the Hematology/Oncology fellowship program.

Upcoming Events

In conjunction with the UAB Cancer Care Network, the Division of Hematology/Oncology will offer post conference reviews, specifically:

The American Society of Hematology’s 2012 Annual Meeting and Exposition will be held on December 8-11, 2012 at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta, Georgia. Harry Erba, MD, PhD, Professor and Director of Hematologic Malignancy Program, has agreed to chair the Post ASH CME Review conference.

The American Society of Clinical Oncology’s Annual Meeting will be held on May 31-June 4, 2013 at McCormick Place in Chicago, Illinois. Guru Sonpavde, MD, Associate Professor and Director of Genitourinary Malignancy Program has agreed to chair the Post ASCO CME Review conference.

The goal of the reviews is to provide hematologists, medical oncologists, and oncology nurses with current data and information presented at ASH and ASCO. Due to budgetary and time constraints, many hematologists, oncologists, and researchers are unable to attend these conferences. These conferences will provide opportunities for learning and networking with colleagues from community hospitals throughout the region. More details will be forthcoming.

Stellar Performances

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