

Richard

For Richard's story:
yalecancercenter.org/richard

Melanoma Program
AT SMILOW CANCER HOSPITAL



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“ I am fortunate to be surrounded by good doctors, a wonderful family, and many friends. I know that there is a tremendous amount of work being done in the research field. That gives me hope that someday I will be totally healed. ”

– Richard

The Melanoma Program at Smilow Cancer Hospital brings together an extensive, multidisciplinary team to diagnose, treat, and care for patients with melanoma.

Established more than 30 years ago, our program includes experts in melanoma surgery, medical oncology, dermatology, pathology, dermatopathology, radiology, genetics, and radiation oncology. Members of the team are national and international leaders in clinical and laboratory research focusing on improving the treatment for melanoma. From patients who present with an early stage diagnosis or more complex, metastatic disease, our team is prepared to provide each patient with the most comprehensive and cutting-edge treatment available.

Each patient's care will be reviewed by our multidisciplinary care team to develop a personalized treatment plan. Clinical trials are also available to patients through Yale Cancer Center, bringing the latest treatment options for melanoma to our clinics to benefit patients.

Smilow Cancer Hospital places great emphasis on taking care of all of our patients' needs through a network of supportive care services. Nurses with dedicated knowledge and skills related to the treatment of melanoma are available to care for our patients through the continuum of their treatment. Patients and their families also have access to social workers to provide psychosocial support, as well as pastoral support, nutritional counseling, physical therapy, palliative care, and integrative medicine.

“ My feeling is that patients need to become experts on their disease. They need to know the right questions to ask in order to get the best answers. They need to know the options they have. They need to understand that they will have good days and bad days. Good scans and bad scans. And they need to surround themselves with friends and family, who can support them. ”

- Richard

CLINICAL CARE

Clinical care of melanoma patients is a coordinated effort of our surgeons, medical oncologists, dermatologists, radiologists, surgical and dermatologic pathologists, and radiation oncologists. Care and management of patients is discussed among the team in a weekly tumor board conference, where all aspects of each patient's case are reviewed and discussed to determine the best treatment plan.

After the initial diagnosis, and depending on the presentation of the disease, each patient is evaluated by our dermatologists, surgeons, and/or medical oncologists. Dr. Jonathan Leventhal is a dermatologist dedicated to skin cancer screening and skin complications of cancer therapies, Drs. James Clune and Kelly Olino are surgeons who specialize in melanoma surgery, and Drs. Sarah Weiss, Mario Sznol, and Harriet Kluger are the medical oncologists who collaborate on patient care within our Melanoma Program.

For some presentations of melanoma, particularly in the early stages where disease has not spread beyond the primary site or lymph nodes close to the primary site, surgery may be the preferred initial treatment. Melanomas can occur on any skin site and even in areas not exposed to the sun. Some melanomas appear in delicate areas such as the face, nose, ear, or hand and often require the expertise of a plastic surgeon. Specialized surgical expertise is essential for the management of melanoma. Our melanoma surgery team includes experts in surgical oncology and plastic surgery. For certain regions of the body, our team collaborates with other highly-trained surgical subspecialties including thoracic surgery and neurosurgery.

In the early stages of melanoma, pathology results from your tumor will determine the risk of developing metastases (spread to distant organs) in the future. If the results indicate a high risk for melanoma metastases, treatments are available to reduce the risk and possibly prevent or delay melanoma recurrence. Adjuvant therapies or therapies given after surgery, include immunotherapies and targeted therapies, for tumors with a specific mutation in the protein called BRAF. Clinical trials may also be available.

Depending on the melanoma presentation, CAT scans, MRI scans and/or PET scans may be used to determine if melanoma metastases are present in other parts of the body and to determine the extent of involvement of other body sites. If the disease is present in multiple body sites, immunotherapy or targeted molecular therapies will be recommended using the knowledge and expertise of our oncology team. In addition to standard of care treatments, clinical trials may be available, and clinical trials may also be offered if the standard of care treatment is not effective. Our physicians participated in and led clinical trials of the immune therapies that are now standard of care and substantially improved the outcome for patients with advanced melanoma.

SPECIAL TYPES OF MELANOMA

Melanoma is also known to develop in areas of the body other than the skin. Ocular melanoma is the most common eye tumor in adults. Care is managed through the Ocular Oncology Program at Smilow Cancer Hospital, in collaboration with the Smilow Cancer Hospital Melanoma Program.

The Ocular Oncology team has extensive expertise in treatment of this disease. Mucosal melanoma is found in the mucosal surfaces of the body which line nasal passages, the anus, vagina and other areas. With this diagnosis, patients are often first seen by head and neck, gastrointestinal, or gynecologic surgeons. With both diagnoses, our Melanoma Program experts provide input and manage subsequent post-surgical and follow up care for melanoma patients.



Dina

For Dina's story:
yalecancercenter.org/dina



“ Dr. Sznol impacted my life in every way. I was absolutely confident he would know what to do. Dr. Sznol is an incredible human being and a professional, and he knew how to treat me as a whole. ”

- Dina

One of the major complications of advanced melanoma is spread of disease to the brain. The disease and treatment of the disease can have important neurologic consequences. Management of disease in the brain requires a highly skilled and experienced team. To care for these patients, we have assembled a multidisciplinary group of expert medical oncologists, neurosurgeons, neuroradiologists, and radiation oncologists to form the Brain Metastasis Program, led by Dr. Harriet Kluger and Dr. Veronica Chiang. The team meets weekly to design optimal treatment regimens and effectively manage the neurologic consequences of the disease and its treatment.

MELANOMA RESEARCH PROGRAM

Our Melanoma Program has a long history of recognized and groundbreaking laboratory and clinical research into the causes and treatment of melanoma. Patients with advanced or metastatic melanoma have access to numerous clinical trials at Smilow Cancer Hospital including novel immunotherapy and targeted molecular therapy regimens. Additionally, patients who are no longer eligible for melanoma-specific studies may be eligible for therapies through our Phase I Clinical Trial Program. We are committed to providing you with the very best care today, and we remain dedicated to cutting-edge research and innovative therapies that will advance the standard of care tomorrow.

The Yale SPORE (Specialized Programs of Research Excellence) in Skin Cancer is the result of a grant awarded by the NIH National Cancer Institute to improve risk assessment, measures for diagnosis and prognosis, and therapies for patients with melanoma. As only one of five sites in the United States to receive a SPORE grant focused on skin cancer, Yale is in the unique position of being able to prioritize skin cancer research through several research projects and a career development program.

Yale Cancer Center is also home to several leading melanoma research laboratories, which study the genetics and cellular changes that result in melanoma. Yale researchers developed several mouse models that are used worldwide that study how melanoma forms and progresses, the ability to test new melanoma therapies, and how the immune system can be stimulated to fight melanoma.

appointments

HOW TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT

For more information or to schedule an appointment with a member of the Melanoma Program at Smilow Cancer Hospital, please contact our patient intake coordinators at (203) 200-6622. They will provide you with assistance during your diagnosis, treatment, and recovery and our nurse coordinator can help answer questions that you may have. Our goal is to ensure that each of our patients has an outstanding and positive care experience.

WHAT TO BRING TO YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT

For your first visit, our patient intake coordinators will work with you and your doctors to obtain all available imaging films and reports, pathology reports, slides, doctor's referral notes, and the results of any pertinent tests or consultations.

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A Comprehensive Cancer Center Designated
by the National Cancer Institute