



The Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center Pancreatic Tumor Registry Newsletter

Our Participants: The “Heart” of the MSK Pancreatic Tumor Registry

Greetings from the Pancreatic Tumor Registry staff at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center! In this issue, we have several updates that we hope you will find helpful. You may also read a letter from Dr. Sara Olson, who is the co-principal investigator for the Registry, about studies in pancreatic cancer.

This study could not be successful without your generosity and support. Thank you all for your willingness to be a part of this important work, which will help countless people in the future.



- 1,042 People with pancreatic cancer
- 137 People with pancreatic cysts
- 472 Relatives of people with pancreatic cancer
- 553 Healthy control participants

*December 2002 through December 2014

We’ve Moved – Please Update Your Contacts!

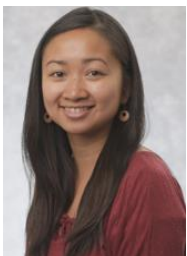
The study’s support staff recently moved to a new location in Manhattan. Please make note of our new address and phone numbers, listed at the end of this issue. You are also welcome to visit our website to view past issues of our newsletters.

If you have any study materials that you need to mail to us, please make sure that you have the correct address before mailing the items out. Please call us if you have any questions about our move or contact information.

Dr. Robert Kurtz’s phone number and clinic location have not changed – participants may call his office to schedule appointments at 212-639-7620.



Staff Update



Amethyst Saldia has been a Research Study Assistant with the Pancreatic Tumor Registry since 2010. This year she was promoted to Research Project Coordinator in the MSK Epidemiology Department. While she is still involved with the study, more of her time will be dedicated to assisting other researchers within the department.

Amethyst is very grateful for her time spent supporting the study thus far, and sends her regards to all our participants!

Studies in Pancreatic Cancer

A letter from Dr. Sara Olson, co-investigator for the MSK Pancreatic Tumor Registry



Sara H. Olson, PhD

As an epidemiologist, I study **risk factors** for disease in order to help understand why some people get disease and others do not. A risk factor is something that can increase someone's chances of getting a disease; for example, smoking is considered a risk factor for getting lung cancer. Learning more about risk factors can help us understand more about biology and how disease can be prevented or found at an early stage, so that treatment can be more helpful. Our study to learn about risk factors for pancreatic cancer started in 2002 as part of the MSK Pancreatic Tumor Registry overseen by Dr. Robert Kurtz. The study has included people with pancreatic cancer who have relatives that also have the disease, others with pancreatic cancer who do not have relatives with the disease, relatives of people with pancreatic cancer who may be at higher risk of getting the disease themselves, and healthy people. More than 2,000 people have taken part in the study. They have spoken to our interviewers about their

lifestyle and have provided blood or saliva samples so that we can look at **genetic factors**, things related to a person's genes that could put them at higher risk of getting sick. We are very grateful for the interest and generosity of all those who have taken part.

Studies have shown that smoking, being overweight or obese, and having close relatives with the disease increases risk of pancreatic cancer. Our research has confirmed this as well, although our MSK participants include very few smokers!

A good deal of my work is focused on allergies and their relationship to cancer. Studies have found that people with allergies are less likely to get pancreatic cancer. Using results from our study and several others, we found that some genetic factors that are related to allergies are also related to cancer risk. However, when we did a separate study that looked at IgE — a marker of allergies that is found in the blood — we did not find that this marker was related to the development of pancreatic cancer. Although allergies are also related to lower risk of some other cancers, we still do not understand why this is the case.

One possible explanation is **oral health**, or how healthy your mouth is. People with poor oral health are more likely to get pancreatic cancer but also less likely to have allergies, for reasons that are not known. This has led us to our current study of the **oral microbiome**, the bacteria found in people's mouths. (This study is described later in the newsletter.) We are studying whether there are differences among patients with cancer, those with some types of cysts, and healthy controls in the types of bacteria found in the mouth. We also hope to learn about how the oral microbiome is related to other aspects of oral health and allergies.

Epidemiology has come to depend more and more on collaborations between researchers at different centers, and this has also been a large part of my work on pancreatic cancer. I participate in the Pancreatic Cancer Case-Control Consortium (PanC4) as a member of the steering committee. This group has worked on several studies of genetic factors that are related to risk, as well as on studies of exposures such as cigarette, pipe, and cigar smoking; diabetes; ulcers and gastric surgery; and reproductive factors in women. By combining information from several studies, we can address questions that can't be answered in individual studies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sara H. Olson".

Sara H. Olson, PhD

Meet Our Research Study Assistants

Our Research Study Assistants, or RSAs, play a very important role in our study. They work with our hospital staff to introduce patients to our study, interview participants to complete research surveys, and are available to answer questions about eligibility and other study-related issues.

Pam Nunes joined our team in December 2014. She graduated from Rutgers University with a bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences and has spent the last two years as a Secondary Education Chemistry Teacher in Mozambique for the Peace Corps.

Pam is assuming the role as the primary contact for the MSK Pancreatic Tumor Registry. Please feel free to give her a call if you have any questions or concerns about the study or your participation.



Pam Nunes

Jenny Yang joined our team in October 2014. Jenny graduated from Wellesley College with a bachelor's degree in East Asian Studies and Biological Sciences. Before coming to MSK, Jenny was a medical scribe at CityMD in Queens, New York.

Jenny helps us with the study follow-up calls and assists Pam in clinic. She also supports the research needs of other investigators in the Epidemiology and Health Outcomes departments at MSK.



Jenny Yang

Lucille Castori Grant: Pancreatic Cancer and the Oral Microbiome



Drs. Sara Olson and **Robert Kurtz** were awarded a grant from the Lucille Castori Center for Microbes, Inflammation, and Cancer for a pilot study of the bacteria in people's mouths (called the "oral microbiome") and how they might be related to the risk of pancreatic cancer. Several studies have shown that poor oral health is related to increased risk of pancreatic cancer, and this may be related to the bacteria found in people's mouths. The mouth holds many different types of bacteria; the specific forms and amounts of each are different from person to person. Instead of using older methods, like waiting for bacteria to grow in the lab, recent advances in technology allow us to do better tests that find and look at these bacteria in more detail.

In our pilot study, we are looking at the oral microbiome in people with cancer, people with cysts on their pancreas, and healthy people. If we find differences among these groups, this could open the possibility of finding pancreatic cancer at an earlier stage. Participants in this study complete surveys about their health, including their oral health, and provide a saliva sample so we can see what types of bacteria can be found in the mouth.

We plan to complete the laboratory analysis this spring and then prepare the results for publication. We look forward to sharing them with you when this is completed. Thank you to all those who have participated in this study!

The David M. Rubenstein Center for Pancreatic Cancer Research

We are delighted to share the news that two of our study investigators, **Drs. Eileen O'Reilly** and **Peter Allen**, were appointed as associate directors of the **David M. Rubenstein Center for Pancreatic Cancer Research (CPCR)**. Dr. O'Reilly, an oncologist, and Dr. Allen, a surgeon, treat many patients with pancreatic cancer at MSK. They join director Dr. Steven Leach and fellow associate director Dr. Christine Iacobuzio-Donahue in the CPCR's leadership.

The purpose of the CPCR is to improve the lives of people with pancreatic cancer through more focused research efforts. The program consists of skilled physicians and scientists from different medical fields. At this time, the CPCR is still establishing its staff and research projects, but we're excited to see what the program accomplishes in the future. To learn more about the CPCR, you may visit their website at <http://www.mskcc.org/research/david-m-rubenstein-pancreatic-research/leadership>.

Contact the MSK Pancreatic Tumor Registry

Robert C. Kurtz, MD, Principal Investigator: 212-639-7620

Participants may call Dr. Kurtz's office to schedule appointments.

Amethyst Saldia, Research Project Coordinator: 646-888-8310

Pam Nunes, Research Study Assistant: 646-888-8319

Contact Pam with questions about eligibility, to update contact information and participant status, and for other questions about the study.

E-Mail: FPCRRegistry@mskcc.org

Website: www.mskcc.org/cancer-care/adult/pancreatic/pancreatic-tumor-registry

Visit our website to view the current eligibility requirements and to download past issues.

Postal Mail:

Attention: Pam Nunes, Epidemiology Service
Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center
485 Lexington Avenue, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10017

You received this newsletter because you or a loved one participated in the MSK Pancreatic Tumor Registry study.