



# THE INSTITUTE FOR CANCER CARE AT MERCY

PHYSICIANS ON THE LEADING EDGE OF EXCELLENCE

## Collaborating for the Best Outcomes: *The Melanoma and Skin Cancer Center at Mercy*

Vadim Gushchin, M.D. | The Melanoma and Skin Cancer Center | Surgical Oncology

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Recent findings have shown an overwhelming increase in skin cancer malignancies, including melanoma. Among all skin cancers, melanoma is responsible for about two percent of skin cancer cases, but for the majority of skin cancer related deaths. Melanoma is the fifth most common cause of death from cancers. With more than 85,000 cases diagnosed a year, it frequently requires a coordinated approach to treatment.

At The Institute for Cancer Care at Mercy, a coordinated team approach is used to treat melanoma and other skin cancers. Our team of Board Certified specialists provides patients the best possible outcomes and the best quality of life after treatment.

### **Multidisciplinary Team Approach**

The Melanoma and Skin Cancer Center at Mercy offers comprehensive care and leading edge treatment options for skin cancer including advanced-stage melanoma. A multidisciplinary team comprised of

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“Mercy’s skin cancer program is uniquely positioned. We have experts in the field, all in one location and in a community hospital setting. Some skin cancers, like melanoma, require a team of experienced doctors who offer advanced treatment options including immunotherapy, targeted therapy and regional therapy such as isolated limb infusion. Mercy’s melanoma program offers all of these treatments.”

— Vadim Gushchin, M.D., Director of The Melanoma and Skin Cancer Center at Mercy



## Collaborating for the Best Outcomes: *The Melanoma and Skin Cancer Center at Mercy* continued from page 1

dermatologists, surgical oncologists, medical oncologists, pathologists and plastic surgeons work together to design an individual care treatment plan based on the patient's exact needs.

Mercy's team of Board Certified medical experts includes a pathologist with advanced training in complex cellular interpretation. This type of coordinated team approach typically occurs in an academic hospital setting.

### Conditions We Treat

- Basal Cell Carcinoma
- Melanoma
- Merkel Cell Carcinoma
- Sarcoma
- Squamous Cell Carcinoma

### Leading Edge Treatment Options

The Melanoma and Skin Cancer Center at Mercy offers leading edge treatments for all forms of skin cancer including aggressive cases. Our physicians share information routinely on new advances in the field, with the objective of providing patients the most current care.

Mercy's program offers targeted therapy and immunotherapy, offering hope to patients with late-stage skin cancers. Treatment options also include Isolated Limb Infusion (ILI) therapy: used to deliver aggressive treatment to the affected limb, sparing the rest of the body from toxic treatment.

Other treatment offerings include:

- Chemotherapy
- Plastic Surgery
- Radiation Therapy
- Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy
- Surgery

### Clinical Trials

Mercy also participates in clinical trials that enable us to offer patients the latest treatment options for skin cancer and melanoma.

### Coordinated Approach for Convenient Care

At The Melanoma and Skin Cancer Center, we make every effort to streamline the treatment process for patients and to coordinate appointments with team specialists on the same day. Our physicians use a shared medical record allowing them direct access to imaging, reports and information needed to make the appropriate decisions for patient care.

*To learn more about the melanoma program and/or to schedule patients, please call 410.332.9294.*

# New Developments in Immunotherapy Improve Survival Rate in Advanced Melanoma

Vinod Varki, M.D. | Medical Oncology and Hematology



**T**here are many exciting developments in melanoma treatment, particularly in the field of immunotherapy. As a medical oncologist, I manage the targeted and immunotherapy elements of melanoma care. My primary goal is to prevent the disease from coming back after definitive surgery, to control and perhaps cure the disease in its advanced stages.

Until recently, the treatment of locally advanced and advanced melanoma was very limited, and the prognosis was very poor. Prior to 2011, melanoma was treated with interferon in the adjuvant setting; however, treatments have advanced and there are now more powerful and less toxic immunotherapy options.

## Nivolumab for Adjuvant Treatment

In December 2017, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved nivolumab for adjuvant treatment of patients with melanoma and involvement of lymph nodes or metastatic disease that has undergone complete resection. Nivolumab is the first inhibitor to show superiority compared with the standard of care, ipilimumab, in this patient population. According to the trial, it showed that nivolumab significantly improved recurrence-free survival compared with ipilimumab in patients with stage IIIB/C or stage IV melanoma after surgery. Patients assigned nivolumab had an 18-month recurrence-free survival rate of 66.4% compared with 52.7% for ipilimumab.\*

Treatment for advanced melanoma once meant solely chemotherapy, which is thankfully now a thing of the past. Major advances in melanoma treatment over the past 8 years have resulted in extremely high response rates to targeted and immunotherapy based regimens. Many patients with stage IV melanoma that have brain metastasis are actually being cured of their disease.

Immunotherapy works by revving up the patient's immune system to attack the cancer. Cancer has unique ways of evading the immune system and immunotherapies block these evasive signals created by the cancer. Additionally, cancers have complex constitutively activating proliferative mechanisms. One of the many mechanisms used by melanoma for proliferation is the mutated BRAF/MEK signaling transduction. We now treat these mutated melanomas with BRAF/MEK inhibitors, which significantly shrink these cancers.

***The Melanoma and Skin Cancer Center at Mercy is currently using nivolumab.***

*(\*Source: U.S. Food and Drug Administration)*

To schedule a patient with Dr. Varki, please call 410.783.5858.



# Announcing Heat It To Beat It | *Sunday, September 23, 2018*

Mark your calendars for the 9th annual **Heat It To Beat It** Walk - an event to raise awareness and funds for peritoneal carcinomatosis research and HIPEC surgery.

Proceeds from **Heat It To Beat It** support research conducted by Armando Sardi, M.D., Vadim Gushchin, M.D., Kurtis Campbell, M.D., and their colleagues at Mercy, whose work helps to provide scientifically proven treatments for patients with peritoneal carcinomatosis worldwide.

Drs. Sardi, Gushchin and Campbell are specialists in the treatment protocol for patients with this disease, using heated intraperitoneal chemotherapy – HIPEC. HIPEC is a highly concentrated chemotherapy treatment that is delivered directly to cancer cells in the abdomen during surgery. For many patients, this is the only chance for long-term survival. Although there have been many scientific reports showing the benefit of this treatment, there is a lack of awareness about the disease and patients often struggle to be correctly diagnosed and treated.

*To learn more about the event, start a team or make a donation, please visit [www.heat-it.org](http://www.heat-it.org).*



## Celebrating a Successful Building Bridges Gala



On Thursday, July 7, 2018, Dr. Armando Sardi, Medical Director of The Institute for Cancer Care at Mercy, and The Partners for Cancer Care and Prevention (PFCCP), hosted the “Building Bridges Gala” at the residence of Camilo Reyes, the Ambassador of Colombia in Washington, D.C.

The event served to honor donors and partners whose generosity “has had a critical impact in global cancer control,” as PFCCP Executive Director Mavalynne Orozco-Urdaneta, BA, MFT, CPC, noted in her opening remarks. Formerly known as United Hands for Health, PFCCP was established in 2011 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a medical mission, serving more than 35,000 patients since its earliest days of operation.

Key supporters represented at the event which featured more than 200 attendees included the American Cancer Society, The Susan G. Komen Foundation, American Breast Care and Mercy Surgical Oncology.

The event also served to raise awareness for the work Dr. Sardi and his colleagues in Surgical Oncology at Mercy Medical Center in Baltimore, MD, are doing in the treatment of peritoneal carcinomatosis. Mercy’s Heat It To Beat It event is a key event in raising awareness and research funds for peritoneal carcinomatosis.



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Director, Institute for Cancer Care

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**The Institute for Cancer Care at Mercy offers:**

- One-of-a-kind cancer treatment center
- A multidisciplinary team of physician experts
- Dedication to advancing breakthrough treatments for cancer management
- Cutting-edge cancer treatment with access to the latest clinical trials
- Pioneering and complex surgical techniques
- Innovative cancer therapies to meet clinical as well as personal needs for each patient
- Survivorship wellness programs for patients

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