

A Letter from The Director

Dear friends:

It's a new year when we all make resolutions to do more and do better. For all of us at the Johns Hopkins Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute (GBCI), the turn of the year ushers in a fresh start, renewed purpose, and loads of new questions. They say that "half of science is asking the right questions". We find ourselves always posing new questions and ideas, and are continually searching for answers. Bladder cancer, as you know, is sneaky, crafty and cruel at times, and is not our friend. We work hard to outsmart it and be rid of it in our clinics, for our patients and families, in our laboratories, and with our national and international collaborators. Humbly, this is the time of year when we ask ourselves a lot of questions: "Are we getting anywhere?"... "Are we making progress?"... "What can we do to lessen the burden on our patients?"



...“How can we be better?”. These and so many other questions inform our work daily, and our goal for 2022 and beyond is to find adequate answers, and serve all who are affected by bladder cancer with novel ideas, proven science, and improved clinical care.

Clinical Trials are one aspect the GBCI's discovery process where we are able to convert our questions to practical study, and put our hypotheses about new drugs and treatments to work. We are lucky at the GBCI to be blessed with many physician-scientists who not only devote their time and energy to their patients in the clinic or operating room, but who also serve as the architects behind several new and ongoing clinical trials at Johns Hopkins. We highlight three ongoing trials in this issue, touching all aspects of bladder cancer, including upper tract urothelial cancer (known as UTUC).

Speaking of **UTUC**, we are humbled to announce a formidable gift from the Trone

Family Foundation in support of our growing UTUC clinical and research program. We thank them for believing in our work and for partnering with us.

They say that the future belongs to the curious. We at the GBCI are always trying to ask better questions and find better answers, be it determining the role B cells play in cancer, evaluating outcomes in clinical trials, questioning environmental causes of bladder cancer, treating upper tract disease, caring for women with bladder cancer with intention, and other important initiatives. Our goal in 2022 is to serve our patients better – in the lab and in our clinics, and with dignity, respect, science and knowledge. We aim to turn our questions inside out in order to serve you. Let's celebrate this new year with a fresh start, and a fresh list of questions and with healthy curiosity, together.

Wishing you a great year ahead,

David J. McConkey, PhD
 Director, Johns Hopkins Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute

PRECISION MEDICINE & BLADDER CANCER

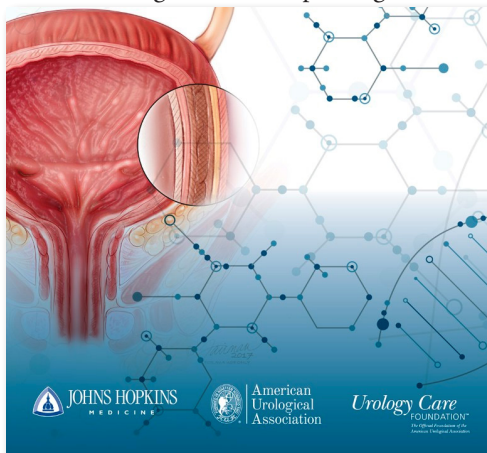
The Johns Hopkins Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute (GBCI) enjoys an invaluable partnership with the American Urological Association (AUA). The AUA has more than 23,000 members worldwide who have been transforming and improving

urological care for over 100 years. Together, the GBCI and the AUA's Translational Research Collaboration present a virtual research conference for medical professionals, clinician-scientists and researchers on March 4-5, 2022 titled "Optimizing

Measurements for Bladder Cancer Precision Medicine". This is the fifth year of a productive collaboration for the GBCI and the AUA. This year's conference, attended by leading urologists, oncologists and researchers from the US and Europe will focus on the development and adoption of biomarkers in clinical practice, clinical trial design, emerging technologies, liquid biopsies, the role of the microbiome, and other topics. Many of the GBCI's faculty have been involved in the planning of this conference and will also serve as panelists. More than 100 physician-scientists from all over the world are expected to attend.

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OPTIMIZING MEASUREMENTS FOR BLADDER CANCER PRECISION MEDICINE

A Johns Hopkins University Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute/American Urological Association Translational Research Collaboration

MARCH 4-5, 2022
 VIRTUAL MEETING

For more details, visit
AUAnet.org/BladderCancer



GBCI-SPONSORED CLINICAL TRIALS

Finding answers to many questions

Noah Hahn, MD, clinical director of the Johns Hopkins Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute, wants to improve the offerings for patients with Non-Muscle Invasive Bladder Cancer (NMIBC) with the promise of immunotherapy, which until now, has been mostly assigned to patients with muscle invasive or metastatic disease. His question: “Can we give our patients immunotherapy early, and will different combination therapies curb NMIBC from spreading?” Dr. Hahn is the leader of the “ADAPT-BLADDER” clinical trial (conducted through the Hoosier Cancer Research Network; NCT03317158), which studies the safety and benefit of using different immunotherapy combinations in NMIBC patients who are no longer responsive to BCG treatments within the

bladder. Phase 1 of this trial had three different cohorts: patients who received the immune checkpoint inhibitor durvalumab only, those who received durvalumab and BCG, and those who received durvalumab and radiation. This multi-center trial, launched in 2017, indirectly benefitted from a pause in enrollment when the COVID-19 pandemic first hit in the Spring of 2020. This pause allowed Dr. Hahn and his collaborators time to follow their Phase 1 patients to understand how often initial responses to study treatments remained durable for a year or longer. Additionally, the team had more time to sequence the RNA and

DNA of the tumors of the Phase 1 patients providing invaluable genetic information for investigators. Dr. Hahn offers, “I was hopeful that we could successfully bring together urology, medical oncology, and radiation oncology in the treatment of NMIBC patients with an immune checkpoint inhibitor therapy like durvalumab for the first time....we now have 1 year of follow-up data on all patients and the results are encouraging – particularly in the durvalumab and BCG arm, with a 73% durable complete response at 1 year - this trial has more than exceeded my expectations for patients”. With Phase 1 showing promise, the trial has recently reopened with 2 new arms incorporating durvalumab in combination with intravesical chemotherapies and other immunotherapies. The new arms are currently accruing patients.



Noah Hahn, M.D.
GBCI clinical director



What else besides BCG?

For several years now, BCG, a standard treatment prescribed for non-muscle invasive bladder cancer (NMIBC), remains in short supply due to manufacturing challenges, often leaving patients and physicians with few options. This has prompted **Max Kates, MD**, Associate Professor of Urology and Oncology, and co-director of the Johns Hopkins Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute’s NMIBC Multi-Disciplinary Clinic, to explore alternatives to BCG. For the past 10 years, gemcitabine and docetaxel, intravesical chemotherapy drugs (delivered directly into the bladder), have been successfully substituted for BCG or prescribed for those who cannot tolerate BCG. In searching for other options for his patients, Dr. Kates devised a Phase II

Clinical Trial at Hopkins (J2020) aimed at intermediate or high-risk NMIBC using this widely-available “gem/docetaxel” chemotherapy combination instead of scarce BCG. The primary objective of this trial is to determine the complete response rate for those treated with this chemotherapy combination, and the secondary objectives will determine safety, recurrence rates, and other measures of efficacy. Dr. Kates’ trial is based at Hopkins and, as of this writing, is more than 2/3 enrolled. According to Dr. Kates, the preliminary data are “very promising,” and his initial findings will be presented at the upcoming American Urological Association meeting in May 2022. Due to positive preliminary initial data, this “starter” trial has led to the



Max Kates, M.D.

formation of a much larger randomized trial called the BRIDGE study, recently approved by the NIH, enrolling 870 patients, offered at several institutions, which will randomize patients to receive either BCG or the gem/docetaxel combination. The BRIDGE trial hopes to start accruals towards the end of 2022. Dr. Kates says he has been surprised by “... how much enthusiasm this trial has generated among patients”..., the goal of the trial being “... that one day we will have a therapy that is as good as or better than BCG so that we can avoid shortages that have plagued the bladder cancer community for years.”

GRAND ROUNDS 2022

At the GBCI, we aim to showcase our multi-talented and multi-disciplinary faculty, asking them to become our “Zoom teachers” to share their research, area of expertise and knowledge with our patients and viewers.

The 2022 “*Grand Rounds*” Program (listed here from January thru May 2022) offers a variety of educational talks (with ample time for questions and answers from our audience) and takes place by Zoom typically on a Tuesday afternoon from 4-5 pm. All of our webinars are recorded and are available to see at your convenience on our website, in case you are not able to join us live. The educational talks are free and all are welcome, though we ask you to register in advance: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/greenberg-bladder-cancer-institute/>.

Our 2022 Grand Rounds offerings include:

Dr. Burles “Rusty” Johnson is one of the GBCI’s newest faculty members who asks questions at the cellular level. As a genitourinary medical oncologist, Dr. Johnson not only cares for patients but is also a cancer

researcher, who, in his laboratory, is always hard at work exploring the role of cancer cells and how they behave – or misbehave. Dr. Johnson studies lymphocytes – T-cells and B-cells – which are the white blood cells that play crucial

roles in fighting SARS CoV-2 and other infections; COVID-19 vaccines work by activating these cells. Dr. Johnson’s research is specifically focused on the B-cells – the type of blood cell that makes antibodies (again, think about how antibodies have been used to treat patients with COVID-19). Usually, T-cells and B-cells work together to help one another, but now we know that it doesn’t always work this way in cancer. Dr. Johnson studies how B-cells contribute to these cancer-related immune anomalies and is always confronted with lots of questions, theories, and hopefully, discoveries.

Dr. Johnson knows first-hand that speaking “science” as a language can be baffling to bladder cancer patients – “what’s a T-cell? What do B-cells do? What does this all mean?” – so as part of the GBCI’s “*Grand Rounds*” educational series, he will be presenting a talk on Tuesday, January 25, entitled, “Bladder Cancer 101: A Primer

on Biology & Terminology” for all to tune in. A natural teacher, he will share in plain language the mechanisms of how cells work, or don’t work, or go crazy and why.

Given that cancers seem to play ping pong or “tag, you’re it!”, **Dr. Nirmish Singla** is always thinking of how cancers in one part of the body sometimes impact other organs. Dr. Singla studies bladder cancer, upper tract cancers and kidney cancers, and how they are related. Kidney health is vital to bladder and ureter health. Dr. Singla’s hypothesis is that “It’s all related: Kidney Health for Bladder Cancer Patients,” and he will share his insights and speak on this topic at the February 22, 2022 *Grand Rounds*.

At Johns Hopkins, when we have questions, we are lucky to have experts right down the hall to guide us with answers. Among our many questions is how to reduce health disparities for underserved populations, an important area of focus for the GBCI. On **March 8, 2022, Dr. Otis Brawley**, a globally recognized expert in cancer prevention and

control, and a Bloomberg Distinguished Professor at Johns Hopkins, will guide us as to how to close racial, economic, and social disparities in the prevention, detection and treatment of

cancer in the US and worldwide, including bladder cancer. Bladder cancer does not discriminate, and many suffer inequities, access to care, and unsuccessful outcomes not only due to cancer but to life circumstances. These are the humbling questions we ask and aim to remedy.

We ask ourselves: “*Where does Bladder Cancer Come From?*” It happens that **Dr. Sunil Patel**, the Lewis Family Fellow in Urologic Oncology at the Brady Urological Institute, is vitally interested in exploring the environmental causes of bladder cancer as well as in treating the disease. A urologic surgeon, Dr. Patel serves patients with bladder cancer, but is always wondering where it’s coming from to begin with. As part of our “*Grand Rounds*” series, Dr. Patel will share his insights as to the possible environmental causes of bladder cancer. He will speak on **April 19, 2022** about his questions, and perhaps, lend some answers.



WOMEN’S BLADDER CANCER PROGRAM

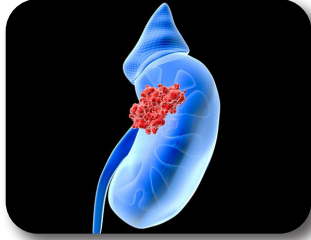
The GBCI aims for inclusivity of all patients, especially women, in their bladder cancer journey. Bladder Cancer disproportionately affects men by a ratio of 4 to 1, but bladder cancer does occur in women, where it seems to be more aggressive, presenting more often at a more advanced state, due to intrinsic differences in biology and to misdiagnoses. Our mission is to serve our female patients with intention and precision. Our team of experts include **Dr. Armine Smith** (Urology) and **Dr. Jeannie Hoffman-Censits** (Oncology) who together have established a Women’s Bladder Cancer Program at Sibley Memorial Hospital in Washington, DC (a member of Johns Hopkins Medicine) and at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore. They are committed to serving all patients with bladder cancer, especially women, as they are a rare all-female medical team who provide care should women prefer to be seen by women.

Additionally, the GBCI also hosts a **Women-Only Educational Series** by Zoom throughout the year. The 2022 offerings include topics with experts related to integrative health and nutrition, sex-based disparities in cancer, urogynecology and sexual health, psycho-social support and life after a cancer diagnosis. The Program, open to all women, begins in March 2022 and will feature five educational presentations throughout the year. To register, visit <https://events.jhu.edu/form/WomenAndBladderCancer>. Registration is required; the programs are free and open to all (women).

Sibley Memorial Hospital, home of the GBCI’s **Women’s Bladder Cancer Program**, also hosts a **monthly support group** for women diagnosed with bladder or urothelial cancer. Patients meet others going through similar experiences, gaining support and friendship. The group is guided by Samantha Rockler, LCSW, and the meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month from 12-1pm. For more information or to join, contact srockle1@jhmi.edu or call 202-537-4105. The first session will be held on Thursday, February 3, 2022 from 12-1pm.

UPPER TRACT UROTHELIAL CARCINOMA:

In addition to cancer of the bladder, the GBCI also sees and treats many patients with Upper Tract Urothelial Carcinoma, commonly known as UTUC, a cancer that affects the “connectors” between the kidneys and the bladder. Most often, the cancer occurs in the lining of the kidneys and ureters.



Dr. Nirmish Singla (Urology) and **Dr. Jeannie Hoffman-Censits** (Oncology) are devoting their careers to serving patients with UTUC.

Dr. Hoffman-Censits is the architect of an ongoing Phase 3 clinical trial (NCTNEA8192) for patients with UTUC. This large, multi-center trial compares the efficacy of adding the immune checkpoint inhibitor durvalumab to chemotherapy vs. chemotherapy alone before surgery for patients with UTUC. Introduced above, durvalumab is an FDA-approved immunotherapy agent, and is classified as a monoclonal antibody. The goal of the trial is to assess whether the addition of durvalumab better equips the body’s immune system to attack the cancer, interfering with the ability of tumor cells to grow and spread.

“We are so excited to have the support of the ECOG-ACRIN clinical trials leadership in bringing this trial to our patients,” said Dr. Hoffman Censits. “This is the first large scale multicenter randomized preoperative trial specifically for patients with UTUC.”

TRANSFORMATIVE GIFT: The David and June Trone Family Foundation have made a tremendous gift to the GBCI to support our UTUC Program. They have committed \$975,000 to expand and enhance our UTUC Multidisciplinary Clinic and its related research, led by Drs. David McConkey, Jeannie Hoffman-Censits, and Nirmish Singla. The gift also provides support for a new patient navigator, our bladder cancer biorepository, and research supplies and personnel for imaging, organoid, and liquid biopsy studies, all of which will greatly benefit our patients and their families. We are so grateful to the Trone family for their investment!

If you would like to learn more about how you can support the efforts of the Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute, please email bladdercancer@jhmi.edu.

HELP SUPPORT THE JHGBCI!

Your support of the JHGBCI is invaluable and helps serve those with bladder cancer. We hope that you will consider, among many needs, helping the JHGBCI underwrite the cost of our tumor sequencing program (not otherwise reimbursed). The cost of sequencing is approximately \$400 per sample, and contributes greatly to our understanding of bladder cancer and to the discovery of new treatment protocols.

We appreciate your partnership and belief in our mission.

To make an online gift to the Johns Hopkins Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute, please Google:

JHGBCI CHARITABLE GIVING

Or click the image below:



For gifts of CASH, please make your check payable to Johns Hopkins and send it to the following address:

**The Brady Urological Institute
Development Office
600 North Wolfe Street, CMSC 130
Baltimore, MD 21287**

Please reference the **Johns Hopkins Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute** or the faculty member to be supported by your gift on the memo line of the check.

NEW

The GBCI has created a new, unique email address for all UTUC inquiries:

UTUC@jhmi.edu



and a website dedicated to UTUC information:

[www.hopkinsmedicine.org/
greenberg-bladder-cancer-institute/utuc/](http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/greenberg-bladder-cancer-institute/utuc/)



Johns Hopkins Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute
600 N. Wolfe Street | Park 2 | Baltimore, MD 21287

Request an appointment: (410) 955-6100 | Pathology Second Opinion Service: (443) 287-8256
<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/greenberg-bladder-cancer-institute/>



JOHNS HOPKINS
M E D I C I N E

Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute

2022 VIRTUAL GRAND ROUNDS

Hear important updates from Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute leaders, hosted by Dr. David McConkey, Director of the Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute

About Our Program

All sessions begin at **4:00 PM** via Zoom, and are free of charge.

- ✓ One-hour Zoom webinar (20-25 minutes with slides / 40 minute conversational Q & A)
- ✓ Opportunity to “chat” with experts
- ✓ Register for any of our sessions at: events.jhu.edu/form/GBCIGrandRounds2022

Join us for our virtual Zoom series, focused on engaging the broader bladder cancer patient/family/advocacy community.

OUR SESSIONS:

1/25 | Bladder Cancer 101:

A Primer of Biology & Terminology
Burles Johnson, MD, PhD



2/22 | It's All Related:

Kidney Health for Bladder Cancer Patients
Nirmish Singla, MD, MSc



3/8 | Quality Cancer Care:

A Conversation About the Facts You Need to Know
Otis Brawley, MD



4/19 | It's All Around You:

Potential Environmental Causes of Bladder Cancer
Sunil Patel, MD, MA



BLADDER CANCER MULTI-DISCIPLINARY CARE MAY | Treating the Whole Patient:

Conversation on Clinical Team Collaboration in Bladder Cancer
Noah Hahn, MD
Max Kates, MD



Click here or
Scan to register now.



Questions? Email us at bladdercancer@jhmi.edu



www.hopkinsmedicine.org/greenberg-bladder-cancer-institute



2022 Women and Bladder Cancer Educational Series

Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute at
Sibley Memorial Hospital



Register Now

[Click here](#) or
scan code below:



Our Program

Join as our multidisciplinary team presents topics to enhance your knowledge and provide support. Specialists will discuss various facets of care and implications for female bladder cancer patients. The speakers will provide information to help you manage your health and support quality of life. A patient will share their perspective, and time for asking questions will facilitate participant engagement. GBCI Women's Bladder Cancer Program Co-leaders **Dr. Armine Smith** and **Dr. Jean Hoffman-Censits** will join in several of the sessions, schedules permitting.

This program is for women only to create a safe environment for open discussion.

Contact Us

Questions? email us at
bladdercancer@jhmi.edu

Visit our website at
<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/greenberg-bladder-cancer-institute/>



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MEDICINE

Greenberg Bladder Cancer Institute



March 1, 2022 | 4:00-5:30pm

Integrative Health and Cancer: Six Considerations

► **Rosanne Sheinberg, MD**

- Social connection, stress management, diet, exercise, sleep, and the environment
- How to successfully make lifestyle changes



June 7, 2022 | 4:00-5:30pm

Interpreting Population Science for Cancer Survivors

► **Elizabeth Platz, ScD, MPH**

- Gender disparities in cancer & bladder cancer
- Population science and how to apply statistics to the individual
- Environmental factors in cancer
- Cancer prevention and control



September 6, 2022 | 4:00-5:30pm

The Complexities of Being Female with Bladder Cancer

► Urogynecology with **Daniel Gruber, MD, MS**, Urogynecologist

- Lower urinary symptoms after intravesical treatment
 - Pelvic organ prolapse after cystectomy
 - Optimizing urinary continence after neobladder
- Sexual function with **Rachel Rubin, MD**, Urologist
- The physical and emotional effects of bladder cancer on sexual health
 - How to maintain sexual health after treatment



October 4, 2022 | 4:00-5:30pm

Living in the Now: Using Mindfulness as a Tool to Cope with Cancer

► **Samantha Rockler, MSW**

- Manage the challenges of cancer and fear of recurrence through meditation and other mindfulness techniques
- Learn to live well in the face of cancer
- Cultivate peace and hope during difficult times



December 6, 2022 | 4:00-5:30pm

Now What? Managing Health after Bladder Cancer

► **Kim Peairs, MD**

- Successfully transitioning to primary care
- Identifying which medical provider is in charge
- Understanding symptoms and signs of recurrence
- General screening guidelines