Living with Brain Tumors: A Focus on Gliomas

Sponsored by the Center for Neuro-Oncology

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Presented by:
Patrick Wen, MD
Director, Center for Neuro-Oncology
Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Cancer Center
Department of Medical Oncology
Dana-Farber Cancer Institute
Professor of Neurology
Harvard Medical School

Conference co-chairs:
Lisa Doherty, APRN, BC, OCN
Andrew Norden, MD, MPH
David A. Reardon, MD
Patrick Wen, MD
Dear Friends,

It is an exciting time at Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Cancer Center (DF/BWCC). Over the past few years, we have made important strides in research and the development of new treatments for patients with brain tumors.

With the help of many of our patients, Dana-Farber participated in a large study of the drug Avastin, which blocks a tumor’s ability to form the blood vessels that allow them to thrive and grow. Avastin proved effective in patients with recurrent glioblastomas and was approved by the FDA in 2009. While Avastin is not a cure, it has prolonged the life of many patients. A major focus of our research is to improve on the results of Avastin alone.

Another major focus of research at Dana-Farber is to characterize the molecular and genetic abnormalities in brain tumors. It is our hope that, over time, this information will enhance our ability to uncover the causes of each person’s tumor, allowing us to select the most appropriate treatment, or speed the development of new, targeted therapies.

We are already making progress. Dana-Farber researchers have assisted with the development of targeted molecular drugs for glioblastomas and are identifying the most promising and best combination for our patients. Clinical trials are underway on new drugs that target the PI3 kinase, one of the most critical pathways in glioblastomas. We also have a large research program studying the biology of tumor stem cells, which are resistant to treatment, and finding the best drugs to kill them. In addition, new trials are in progress on tumor vaccines to stimulate the body’s immune system to fight tumors.

Although a major focus of research at Dana-Farber is finding better treatments for gliomas, we also have active research programs for meningiomas, CNS lymphomas, ependymomas, brain metastases, and other tumor types.

With your help, we hope to find cures for brain tumors. If you would like additional information or are interested in supporting this innovative research, please consider donating to the Adult Brain Tumor Research Fund by contacting me at patrick_wen@dfci.harvard.edu or 617-632-2166; or Susan Korsmeyer at susan_korsmeyer@dfci.harvard.edu or 617-582-8393.

Thank you so much.

Patrick Wen, MD
Professor of Neurology, Harvard Medical School
Director, Center for Neuro-Oncology
Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Cancer Center
Multispecialty brain tumor clinic: A team approach, focused on your needs

The Multispecialty Clinic for Patients and Families at the Center for Neuro-Oncology is a weekly clinic that gives patients and their families a single time and place to meet with many different specialists from Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Cancer Center, including specialists in surgical, medical, and radiation oncology. This approach focuses on your needs and ensures carefully coordinated treatment and support.

The clinic is held every Friday, from 7:30 to 11 a.m., on the 8th floor of Dana-Farber’s Yawkey Center for Cancer Care. To schedule an appointment, call 877-442-3324.

Meet the Speakers

All speakers are affiliated with Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Cancer Center, unless otherwise noted.

Brian Alexander, MD, MPH, is a radiation oncologist specializing in the treatment of cancers of the central nervous system. He is also an instructor of Radiation Oncology at Harvard Medical School. He received his medical degree from the University of Michigan and completed his residency as part of the Harvard Radiation Oncology Program.

Rameen Beroukhim, MD, PhD, treats patients with primary brain cancers and leads a research laboratory investigating the mutations that lead to related cancers. He completed his medical degree and residency at the University of California, San Francisco, and is now an assistant professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School and a neuro-oncologist at Dana-Farber.

Nancy Campbell, MS, is an exercise physiologist in Dana-Farber’s Adult Survivorship Program. She began her career at the Institute in 2005 and has been involved in numerous research studies involving cancer survivors and exercise. A Certified Cancer Exercise Trainer, she also leads fitness classes for female cancer patients and survivors, and provides no-cost exercise consultations to male and female patients and survivors.

Lisa Doherty, APRN, BC, OCN, is a nurse practitioner in the Center for Neuro-Oncology. Doherty has extensive experience caring for adult patients with primary brain tumors, including patients on clinical trials. Prior to Dana-Farber, Doherty worked with hematology and oncology patients at University of Massachusetts Memorial Medical Center and the Lahey Clinic in Burlington, Mass.

Alexandra Golby, MD, is a neurosurgeon and director of Image-guided Neurosurgery at Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Cancer Center, where she focuses on the treatment of brain tumors and epilepsy. Her expertise is in the treatment of patients with lesions in the eloquent cortex and the use of functional brain mapping techniques, including awake surgery, to improve neurologic outcome. She is also Principal Investigator of the Golby Lab, a surgical brain mapping laboratory at Harvard Medical School. She earned her bachelor’s degree in physics and philosophy from Yale University and her medical degree from Stanford University School of Medicine.
Stacy Kennedy, MPH, RD, CSO, LDN, is a senior clinical nutritionist at Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Cancer Center. She specializes in physical activity for cancer survivors and is certified through the American College of Sports Medicine. She is also board certified as a Specialist in Oncology Nutrition through the American Dietetic Association. She conducts educational seminars and workshops on nutrition, exercise, weight management, and wellness in Boston and throughout New England.

Debra LaFrankie, RN, OCN, is a program nurse in the Center for Neuro-Oncology. She is a co-leader of the Dana-Farber Brain Tumor Support Group, and facilitates the weekly multidisciplinary brain tumor board conference. She is also captain of “Team Neuro,” which helps raise brain tumor awareness and research funds through the annual Boston Marathon® Jimmy Fund Walk.

Eudocia Q. Lee, MD, MPH, is a neuro-oncologist and instructor in neurology at Harvard Medical School. Her research focuses on biomarkers in glioblastomas and neurologic complications of cancer. Lee received her medical degree from Washington University.

David Reardon, MD, served as the associate deputy director at the Preston Robert Tisch Brain Tumor Center at Duke University Medical Center before joining the Center for Neuro-Oncology as clinical director in 2011. His work includes using clinical therapeutic agents to improve the cure rates in patients with brain and spinal tumors.

Nancy Goldsmith Tharler, LICSW, is the full-time ambulatory neuro-oncology social worker at Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Cancer Center. In 2009, Tharler received the National Neuro-Oncology Social Worker of the Year Award.

Halyna Vitagliano, MD, MSci, is an attending psychiatrist at Dana-Farber in Psychosocial Oncology. She provides neuropsychiatric evaluations, treatment, and follow-up for patients with psychiatric and cognitive issues that result from brain cancer and hematological malignancies and their sequelae. Vitagliano is a graduate of Tufts University School of Medicine. She completed her psychiatry residency and fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital.

Patrick Wen, MD, is professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School, director of the Center for Neuro-Oncology at Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Cancer Center, and director of the Division of Cancer Neurology in the Department of Neurology at Brigham and Women’s Hospital. His research focuses on novel treatments for brain tumors, including targeted molecular therapies and inhibitors of angiogenesis.