LEADERSHIP

HUMANIZATION OF CARE FOR THYROID CANCER PATIENTS

Drs. Melissa Henry and Michael Hier received funding from Genzyme to implement and evaluate an Interdisciplinary Team-Based Care Approach (ITCA-ThyCa) for patients with a newly diagnosed or suspected thyroid cancer. Due to the promising results obtained through this pilot study their funding was recently renewed allowing them to pursue the full program evaluation over a second year. Before this study, the care of thyroid cancer patients at the Jewish General Hospital was strictly medically focused, involving the disciplines of ENT, endocrinology, and nuclear medicine.

In collaboration with the JGH Departments of Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery, Oncology, Nursing, and Psychology (through the Louise Granofsky-Psychosocial Oncology Program), implementation of the full ITCA-ThyCa allowed for Gabrielle Chartier, B. Sc.N., M.Sc.N. to join this team. Ms. Chartier has expanded the care provided to patients by tailoring their healthcare through a bio-psychosocial needs assessment screening for distress using tools based on Canadian Partnership Against Cancer (2012) guidelines, and the creation of a larger interdisciplinary team to cover all aspects of patient care including physical, psychological/existential, and social dimensions. She coordinates services and assures continuity of care from diagnosis onwards; provides information about the illness, its treatments, cancer- and treatment-related symptom management; provides emotional support to patients and their families; and refers to relevant hospital and/or community services.

Over the past year Ms. Chartier has met with almost one hundred patients at the JGH. The program evaluation is based on the 2014 Centre for Disease Control and Prevention Framework, comprising data from screening for distress over time, patient satisfaction, patient interviews, chart reviews on service utilization throughout the illness treatment, and notes on the process of implementation.

Results thus far underline how complex thyroid cancer really is when seen through a biopsychosocial lens. Notably, thyroid cancer patients present high levels of anxiety, fatigue, and pain; complex medical cases including comorbidities and extensive surgeries – e.g., neck dissections, laryngectomies, complications post-surgery; psychosocial complexities (e.g., pregnant patients, patients with pre-existing psychiatric issues, vulnerable families, and young children’s reactions to their parent’s cancer); difficult readjustment to thyroid hormone replacement medication (e.g., patients feeling physically and emotionally ill); and complex decisions around the administration of Thyrogen to avoid a hypothyroid state pre-radioactive iodine treatments, to name a few.

Patients identify the importance and benefits of having a dedicated nurse accompany them throughout their treatment trajectory process; the presence of that human touch softens the blow upon learning they have this illness; reported by them as too often minimized. Because of the nurse, patients describe their concerns as being addressed earlier, in a timelier manner, and more effectively by providing critical information, symptom management, and referrals to appropriate hospital and/or community services.

Through this initiative, we are debunking the myth that thyroid cancer is ‘straightforward’. The role of a nurse and highly qualified interdisciplinary team has proved essential for the improved well-being of thyroid cancer patients. Data from our program illustrates how hospital resources cannot simply be allocated based on medical trajectory alone, and that a biopsychosocial approach provides effective and ultimately cost-saving results.

ANOTHER 1st FOR THE JGH!

Dr. John Antonio is now officially HIP!!! In a first for the JGH, Dr. John Antonio was recently voted into “The Hip Society”. This is a ‘by-invitation-only’ club so this is quite the honour - not only for him, but for the Department of Orthopaedics and the entire JGH institution! This small and coveted club is comprised of only 80 of the top hip surgeons in the world.

Mission: “The Mission of The Hip Society is to advance knowledge of hip disorders, promote evidence-based treatment, and refine surgery of the hip in order to improve the lives of patients.”

Vision: “The Vision of The Hip Society is to be the premier independent professional association dedicated to the pursuit of new knowledge, and dissemination of advancements in clinical practice related to disorders of the hip.”

Members: are comprised of a group of “… thought leaders in the field of hip disorders who have demonstrated excellence in the domains of diagnosis, treatment, and research.”

We continue to perform clinical and basic research in hip and knee arthroplasty and tissue engineering / stem cell therapies of musculoskeletal disorders at the LDI. Since his arrival his team has published over 180 peer reviewed articles and has given over 500 presentations.

Although his team hasn’t been intimately involved in the move to the new OR site in Pavilion K they all certainly look forward to a modern OR environment, with state of the art lighting, antiseptic environment and spacious layout. This should play a significant impact on safety, efficiency and outcome metrics.