

## Focus on Faculty #1

### Gerald Batist



[Dr. Gerald Batist](#), a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences and Deputy Director of the Lady Davis Institute, was the Chair of the Department of Oncology from 2001 to 2010. During his tenure he transformed the Department by creating interdisciplinary programs which cut across disease sites and tumour types. These include the Adolescent and Young Adult Oncology Program, the McGill Pediatric Oncology Program, the Psychosocial Oncology Program, the McGill Program in Cancer Genetics, the Cancer Prevention Program, the McGill Cancer Nutrition-Rehabilitation Program and the McGill Programs in Whole Person Care.

Born in Montreal, Dr. Batist went to Columbia University in New York and returned to Montreal to attend medical school. Thereafter he pursued training in major centres in the U.S., culminating in a fellowship at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland. He returned to join the McGill faculty in 1985.

In 1992 Dr. Batist founded the McGill Centre for Translational Research in Cancer, the research core of the Segal Cancer Centre at the Jewish General Hospital. He is an international leader in innovations in cancer therapeutics, most particularly through his focus on therapeutic resistance. He has generated leading edge experimental data on mechanisms of tumour resistance and strategies to overcome it, and has also created one of the most innovative consortia for serial biopsies of metastatic cancers that will define molecular signatures of therapeutic resistance to specific treatments, called the Quebec Consortium for Clinical Research in Cancer (Q-CROC). In the process, Dr. Batist and colleagues helped define the concept and parameters of ‘next generation bio banking’ and has become an international leader in changing the definition of cancer as a collection of uncommon or rare (‘orphan’) diseases. The consequence is a transformation of the paradigm of anti-cancer therapy development from large clinical trials of unselected patients to small highly selected patient sub-groups, with a goal of generating more effective therapies. To help realize the transformation of cancer therapeutics research, he helped win a competitive major funding award, and helps lead the National Centre of Excellence in Personalized Medicine called Exactis.

At the Segal Centre and at McGill, Batist developed leading-edge trans-disciplinary clinical and research teams, and provided innovative models in which to implement the improved treatments his work spawns to the benefit of patients, science and society at large. He works with cancer patient advocacy groups to ensure their voice in the policy and practice of care, and is on the Executive Committee of La Coalition Priorité Cancer. This is a natural extension of his creation and leadership of the International Cancer patient Solidarity committee in the 80s. Working with international NGOs, and with multiple diplomatic leaders, the International Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières and the Helsinki Watch Groups, Dr. Batist fought for the rights of Soviet cancer patients and their families.

Dr. Batist is grateful to his wife Lynn and their children, Kira, Zachary and Jonah for all of their support throughout his distinguished career.

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