



STAR ACT IS A VICTORY FOR CHILDREN WITH CANCER

Submitted by: Dr. Gregory J. Aune, the Stephanie Edlund Distinguished Professor in Pediatric Cancer Research at the Greehey Children's Cancer Research Institute of UT Health San Antonio.

With the recent signing of the Childhood Cancer Survivorship, Treatment, Access and Research, or STAR Act on Tuesday represents a significant legislative achievement in the ongoing battle to improve outcomes for children afflicted with cancer.

As a long-term childhood cancer survivor, I am grateful that this issue is receiving much-needed national attention. As an advocate involved in guiding this bill through Congress, I appreciate the teamwork of the childhood cancer community and our legislators in getting the STAR Act to the finish line. And as a pediatric oncologist and laboratory scientist at UT Health San Antonio, I am hopeful that passage of the STAR Act will improve the environment for pediatric cancer research.

UT Health San Antonio is among the vanguard of American centers conducting cutting-edge research to improve the treatment of children with cancer. *Through scientific discoveries and the conduct of clinical trials of novel therapies, our pediatric oncologists are making a positive impact on cancer survivor rates and long-term quality of life.*

The STAR Act augments this by authorizing funding for clinical trials, building and enhancing cancer tissue biorepositories, and new research on improving care for the rapidly growing population of survivors.

San Antonio and South Texas are well-positioned to benefit from many of the provisions of the STAR Act. The Greehey Children's Cancer Research Institute, part of UT Health San Antonio, is one of only two stand-alone research institutes in the U.S. focused solely on childhood cancer. Greehey Institute clinical faculty care for children in the University Health System, UT Health San Antonio's primary clinical partner in pediatrics. Because our pediatric oncologists are nationally leading experts with experience in the latest treatments, parents consider UT Health San Antonio the right place to bring their seriously ill children. Greehey Institute faculty also are integral members of the Mays Cancer Center, the newly named home to UT Health San Antonio MD Anderson Cancer Center, the region's only NCI-designated Cancer Center.

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NEWSLETTER

6.21.2018

**CONGRATULATIONS TO
BRUCE CHRISTENSEN,
DHSC, PA-C, DFAAPA**



The Association of PAs in Oncology (APAO) has elected Bruce Christensen, DHSc, PA-C, DFAAPA to serve on their board of directors, as a Director at Large for the 2018-2019 year, starting on July 1.

The APAO is a non-profit specialty organization affiliated with the American Academy of PAs (AAPA) that consists of PAs working in the field of oncology. It is the only national organization representing PAs specializing in oncology. Their members work in all oncology disciplines and practice in both the clinical and research setting.



DOCTORING IS A FAMILY TRADITION

Medical School During a Revolution

Virginia G. Kaklamani, MD, Professor of Hematology/Oncology at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio and leader of the center's breast cancer program, was born and reared in Athens, Greece. "I spent my formative years in Athens, where I attended school. My father is a physician and my mom's a physician/researcher, and they both really love their work. Hearing my father talk about various patients and how he approached treatment was very stimulating. So I was groomed for a career in medicine at an early age," said Dr. Kaklamani.

Unlike the educational road in the United States, aspiring doctors in Greece do not go to college; instead they go directly to medical school for 6 years. All high school students sit for national-level exams, from which they can apply to different schools, such as medical or engineering. Medical school admission is the most competitive, and only the top scorers on the national exam qualify.

"I actually did my first 2 years of medical school in Hungary from 1990 to 1992," shared Dr. Kaklamani. "I made that decision because they had a good English program and by then I realized I wanted to relocate to the States at some point. Hungary was a wonderful experience. It was a time of social revolution when the Soviet troops ended their occupation."

Dr. Kaklamani explained that under the European medical school system, the first 2 and a half years are preclinical, and then

the next 3 and a half years are spent in the clinic. "Naturally, patients in the clinic spoke Hungarian, and it was quite challenging, as my proficiency with the language was limited. So I took entrance exams to return to Greece and finish medical school," she added.

Early Decision to Pursue Oncology

Asked about her decision to pursue a career in oncology, Dr. Kaklamani replied: "Ever since I was about 16 years old, for whatever reason, I wanted to become a medical oncologist specializing in breast cancer. I had no personal experience with a family member having breast cancer but was just intrigued by the disease and the prospect of taking care of women and building long-term doctor-patient relationships." She added: "Plus the opportunity to do cancer research in the lab was also another fascinating aspect of oncology."

After attaining her medical degree in 1996 from Athens University Medical School and her ScD in 2000, Dr. Kaklamani faced a tough decision: where to do her specialty training. "I wanted to go to the United States. Both of my parents had trained in the States and had had a wonderful experience. Still, leaving home and moving halfway across the world gave me pause, and I struggled with the decision for awhile. But I finally left Greece and worked for a researcher in Boston who specialized in endocrinology. He wanted to move into endocrine oncology, and we did a lot of work together on growth factors in breast cancer," revealed Dr. Kaklamani.

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BIG CHANGES FOR CALL CENTER



Big changes have been happening with our call center over the last month. We merged the radiation oncology and medical oncology call centers to create one call team in order to provide more staffing support for the increase in volume. Because of this, we were able to streamline the monitoring of the calls and correct some of the phone configurations.

All of our call agents have gone through new customer service training on how to navigate challenging calls, use the new internal call processes and be of service to our patients by providing helpful information. During their training, they were given phone scripts and "cheatsheets," and opportunities to roleplay different scenarios that they might encounter. This training has given the team confidence and an understanding of the impact their role has on patient-centered care.

We are so proud of this team for the strides they have made and for their participation over the last couple of months. For the month of May, medical oncology and radiation oncology were able to increase their performance metrics by 25%.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Grand Rounds



Thomas Aloia, MD has no relevant financial relationships with commercial interests to disclose.

The Surgery Grand Rounds & Surgery Morbidity and Mortality Conferences Planning Committee (Ronald M. Stewart, MD; Daniel Dent, MD; Donald Jenkins, MD, PhD) has no relevant financial relationships with commercial interests to disclose.

The UT Health Science Center San Antonio School of Medicine is accredited by the Accreditation Council for Continuing Medical Education to provide continuing medical education for physicians.

The UT Health Science Center San Antonio School of Medicine designates this live activity for a maximum of 0.75 **AMA PRA Category 1 Credits™**. Physicians should claim only the credit commensurate with the extent of their participation in the activity.

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TOPIC

“Enhanced Recovery
is a Model for Value-Based
Health Care”

WHEN & WHERE

Monday, July 16, 2018
7:00 A.M. | 309L

This Grand Rounds presentation is co-sponsored by
the Mays Cancer Center and the UT Health
San Antonio Department of Surgery.



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Surgery