



ENGLEWOOD HEALTH

May 2019

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As May is Brain Cancer Awareness Month, I am pleased to provide you with more information about the neurological cancer disease management team at The Lefcourt Family Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center and the dedicated care they deliver to your patients. This team comprises experts in neurology, neurosurgery, medical oncology, radiation oncology, pathology, neuro-radiology, oncology nursing, and genetics. They focus on all neoplastic processes that affect the brain and spine, encompassing primary and metastatic tumors of the brain and spine, pituitary tumors, and tumors of the peripheral nervous system. The team provides the most effective and up-to-date care in a state-of-the-art facility at Englewood Health. It is, however, their warmth and compassion that sets this team apart.

Of the neurological pathologies we treat, the most common primary brain tumor is the glioma, which afflicts 8 in 100,000 people. These tumors may be relatively slow growing (WHO grade 2 gliomas, otherwise known as low grade gliomas), but more commonly are aggressive and unrelenting (WHO grade 3 and 4 gliomas, otherwise known as malignant gliomas). In fact, malignant gliomas comprise more than 80% of all gliomas.

Diagnosing Brain Tumors

Neuro-imaging is the first step and plays a vital role in the initial diagnosis and follow-up management of brain tumors. In addition to standard CT and MRI techniques, we have been able to accurately diagnose different types of tumors by utilizing MR perfusion, which helps evaluate their blood supply, and MR spectroscopy, which provides an analysis of their biochemical composition. We also use PET imaging with nuclear agents, which can target specific cell types to improve the diagnosis and management of tumors.

Treating Brain Tumors

Surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation therapy are the mainstays of treatment for malignant tumors of the brain and spine.

Surgery

The key to a successful surgery is maximal tumor resection performed in a safe manner. Unlike other sites of disease, surgical resection of brain and spinal cord tumors is constrained by crucial functional tissue that may lie either immediately next to, or even within, tumor.

Glioma surgery is made even more difficult in that glioma-involved brain and spinal cord tissue often has an identical intraoperative gross appearance to normal functional brain and spinal cord. Intraoperative fluorescence-guided surgery is a new technology that aims to mitigate this difficulty. This technique allows the surgeon to differentiate tumor from normal brain by administering a compound (5-Aminolevulinic Acid, commercially known as Gleolan) that preferentially lights up tumor tissue under a fluorescence filter, while leaving normal brain and spinal cord dark. Just last month, we at Englewood Hospital were the first team in New Jersey to utilize this technology to remove a malignant brain tumor. This surgery was a tremendous success and ushers in a new era of surgery.

“Minimally invasive surgery” is a mantra for all members of the surgery, anesthesiology and nursing teams at Englewood Hospital. The robust bloodless surgery program at Englewood has instilled a minimal incision, minimal blood loss, and maximal efficacy mindset in the operating room. In this vein, endoscopic brain surgery—performed through dime-size openings in the skull, or through the natural airways of the skull’s sinuses—exploits small entryways to remove tumors of the brain and pituitary gland.

Radiation Therapy

We employ the same minimally invasive approach whenever possible with radiation therapy. Advanced high-dose focused radiation techniques, known as stereotactic radiosurgery (SRS) and stereotactic body radiation therapy (SBRT), are utilized whenever possible to treat brain and spine tumors and cancers in an outpatient setting. These techniques target cancerous tissue with radiation while sparing normal tissue, even when they are right next to each other. SRS and SBRT have proven to be highly effective for brain and spine tumors, with results that often surpass those of surgery. And unlike surgery, radiation-planning techniques allow us to treat multiple brain or spinal tumors simultaneously without significantly increasing risk or patient treatment time.

Medical Oncology and Personalized Medicine

Our medical neuro-oncology team provides tailored treatment to each brain and spine tumor patient. "Personalized medicine" is a buzzword that is used and misused by many cancer centers. At Englewood our goal is to practice personalized medicine in the original and truest sense of the word—medicine that focuses on the patient as a person. Brain tumor patients have complex needs and medical problems. We offer time, expertise, and attention to our patients that other centers cannot always provide, and we believe that this attention benefits our patients' physical and emotional well-being.

We seek to provide cutting-edge and individualized medical treatment and decision-making based on available genomic data gleaned from our patients' tumors. Each patient's tumor is molecularly profiled to provide optimal prognostic and therapeutic guidance. Genetic counseling is provided whenever necessary. In addition to chemotherapy and targeted anti-angiogenesis therapy, novel treatments are employed for the treatment of malignant brain tumors. One such treatment is Optune, which creates electric tumor treatment fields, through a wearable, noninvasive device. Each patient is also considered for entry into cutting edge clinical trials.

Our Team

Our neuro-oncology disease management team is led by Kevin C. Yao, MD, a neurosurgeon, Maxwell Janosky, MD, a medical oncologist, and Samuel Singer, MD, a neuro-oncologist. Other team members include pathologists Rosalyn Stahl, MD, and Ana Burga, MD; radiation therapist David Dubin, MD; neuroradiologist Mark Herman, MD, and nurse practitioner/patient navigator Jolynne Guidotti.

On behalf of this team, I welcome you to learn more about us and discover how we can help patients in our community. Our multidisciplinary team is available 24/7 and meets on a weekly basis to discuss and formulate optimal treatment plans for our patients. Our clinical space resides in the brand new top floor of the Berrie Center for Humanistic Care at Englewood Health, overlooking Englewood and surrounding Bergen County, and sits next to the Graf Center for Integrative Medicine, which provides holistic and complementary wellness therapies for our patients and the community. Since its inception in May 2018, our neuro-oncology team has provided care for more than 100 patients, and has experienced a two-fold increase in our weekly multidisciplinary clinic patient volume. We look forward to a future of growth, providing compassionate care to those who need it most.

To refer a patient, please call our main cancer center phone number, 201-608-2266, or Dr. Yao can be reached directly on his cell phone at 201-450-2555. Don't hesitate to reach out to me if I can be of further assistance.

Best regards,



Steven Brower, MD, FACS
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The Lefcourt Family Cancer Treatment and Wellness Center
Chief of Surgical Oncology and HPB Surgery
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