Indiana University
Hematology Oncology Fellows Research Interest

Laura Lourdes, MD
PGY 7
Residency:
University of Florida

Coming into fellowship, my interest was in thoracic oncology. I was interested in targeted therapy in lung cancer and immunotherapy. My current research project is looking into combining immunotherapy with chemotherapy after progression on single agent immunotherapy in the third line setting.

Going forward, I am interested in pursuing a career in public and global health. I've enrolled in a Master's in Public Health program at Indiana University and upon graduation hope to work with the community to improve public health, namely the uptake of HPV vaccines and to do similar work with the AMPATH program in Kenya.

Derek Thomas, MD
PGY 7
Residency:
Indiana University
School of Medicine

As I will be entering clinical private practice soon, I have no current research projects ongoing or planned. My clinical goals for the remainder of my training are to improve upon a broad knowledge base of inclusive hematology and oncology to best prepare me for caring for a wide variety of patients in private practice as well as gain further clinical experience in managing patient care issues. Both of these goals will be emphasized for common clinical diagnoses that I will be managing in the near future including breast, lung, prostate and colon cancer as well as myeloma, non-hodgkin lymphoma and benign hematology.

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Nabil Adra, MD
PGY 6
Residency:
Indiana University
School of Medicine

My research interests are in the field of Genitourinary oncology focusing mostly on testicular, prostate, and urothelial cancer. In testicular cancer, my research has focused on front-line and salvage therapy for patients with metastatic germ cell tumors. In the front-ling setting, we evaluated prognostic factors and survival outcomes of patients treated with cisplatin-based chemotherapy. In the salvage setting we evaluated high-dose chemotherapy in patients with relapsed germ cell tumors. We have also studied immune-therapy in testicular cancer through a phase II trial evaluating immune checkpoint inhibitors in patients with refractory germ cell tumors. I am also interested in research involving survivorship issues for patients who are cured with chemotherapy and looking at long-term outcomes and genetic susceptibility to long-term toxicity and secondary malignancies. In prostate cancer, I am interested in evaluating biomarkers predicting disease response to therapy in patients with metastatic disease. This is being studied through our genitourinary cancer clinical and tissue database whereby all patients seen in our GU oncology clinics have clinical data abstracted and blood/urine/tissue samples collected and studied for such biomarkers. I am also interested in optimizing immune therapy in patients with prostate cancer. This is being evaluated in a variety of methods including dietary intervention studies evaluating whether low-protein diets amplify responses to immune-therapy in patients with metastatic prostate cancer. Finally, I am also interested in optimizing responses to immune-therapy in urothelial cancer. This is being investigated through phase II trials studying the combination of immune-therapy with checkpoint inhibitors and chemotherapy in patients with metastatic bladder cancer.

Jill Kremer, MD
PGY 6
Residency:
Indiana University
School of Medicine

My research interests are currently honed toward early phase oncology and novel therapeutics. Through research with phase I clinical trials and industry exposure, I am trying to gather more experience in clinical trials. This includes, but is not limited to, discovery, preclinical and clinical drug development. My latest projects are centered around investigating novel agents and their effect on the tumor hypoxia microenvironment in the setting of VEGF inhibition.

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Hirva Mamdani, MD
PGY 6
Residency:
Wayne State University

Since 2014, Indiana University has been my home for exciting research opportunities under the guidance of two excellent mentors: Dr. Shadia Jalal and Dr. Nasser Hanna – the very reason for my passion for thoracic malignancies with specific focus on lung and esophageal cancer as well as DNA repair pathways. Currently I am leading a phase II clinical trial of PD-L1 inhibitor durvalumab in improving relapse free survival for patients with locally advanced esophageal adenocarcinoma who have residual disease in the esophagectomy specimen after undergoing neoadjuvant chemoradiation. This trial is open at 5 sites in the US. My other ongoing research projects include a retrospective study looking at overexpression of RAD51 and its correlation with the development of brain metastasis in non-small cell lung cancer and a prospective Phase I/II trial proposing the use of combination of PARP inhibitor with temozolomide for advanced esophageal/GE junction/proximal gastric adenocarcinoma based on the data from our laboratory showing synergism between the two agents.

Shahid Ahmed, MD
PGY 5
Residency:
Indiana University
School of Medicine

My primary research interest lies in improving our current understanding of novel personalized lung cancer therapeutics such as immunotherapy and targeted therapies. I am currently working on developing a model for predicting Pneumonitis in patients on Pembrolizumab. I am also writing a protocol for a phase II clinical trial evaluating the role of short term fasting in patients with metastatic NSCLC receiving chemotherapy. I am writing a review on the use of targeted therapies and development of resistance in Lung cancer. I hope to expand my research interests over time to study the evolving role of genomic testing and gene editing in the future.

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Tarah Ballinger, MD
PGY 5
Residency:
Vanderbilt University

My research interests focus on quality of life and mitigation of side effects from cancer directed therapies, with an emphasis on breast cancer patients. I plan to focus primarily on muscle function and exercise interventions. I have written a currently active protocol here at IUSCC to use an individualized, web and accelerometer delivered exercise intervention to increase energy expenditure in breast cancer survivors. I am currently working on protocols and grant submissions for pharmacologic and non-pharmacologic interventions for aromatase inhibitor- induced musculoskeletal dysfunction, as well as an exercise intervention for chemotherapy-induced cognitive dysfunction.

Anthony Betbadal, MD
PGY 5
Residency:
Case Western
University Hospitals

My career interests lie in benign hematology. Currently, I'm on track to take a position at Indiana Hemophilia and Thrombosis Center, the premier hemophilia center in the country. My goals there are to be involved in clinical medicine revolving around bleeding and clotting disorders, with hopefully a focus on patients with antiphospholipid syndrome. While there, I will be a part of the education process with incoming fellows as they continue to rotate there for their hematology outpatient exposure.

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Olumide Gbolahan, MD
PGY 5
Residency:
Morehouse School
of Medicine

I am interested in gastrointestinal malignancies, particularly hepatobiliary and pancreatic. I am also interested in how solid tumors evade immune surveillance. At present, I am writing up results from our data base of patients with localized pancreatic cancer who received surgical resection with curative intent. My lab projects are exploring how chemotherapy and targeted therapy affect the immune microenvironment in pancreatic cancer mouse models.

I am developing interest in genitourinary malignancies, particularly in the use of immunotherapies to treat urothelial carcinomas. I participated in a multi-institutional retrospective study on nonseminomatous germ cell tumors, proposing that lymphovascular invasion in the spermatic cord without cord soft tissue invasion is comparable to pT3 tumors in terms of clinical stage and outcome. I have written a proposal for a multi-center phase II study evaluating combination of pemetrexed with pembrolizumab in the 2nd line setting in advanced/metastatic urothelial carcinoma. This proposal has been endorsed by the Big Ten Cancer Research Consortium and is awaiting approval from pharmaceutical. I am currently in the process of several additional projects, including reviewing patients with late relapse of teratoma and the role of retroperitoneal lymph node dissection in patients achieving radiographic complete remission after chemotherapy, and looking into trends in utilization of neoadjuvant chemotherapy for upper tract urothelial carcinoma.

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Maitri Kalra, MD
PGY 5
Residency:
Indiana University
School of Medicine

I am interested in breast cancer and have keen interest in targeted therapies for triple negative breast cancer. I have written a manuscript on the use of Rucaparib in patients with triple negative breast cancer. I am also interested in BRCA mutations and other genetic mutations associated with breast cancer and I have worked on immortalization of BRCA mutated cell lines. I have also done retrospective research on germ cell tumor patients with brain metastasis getting high dose chemotherapy. I see myself working in the academic setting practicing breast cancer as a clinical researcher.

Nabin Khanal, MD
PGY 4
Residency:
Creighton University
Medical Center

I am interested in clinical research, mainly in areas of malignant hematology, bone marrow transplant and cancer survivor-ship/ quality of care. I have had the opportunity to present some of my work on health care disparities from analyses of various national databases in different meetings as a resident. Now as a fellow, I plan to broaden my research interest and work on some promising projects on cancer survivorship.

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Alvaro Menendez, MD
PGY 4
Residency:
Roger Williams
Medical Center

I am interested in the science behind developing new medications and therapeutic alternatives for our patient population. I am even more passionate on the personal, emotional, psychological and symptomatic part of Hematology and Medical Oncology. As a result, I have focused my fieldwork in investigating ways of improving quality of care, doctor-patient relationship, conventional oncological treatment side effect amelioration methods and survivorship studies. My research has included pharmacological proposals for chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting which evidenced the primary and secondary preventive ability of medications such as Gabapentin. I have also attempted to better characterize the growing trend of supportive and integrative oncology. From behavioral studies to prospective interventions implementing acupuncture and massage therapy among others, I am interested in finding primary and secondary preventive indications for these modalities. Even more, I am fascinated now with determining genetic variations which could predict better outcomes when implementing these modalities and with finding other pharmacological and non-conventional alternatives to improve our patient's quality of life which is already deeply affected.

Adam R. Miller, MD
PGY 4
Residency:
Indiana University
School of Medicine

As a first year fellow, the ever-evolving field of oncology is a wonder to be a part of. I have taken an interest more specifically in lung cancer, and began research into lung cancer even before starting medical school. Currently my interest is in clinical trials to establish new standards of care, and in lung cancer prevention, including screening strategies on an international level. I am also intrigued by the connection between the immune system and its response to cancer, and the advent of immunotherapy has given options for treating many different forms of cancer. In addition to application to lung cancer, I am studying immunotherapy treatments, response to therapy, and side effects of this relatively new treatment which is rapidly growing in popularity.

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Marwan Mounayar, MD
PGY 4
Residency:
Indiana University
School of Medicine

Platinum based chemotherapy has completely changed the history of metastatic Germ cell tumors by changing a highly fatal cancer into a highly curable one. Unfortunately, a small proportion of patients with germ cell tumors have platinum resistant tumors and eventually succumb to their disease. My current research interest is understanding the mechanisms behind resistance to platinum in germ cell tumors. We plan on sequencing the genome and methylome of germ cell tumors that are resistant to high dose platinum chemotherapy. This project will help increase our understanding of platinum resistance in germ cell tumors and potentially guide future therapies that could potentially overcome platinum resistance.

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