

INTEREST GROUP UPDATE

SGIM Cancer Research Interest Group: A Five-year Journey Building Collaborations...and Friendships

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As my career as a cancer researcher evolved, I found myself at a crossroads. While much of my initial work was focused on cancer screening, I found myself transitioning to a new area of cancer survivorship. During a career planning meeting in late October 2005, my advisor asked me if I had interactions with other primary care providers engaged in cancer-related research. "Isn't there an interest group in SGIM focusing on cancer research?" he asked. That struck me as an excellent question, but I did not have an answer. After our meeting, I went directly to the SGIM website and discovered that there was no such group. If I could benefit from such a group, so can

others, I thought. It was serendipity that submissions for the upcoming SGIM annual meeting were due that evening! I quickly wrote up a description and submitted a proposal to create a new Cancer Research Interest Group. The goals of the group were to provide an opportunity for SGIM members to meet others with interests in cancer-related research, exchange ideas for proposals, discuss potential funding sources, form research collaborations, and identify mentors.

Our first session was held at the 2006 annual meeting. I was pleasantly surprised to find approximately 15 members in attendance and was hopeful that this was a needed niche for likeminded SGIM members. At

the session, we identified several areas of interest, including cancer screening, disparities, informed decision making, and cancer survivorship. We have since met annually for five years; our membership has grown to almost 100. A number of collaborations have been formed, leading to five workshops at SGIM annual meetings, a *Journal of General Internal Medicine* supplement on cancer survivorship care, and a new Distinguished Professor in Cancer Research Program (see Table 1). Furthermore, collaborations have also involved manuscripts and grant submissions.

Where do we go from here? Prior to the 2011 annual meeting, we conducted a survey of our interest group

Table 1. Workshops and other activities sponsored by the Cancer Research Interest Group

Year	Title	SGIM Members Involved
2007	Workshop: Cancer Survivorship 101: What Primary Care Clinicians Need to Know to Improve the Care of Cancer Survivors	John Ayanian, Pamela Ganschow, Alton Hart, Nancy Keating, Larissa Nekhlyudov
2008	Workshop: Meeting the Health Care Needs of Breast Cancer Survivors in Primary Care	Pamela Ganschow, Nancy Keating, Jennifer Potter, Larissa Nekhlyudov
2008	Workshop: Translating Cancer Control Research into Community Practice	Tracy Battaglia, Guedy Arniella, Nina Bickell, Karen Freund, Rene Salazar
2009	<i>JGIM</i> Supplement: Cancer Survivorship Care for the General Internist	<i>JGIM</i> deputy editors (Lori Bastian, Jeffrey Jackson); guest editor (Larissa Nekhlyudov); editorial board (Claire Snyder, Alton Hart, David Haggstrom, Nancy Keating, Jennifer Potter); manuscript authors; anonymous reviewers
2010, 2011	Distinguished Professor of Cancer Research	Larissa Nekhlyudov, Tracy Battaglia, Nancy Keating (planning group); Suzanne Fletcher (Distinguished Professor 2010); Karen Lasser, Kathleen Fairfield (best presentation winners)
2011	Workshop: Genes and Generalists: Identifying Patients at Risk for Hereditary Cancer Syndromes	Susan Hong, Pam Ganschow, Aarati Didwania, Kate Johnston, Irene Metzner, Jennifer Potter
2011	Workshop: The Many Faces of Generalism: General Internists' Role in Caring for Patients with Cancer in the Medical Home	Claire Snyder, Kimberly Peairs, Linda Overholser, Steve Atlas, Katherine Kahn, Larissa Nekhlyudov
2011	SGIM Interest Group Survey	Larissa Nekhlyudov, Linda Overholser, Craig Pollack

NOTE: Collaborative manuscripts and grant proposals not included.

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members to find out more about the focus of their research, professional experiences, and goals related to their involvement in the group. Although our response rate was only 30%, some findings are worth mentioning. Surprisingly, more than 75% of the respondents were faculty members with ranks as associate professor or professor; however, there were no students or fellows represented. Most (70%) defined themselves as clinician-investigators, and 80% reported interests in population-based/outcomes research (specifically in the areas of cancer prevention, screening, survivorship, communication, and disparities).

Much of their work focuses on breast, colorectal, and/or prostate cancer. Approximately two thirds reported that the interest group had been a productive component of their activities in SGIM. Most (80%) reported that the group helped them achieve career goals by providing information about research opportunities and identifying collaborators. About 60% stated that the group helped them stay up to date with clinical information related to cancer. Many were interested in finding mentors and mentees.

Based on the feedback received, as the Cancer Research Interest Group moves onto its sixth year, we

plan to promote participation by fellows and early faculty members, create new mentor-mentee relationships among our members, enhance collaborative research, and continue to educate the general SGIM membership about the wide spectrum of cancer care. As for me, since the group's inception, I have formed new collaborations (and friendships) with other SGIM members, expanded my own understanding about cancer research and clinical care, and have become more engaged in SGIM, which remains my main professional organization. I am truly looking forward to the next five years!

SGIM