Ohio State Urology Update

New fellowship offering
Research focus on pediatric UTIs
Men’s Sexual Health adds new service
From Our Chair

Greetings,

The Department of Urology continues its tradition of national leadership, including “Best Hospital” rankings by U.S. News & World Report for eight of the past 10 years. Our clinical programs have expanded, performing nearly 6,100 procedures over the past year. Our faculty includes leading clinicians, with seven noted in America’s Top Doctors and six with patient satisfaction scores in the top 10 percent nationally.

Our Men’s Sexual Health and cancer survivorship programs are excited to welcome sex therapist Claire Postl, MA, LPCC, and two new advanced practice providers who will optimize care in erectile dysfunction and male fertility preservation.

Our translational research is paving the way for clinical advances. Debasish Sundi, MD, recently received a Urology Care Foundation 2018 Research Scholar Award for his work studying checkpoint blockade in a murine bladder cancer model. Christina Ching, MD, supported in part by a pre-K award from Ohio State, is studying strategies to reduce renal scarring related to UTI in an innovative murine model.

Moreover, our educational programs permit our residents to secure outstanding fellowships. Tariq Khemees, MD, also a Urology Care Foundation 2018 Research Scholar Award recipient, will pursue training in Urologic Oncology at the University of Wisconsin, and Chad Gridley, MD, will begin his specialty training in Endourology at Vanderbilt University.

We’re excited to continue our momentum in 2018 and look forward to partnering with you to provide innovative and distinctive care for your patients.

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Ohio State is part of a research effort that could potentially improve treatment – and prevention – of urinary tract infections (UTIs) in children and the possible kidney damage that ensues.

Christina Ching, MD, a principal investigator in the Center for Clinical and Translational Research at Nationwide Children’s Hospital, is studying the urothelial response to UTIs and its impact on subsequent renal scarring. In particular, she’s investigating how the urothelial expression of cytokine interleukin-6 (IL-6) alters UTI susceptibility and contributes to the pathology associated with infection. Dr. Ching is a pediatric urologist at Nationwide Children’s Hospital and an assistant professor in the Department of Urology at Ohio State.

"We know the body has multiple defense mechanisms against infection and that these can sometimes be detrimental," she reports. "I am particularly interested in how urothelial-induced IL-6 mediates the body’s natural response to UTIs and balances pro- and anti-inflammatory properties so we can potentially capitalize on the beneficial properties of IL-6 while limiting the negative outcome of chronic inflammation."

Her prior research at Nationwide Children’s Hospital prompted her current investigation into potential mediators of innate immunity. The study, published in 2017 in the American Journal of Physiology: Renal Physiology, reports on a new mouse model of scarring following UTI as a result of vesicoureteral reflux. The model mirrors the major pathological features observed in children with kidney scarring following UTI and demonstrates a relationship between inflammatory cell recruitment and fibrosis.

Dr. Ching notes the importance of finding alternate treatments for UTIs outside the traditional antibiotics approach, due to the rising incidence of antimicrobial resistance. She hopes ongoing research will eventually lead to immunomodulatory therapies that manipulate the body’s own response to infection, thus altering host factors contributing to UTI susceptibility.

"Potentially, we could even identify children more susceptible to UTI to intervene sooner and even prevent future infections," she says.

Dr. Ching’s work is supported by grant funding through a pre-K award from Ohio State’s Center for Clinical and Translational Science, the American Urological Association and the Societies for Pediatric Urology.

Ohio State’s Department of Urology now offers an endourology fellowship, featuring both one- and two-year training opportunities to accommodate candidates interested in private practice as well as academics. The two-year option includes one year of research.

The fellowship focuses primarily on minimally invasive care of the urologic patient while also providing broad surgical exposure. Procedures the fellow will train in include extracorporeal shock-wave lithotripsy, ureteroscopy, percutaneous nephrolithotomy (including establishing percutaneous renal access), cystolitholapaxy, laparoscopic partial and total nephrectomy, laparoscopic pyeloplasty, endopyelotomy and robotic-assisted laparoscopic procedures, including radical prostatectomy.

Bodo Knudsen, MD, and Geoffrey Box, MD, co-direct the fellowship.
Ohio State will add on-site sex therapy services to its comprehensive Men’s Sexual Health and Fertility Program, beginning February 2018. It will join only a handful of centers nationwide that offer sex therapy within a medical practice.

Lawrence Jenkins, MD, MBA, clinical assistant professor, leads the Men’s Sexual Health and Fertility Program and anticipates more of the patients he refers for sex therapy will now access treatment. Previously, referred patients needed to connect with a sex therapist outside Ohio State.

“The sex therapist is crucial in a sexual medicine program to provide the counseling related to many disorders overlapping with a psychological factor,” he explains. “Integration of the medical side and the therapy side provides a more holistic approach to treating sexual dysfunction.”

Dr. Jenkins is one of only two or three urologists specializing in sexual dysfunction in the Columbus area. He refers an estimated one-quarter of his patients for sex therapy for issues ranging from erectile dysfunction to Peyronie’s disease.

Claire Postl, MA, LPCC, a certified sex therapist through the American Association of Sexuality Educators, Counselors and Therapists, will manage the new service, which will address sexual dysfunction from a variety of causes, including cancer.

“We’re building something really unique,” Postl says. “We can help men adjust to changes in sexual functioning due to medical issues, aging and general life changes. All those things can impact mental health and sexual functioning.” Postl notes she will offer both individual and couples counseling.

“Often, sexual changes not only impact the individual, but they can also have a large impact on the partner and the couple’s relationship,” she says. “Couples therapy can help redefine sexual intimacy for a relationship.”

Postl believes providing sex therapy within Ohio State’s sexual medicine program will make it easier for men to be open to sex therapy. “They can meet me, ask questions and establish a relationship and comfort with me before we actually start counseling.”

Urologic Oncologist, Surgeon-Scientist Joins Ohio State

Urologic oncologist Debasish (Deb) Sundi, MD, has joined Ohio State’s Department of Urology and is poised to advance care through his research to improve bladder cancer immunotherapy. He recently received a two-year Research Scholar Award grant from the Urology Care Foundation in support of his research.

A surgeon-scientist, Dr. Sundi completed his fellowship at the MD Anderson Cancer Center. He received his medical training from Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine and completed his urology residency at Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Dr. Sundi’s research has been published in numerous peer-reviewed journals, and he currently serves as a reviewer for European Urology, Urologic Oncology, Journal of Oncology and PLOS ONE.
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