

Oncology Exploration Elective

Course Director: Dr. Samira Syed

Student Liaisons: Anna Chung, Ken Zou, and Ayush Iyer

Department: Division of Hematology-Oncology

Minimum: 10 students

Maximum: 30 students

Requirements:

- Attend 9 of 10 sessions
- Attend 1 of 2 tours

Rationale:

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States, with men and women having a lifetime risk of 50% and 33% respectively of developing an invasive cancer.

(<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-basics/lifetime-probability-of-developing-or-dying-from-cancer.html>). Given the high incidence, morbidity, and mortality of cancer, it is inevitable that

medical students will come across patients with cancer during their career. Furthermore, caring for cancer patients requires a multidisciplinary approach, requiring consideration of the social determinants of health and psychosocial care for patients and their loved ones. Thus, a

pre-clerkship course dedicated to introducing students to oncology through a holistic manner

would be invaluable. With the experiences acquired through this elective, students will be able to explore the field of oncology and apply these experiences to their future practice, regardless of their eventual specialty choice.

Objectives:

- Gain exposure to the unique clinical and research fields of oncology.
- Appreciate the non-pharmacological support provided to oncology patients.
- Understand the social challenges of being an oncology patient.
- Practice applying lessons on screening and management through case-based learning.

Format: In-person (unless otherwise notated on the schedule)

Evaluation: Grades will be pass/fail. Attendance at 9 sessions and 1 tour, and end-of-course survey is required to receive transcript credit for the course.

Session 1: Introduction and Pathways in Oncology

Dr. Samira Syed, Division of Hematology/Oncology

Objectives

1. Understand the multidisciplinary approach to the management of cancer using an illustrative case.
2. Appreciate new developments and technologies in the field of oncology.
3. Assess the social determinants of health affecting cancer patients and treatment.
4. Discuss different pathways to a career in oncology.

Session 2: Cancer Screenings

Dr. Ahmad Anshasi, Department of Internal Medicine

Objectives

1. Understand the clinical approach and procedure for screening patients for cancer.
2. Identify and interpret common signs and symptoms suggestive of malignancy.
3. Assess healthcare disparities impacting cancer screening accessibility.
4. Discuss community outreach methods for promoting access to and awareness about cancer screening.

Session 3: Introduction to Surgical Oncology

Dr. John Mansour, Department of Surgery

1. Expose students to the career path and responsibilities of a surgical oncologist.
2. Understand the role of surgical oncology in treating patients with cancer.
3. Learn about procedures performed in surgical oncology for various types of cancer.

Session 4: Pathology in Oncology

Drs. Jason Park and Doreen Palsgrove, Department of Pathology

Objectives

1. Understand the role of pathology in cancer diagnosis and treatment.
2. Briefly discuss the presentations of different cancers in pathology, including cellular and tissue characteristics.

Session 5: Cancer Epidemiology

Dr. David Gerber, Division of Hematology/Oncology

Objectives

1. Understand patient population characteristics (ex. socioeconomic and regional factors) that are associated with different cancer afflictions in the United States and globally.
2. Briefly discuss any local, nationwide, or global initiatives in regard to cancer screenings, education, and epidemiological research.

Session 6: Nutritional Support of Cancer Patients

Ricardo Lopez & Nicole Haaf, Parkland Inpatient and Oncology Dieticians

Objectives:

1. Learn about the nutrition services offered by Parkland.
2. Understand the unique nutritional needs of cancer patients.
3. Understand the role of a nutritionist and dietician in cancer care.

Session 7: Palliative Care and Social Work in Cancer

Dr. Tamara McGregor, Family and Community Medicine

Objectives

1. Learn a brief history of palliative care.
2. Understand how and when palliative care plays a role in management of cancer.
3. Discuss ways palliative care supports both physical and mental health.

4. Appreciate the challenges of palliative care, such as communicating with family members.

Session 8: Tour of Simmons Cancer Center

Alexandra Huffman, Support Services Manager, Simmons Comprehensive Cancer Center

Objectives

1. Participate in a guided tour of the UT Southwestern Simmons Cancer Center.
2. Learn about the facilities and support services available to cancer patients at an NCI tertiary cancer center.
3. Appreciate the many non-medical needs of cancer patients and their families.

Session 9: Cancer and Kids

Dr. Tanya Watt, Pediatric Hematology/Oncology

Objectives

1. Learn about the epidemiological/etiological differences between adult and pediatric cancers.
2. Compare and contrast cancer treatment, management, and challenges between children and adults.
3. Appreciate the challenges of finding new cancer treatments for children.
4. Compare and contrast the role of palliative care in pediatric and adult cancer management.

Session 10: Mock Tumor Board

Dr. Samira Syed, Division of Hematology/Oncology

Dr. Sawsan Rashdan Dowell, Department of Internal Medicine

Objectives

1. Participate in and learn about multidisciplinary approaches to evaluating individual patient cases and optimizing treatment.
2. Communicate and collaborate with others in different specialty roles to work as an effective interdisciplinary care team.

3. Discuss pathophysiologic characteristics and management strategies for a patient presenting with a tumor.

Session 11: Tour of Radiation Oncology

Dr. Kiran Kumar and Dr. Mona Arbab, Radiation Oncology

Objectives

1. Participate in a guided tour of the UT Southwestern Radiation Oncology facility.
2. Learn about the instrumentation and technology provided by the department for both treatment and research.
3. Understand recent advances and clinical trials in radiation therapy for oncology.

Session 12: Cancer Survivors Panel

Objectives

1. Understand the physical, emotional, and socioeconomic challenges of battling cancer.
2. Appreciate the importance of social support when battling cancer.
3. Learn how you can support cancer patients no matter the specialty you choose.